

Rejoicing in God

Luke 1:46-55

Introduction

My soul magnifies the Lord! (Luke 1:46). What does that mean? Mary goes on to say, “*and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior*” (Luke 1:47). So, is “magnify” the same as “rejoice”? To magnify means to make things bigger. To magnify the Lord means to make Him larger in our lives. How can we make God larger in our lives? Things get larger when we get closer to them. As James says, *Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you (James 4:8)*. Because Mary’s soul drew nearer to God, she was able to rejoice in Him as her Savior. Rejoicing is the outcome of magnifying.

Drawing Near

Some people I’ve met in the Lutheran church have issues with the concept of drawing near to God. They say it gets too close to justification by works. But “drawing near” isn’t about justification. When we are justified, we are also redeemed and adopted. God buys us back and makes us His children. Drawing near to God is about the relationship we have with Him *because* He has justified us. Throughout Scripture, God shows He wants a close relationship with His people. (Read: **2 Chronicles 15:2; Psalm 73:28; Isaiah 58:2**). In a relationship, both parties must contribute to it for it to succeed. God wants us to draw nearer because the closer you get to something, the more it fills your field of vision. When we draw near to God, He draws near to us and fills our field of vision.

Distractions

When God doesn’t fill our field of vision, the things of the world distract us. We know that death is the doorway to glory, yet we may become so attracted to the world that we fear death. On the other hand, we see all the ugliness in the world, and we may become fearful, hateful, or divisive ourselves. These attitudes push God farther away. The guiding voice of the Holy Spirit becomes fainter until we cannot hear it at all because He has left. We have driven Him out.

Redirecting Our Focus

When we look at the Magnificat, we see what it means to draw near to God. Mary gives us a list of some things to remember and focus on in drawing near to God.

Patience (v. 48-49)

Even though God *has done* great things for Mary, she knows that her blessings will be future. Just being the mother of God will not make her life easier. She will have great sorrow when she sees her Son rejected, beaten, mocked, humiliated, tortured, and killed. People looking back on this, however, will call her *blessed*. It takes patience to redirect our focus. Life isn’t about instant gratification.

Penitence (v. 50-52)

Mary is humble. With humility comes penitence. God’s *mercy* is for *those who fear Him*, the penitent. At the same time, He *scatters* and *brings down* the *mighty* and *proud*. As James says, *God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble (James 4:6)*.

Perspective (v. 53)

The *hungry* are *filled* and the *rich* are *empty*. Our perspective must be off the material to draw near to God. as Martin Luther said, *The 'rich' are not those who have possessions but those who love them*. Possessions don't bring fulfillment. They are passing away. The fulness of God is eternal.

Promises (54-55)

Mary realizes her Son will be the fulfillment of the ancient promise made to Abraham. She knows God's promises are secure. No matter what happens around us or to us, we can count on His promises being fulfilled. He has promised us life eternal in His Son Jesus Christ. What more could we want?

Means of Drawing Near

What can we do to draw near to God? Of course, we draw near through prayer and His Word. We can read the Word at home by ourselves. But Paul says in **Romans**, Faith comes by hearing (**Romans 10:17**). We hear the Word in worship. When we come together for Word and Sacrament, God speaks to us and gives us His grace to shift our focus and draw near to Him. Then, like Mary, we will **REJOICE IN GOD**, our Savior

*And the peace of God,
Which surpasses all understanding,
Will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
