



Amazing Savior: Earthly Misery Disrupted By Heavenly Mercy

Luke 1:39-56

“My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior for He has looked on the humble estate of his servant.” Luke 1:46-47

“And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.”

Luke 1:50

“For you save a humble people, but the haughty eyes you bring down.” Psalm 18:27

Time Magazine article: **Anxiety, Depression, and The Modern Adolescent: Why the Kids are Not All Right** by Suzanna Schrobsdorff

“They are the post-9/11 generation, raised in an era of economic and national insecurity. They’ve never known a time when terrorism and school shootings weren’t the norm. They grew up watching their parents weather a severe recession, and, perhaps most important, they hit puberty at a time when technology and social media were transforming society.

“If you wanted to create an environment to churn out really angsty people, we’ve done it,” says Janis Whitlock, director of the Cornell Research Program on Self-Injury and Recovery. Sure, parental micromanaging can be a factor, as can school stress, but Whitlock doesn’t think those things are the main drivers of this epidemic. “It’s that they’re in a cauldron of stimulus they can’t get away from, or don’t want to get away from, or don’t know how to get away from,” she says.

In my dozens of conversations with teens, parents, clinicians and school counselors across the country, there was a pervasive sense that being a teenager today is a draining full-time job that includes doing schoolwork, managing a social-media identity and fretting about career, climate change, sexism, racism—you name it. **Every fight or slight is documented online for hours or days after the incident. It’s exhausting.**

“We’re the first generation that cannot escape our problems at all,” says Faith-Ann. *“We’re all like little volcanoes. We’re getting this constant pressure, from our phones, from our relationships, from the way things are today.”*

That statement is not completely true... It’s the story of the Bible since the Garden of Eden... we are stuck in an unjust world where sin and the curse have put God’s people in dark places for long periods of time.



"The splitting of the atom has changed everything save man's mode of thinking . . . thus we drift toward unparalleled catastrophe." Albert Einstein

The problem of evil and the sense of inescapable problems is nothing new.

Psalm 37

Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him;
fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way,
over the man who carries out evil devices!

⁸ Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath!
Fret not yourself; it tends only to evil.

⁹ For the evildoers shall be cut off,
but those who wait for the LORD shall inherit the land.

¹⁰ In just a little while, the wicked will be no more;
though you look carefully at his place, he will not be there.

¹¹ But the meek shall inherit the land
and delight themselves in abundant peace.

¹² The wicked plots against the righteous
and gnashes his teeth at him,

¹³ but the Lord laughs at the wicked,
for he sees that his day is coming.

This old problem of sin, injustice and oppression is one that has been upon us since the garden of Eden and all of us wrestle with it. The Covid crisis has just been a manifestation of what has long lingered in many people's lives – a sense of brokenness and fear that doesn't have any clear resolution. We feel trapped.

That's why the gospel of Luke begins with unmitigated joy!

*"Long lay the world in sin and error pining
Till He appear'd and the soul felt its worth.
A thrill of hope the weary world rejoice
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn!"*

**Two women rejoice because the palpable sense of sorrow and misery of living in a sin-oppressed world is being shattered by a God who has come to put things right in Christ.
God has seen our misery and responded in mercy!**

"Ultimately the wicked will be defeated and the righteous will triumph, for the Lord's kingdom will come in its fullness in Jesus Christ's return. Goodness will finally triumph, the evil will be judged, and the Lord will reign forever." (Schreiner)



The world often seems terribly unjust and unfair. The wicked prosper and the humble are debased. However, the breakthrough in the kingdom of Christ is a grand reversal of injustice and apparent divine indifference to the sufferings of people. Elizabeth and Mary rejoice because God has seen the broken and the oppressed, the forgotten and the forsaken, and He has come to lift them up. He has

In Luke's gospel, there is a dominant theme that God has entered the world to rescue those poor and oppressed and forgotten. The nobodies living without hope and power to escape the sin and injustice of a broken and cursed world:

"And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set liberty to those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.'" Luke 4:17-19

"These two women meet together and erupt with joy. They're not just joyful because they're both having babies. No. They know the Lord has shown them favor. They know the inside scoop on God's plans for their children. Their joy is supernatural." (Thabiti Anyabwile)

The gospel is the great glorious news that we are no longer hopelessly trapped in a world where sin and misery is our destiny.

God has seen our misery and responded in mercy.

Let's look at their joy together this morning because if you are like me, I need a biblical dose of hope and joy every Sunday.

I. Elizabeth's Joy: Mary's Child is Lord of all. (Luke 1:19-45)

In the power of the Spirit, Elizabeth responds to the baby's identity.

"Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" (Luke 1:42-45)

"It is customary for us to think that the first to confess Jesus is the Christ is Peter. Actually, the first to make this confession is the older woman, Elizabeth, who confesses Jesus is Lord even before Jesus is born." (Thabiti Anyabwile)

"Mary responds to the announcement about Elizabeth and immediately goes to visit her. The trip is no small matter; she travels around 80-100 miles, a journey of three or four days." (Schreiner)

"Elizabeth, then, confirms what Gabriel said to Mary by identifying Mary as 'the mother of my Lord'. Jesus is designated here as 'Lord.' It is difficult to know what Elizabeth means by these words, but she speaks prophetically as one filled with the Spirit, and in the framework of Luke-Acts Jesus' lordship indicates that he is fully divine. As Acts 10:36 states (cf Acts 2:36), 'He is Lord of all.'" (Thomas Schreiner)



“The remarkable Christology of this paragraph stands out – Jesus is Lord! The baby in the womb of Mary is the Lord of all people everywhere.” (Schreiner)

This is the one through God’s salvation would come.

This is the one to whom every knee would bow.

See Peter’s sermon at Caesarea in Acts 10:34-43 with its announcement that Jesus is Lord of all. In Acts 10:34, it reads “So Peter announced and said: ‘Truly, I understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. As for the word that he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all)...”

“And we are witnesses of all that HE did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree, but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear, not to all people but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from dead.” (Acts 10:39-41)

And the concluding announcement “To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.” (Acts 10:48).

“How did she know this? ‘Jesus is Lord’ is the earliest of the Christian confessions. Paul tells us that no one can truly call Jesus ‘Lord’ unless the Spirit gives him the ability (1 Corinthians 12:3). The Spirit gives Elizabeth that ability, and he gives that ability to everyone who believes in Christ. In the power of the Spirit, we should proclaim it loudly to all who will listen. From the four corners of the block to the four corners of the globe, let us follow Elizabeth’s example and proclaim his as Lord to everyone!” (Thabiti Anyabwile).

It is the work of the Holy Spirit to announce the great news that Jesus is Lord.

“Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says ‘Jesus is accursed!’ and no one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except in the Holy Spirit.” (1 Corinthians 12:3)

Elizabeth’s joy is John the Baptist’s joy which is actually the Holy Spirit’s joy over the birth of Jesus. The Holy Spirit rejoices because He knows that God the Son, Lord of all, has entered the world to rescue and redeem it!

The heart of the triune God is revealed here – God loves to rescue and to redeem the long-oppressed nobodies of the world who have groaned under the curse.

This is the testimony of two or three witnesses: Elizabeth, John the Baptist, and the Holy Spirit.

There is a sense here and we will see it through the ministry of the Holy Spirit... **This here is the Lord of all!**

Aslan is on the move.

This ought to stagger us and it ought to cause us to rejoice. We are not forgotten. We are never abandoned. This is the incredible mind-blowing reality that the Lord has taken on our humanity!

And Mary believed! That’s all she contributed. Faith!



“Nothing in fiction is so fantastic as is this truth of the incarnation.”

“The Christmas message rests on the staggering fact that the child in the manger was—God”

“The crucial significance of the cradle at Bethlehem lies in its place in the sequence of steps down that led the Son of God to the cross of Calvary, and we do not understand it till we see it in this context.” J I Packer

That’s what is staggering in Luke’s gospel. The Lord of all has come to rescue us at His own humility and through His humiliation.

II. Mary’s Joy: Mary’s Lord is the Merciful Savior.

“My Soul Magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.”

Why does Mary magnify “the Lord” and why does Mary rejoice in God her Savior? Because of His incredible mercy towards Mary and through Mary to all peoples.

What Mary understands and is struck by is that the humility of God in the incarnation reveals his mercy towards the humble. Humility matters to a merciful God!

And her spirit rejoice in “God My Savior”.

Mary although a young girl is steeped in the Word of God. The Word of God will cause you to long for God to come and to deal with His people and their groaning under sin and the curse.

It is clear that Mary’s longings have been steeping long in the Word of God and she like others rejoices to see His coming by faith.

Mary’s longings haven’t been shaped by what she sees on her phone but what she reads in God’s Word.

What causes Mary to rejoice?

Because the Lord has come in mercy: *‘And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.’*

- 1. The Lord’s mercy is driven by His incredible compassion.*
- 2. The Lord’s mercy is consistent with his holy character.*
- 3. The Lord’s mercy is an expression of His covenant faithfulness.*

1. God’s mercy is driven by His incredible compassion towards our misery.

“My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked upon the humble estate of his servant.” (Luke 1:46-48)

God sees her humble estate/misery and is moved.



Mary sees her own salvation in the plan of God. She sees that it begins with God seeing her. He looks upon her humble estate.

Why does she say that all generations will consider her blessed? Because true blessing has nothing to do with power and influence and wealth and popularity. It has to do with God looking upon you in mercy. It is Mary's relationship to God through Christ that makes us consider her blessed.

Mercy: God looks upon and is moved by Mary's misery and He is with ours as well.

"The same word for 'humble estate' (tapeinosin) is used of Hannah's 'affliction' when she had no children (1 Samuel 1:11 LXX). Leah also gave thanks to God for looking upon her 'affliction' (Gen 29:32). The Lord has 'looked' graciously on Mary's humble estate, just as he looked on Israel's mercy in the past. (cf 1 Sam. 9:16)."

"She was deeply distressed and prayed to the Lord, and wept bitterly. And she vowed a vow, and said 'O Lord of hosts, **if you will indeed look on the affliction** of your servant and remember me and not forget your servant, but will give to your servant a son, then I will give him to the Lord...' 1 Samuel 1:10-11

"When the Lord saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb but Rachel was barren. And Leah conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Reuben, for she said '**Because the Lord has looked upon my affliction;** for now my husband will love me.' (Genesis 29:31-32)

Hagar in Genesis 16:13 –

"So she called the name of the Lord who spoke to her, 'You are a God of seeing,' for she said, 'Truly I have seen him who looks after me.'"

God's mercy is greater than the misery of her anonymous, humble estate in a world where she was just a nobody of no significance... and more importantly now way out of this position.

Mary's humble estate (misery) turns to blessing because of Jesus.

She was like many women of her day... trapped in poverty and insignificance. A bright woman who understood God's word and God's promises but was destined to a seemingly meaningless and futile life of survival.

But God saw her. He looked upon her "tapeinosin".

El Roi – the God who sees.

What a world of difference to know that God has seen and beheld her. He has taken notice of Mary of all people. Her humility and her misery was in view and God was moved to answer, to choose her, and to reach out.

Don't ever think that God is blind to your misery and your humility.

Don't ever think that God is blind to your misery and your humility.

What an incredible reality that God has seen and taken notice of us! That's what it means to be blessed.

2. God's mercy is consistent with His holy character and not ours: (Luke 1:49-53)

“for He who is mighty has done great things for me and holy is his name. And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.” (Luke 1:49-50)

- For he has done great things for me
- And holy is His name
- And His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.
- He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty.

Mary's joy is in the uniqueness of God. He is holy. In the faithfulness of God, He has mercy on those who fear him from generation to generation. The power of God in that He rescues the oppressed, brings down the oppressors, and he exalts the humble. This is the consistent nature of God.

“Mary also praises the Lord for the wonderful things He has done, echoing Deuteronomy 10:21, which exults in how the Lord did great and awesome things by delivering Israel from Egypt (cf. Psalm 71:19). ... **The Lord who intervenes is holy; there is no one like him, for he is utterly unique.** We think again of Hannah, who said, ‘There is none holy like the Lord: for there is none besides you; there is no rock like our God.’ (1 Samuels 2.2). Psalm 111:9 also connects the holiness and greatness of God’s name to his redemption of his people.” (Thomas Schreiner)

“But when the goodness and lovingkindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ.” (Titus 3:4-6)

Mercy: God's nature is to be moved and responsive to humility and to be strongly opposed to the proud.

“Mary praises the Lord because he casts down the might and exalts the humble. Hannah says that the Lord ‘brings low and he exalts. He raises the poor from the dust; he lifts the needy from the ash heap to make them sit with princes and inherit a seat of honor. (1 Samuel 2:7-8) **The casting down of the proud and the lifting up is characteristic of God (Proverbs 3:34; Luke 14:11)... One of Luke's favorite themes surfaces here. The Lord satisfies the hungry and the poor but frustrates the rich (cf Psalm 107:9).** WE have already seen that Luke emphasizes the dangers of riches. Jesus promises blessing for the poor and woe to the rich. (Luke 6:21,24)... Such words are fully realized only at the eschaton, and there is a recognition in the very word ‘rich’ that the wicked are rich for some time... His covenantal promises will come to pass, and the godly experience eschatological riches.”

The God of the Old Testament continually exalted the humble and debased the proud.

This ought to grip all of us.



Self-sufficiency, pride, independence, self-reliance... are all offensive to him.

Humility, weakness, openness, vulnerability... have all been honored by Him.

“Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.” (1 Peter 5:5-7)

Mary quotes Psalm 107 when she declares **“He has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; he has filled the hungry with good things.”**

This comes from Psalm 107 – This is true of God even when we have brought the oppression upon us through sin and unbelief.

Psalm 107:1-9

“O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he has redeemed from trouble and gathered in from the lands, from the east and the west, from the north and the south.

Some wandered in desert wastes finding no way to a city to dwell in; hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted within them. Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. He led them by a straight way till they reached a city to dwell in. Let them thank the Lord for His steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man! For he satisfies the longing soul, and the hungry soul he fills with good things.”

God is merciful to the repentant.

“If we would know the riches of God’s mercy, we simply need to admit the poverty of our lives.” (Thabiti Anyabwile)

God’s character is incredible and consistent. He rescues the oppressed who look out to Him.

We have been oppressed by sin, Satan and death. He has come to defeat it all.

3. His Mercy is an expression of His covenant loyalty and (not ours). His covenantal faithfulness not Israel’s is why Christ has come.

- *“He has helped His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy.”*
- *As he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever.”*

God’s faithfulness has nothing to do with Israel’s faithfulness but God’s mercy!

“What God has done for Mary is not for her alone but also for Israel as a whole, signifying a new exodus, a new redemption- is taking place through Jesus.” (Schreiner)



Luke “presents a clear picture of eschatological reversal where the humble are exalted and the proud brought down (1:50-55). Most of all is the idea that God’s Word will be accomplished as he performs his promise and completes his commitment to the greats of old (1:54-55,68-75).” (Darryl Bock)

God has made a glorious promise to Abraham and his offspring forever that Israel will be blessed.

For Luke, God’s promise to Abraham and being realized through Jesus, Israel’s Messiah, is that all the nations will be blessed.

The mercy of God is anchored in the covenant faithfulness of God to save a people for Himself from every tribe and tongue and people.

This is what we celebrate at communion ... the new covenant in God’s blood fulfilling all the covenantal promises me to Israel through Abraham.

God is keeping his promise.

Hebrews 8:8-12

“Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord,
when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel
and with the house of Judah,

⁹ not like the covenant that I made with their fathers
on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt.

For they did not continue in my covenant,
and so I showed no concern for them, declares the Lord.

¹⁰ For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel
after those days, declares the Lord:

I will put my laws into their minds,
and write them on their hearts,
and I will be their God,
and they shall be my people.

¹¹ And they shall not teach, each one his neighbor
and each one his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’
for they shall all know me,
from the least of them to the greatest.

¹² For I will be merciful toward their iniquities,
and I will remember their sins no more.”

“We should praise God for keeping his promises even before the promises are fulfilled. That’s what these women of faith do. His mercy endures forever.” (Thabiti Anyabwile)

He will have mercy on us because of the new covenant that He has made through His Son.



Today in your struggles know this and pray in light of it:

1. The Lord of all sees you. He cares for you.
2. The Lord of all is holy. He helps the humble and opposes the proud.
3. The Lord of all is faithful to his covenant. To His people because He is faithful to His Son.

“Humble yourself, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on Him because He cares for you.” (1 Peter 5:6-7)