

ALTO AND BASS
NO. 2582

A SERMON
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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
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“He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.”
Luke 1:53

THIS song of Mary is full of sweet Gospel teaching. She was evidently a woman well instructed in divine truth, and though but young in years, she must have been deeply experienced in the things of God. Notice how she casts truth into the form of song, and there is a wisdom in this, for we are to teach and admonish one another, “in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs.” Truth is never more likely to abide in the memory, and to impress the heart, than when it is delivered in verse. Both the ears of men and the minds of men delight in rhyme and rhythm, memory grasps and retains truth more readily when it is put into poetic form than in any other. Therefore they do well who enrich the church with “psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs,” and you who cannot make songs, will do equally well if you sing them.

Let us set the Gospel to music, let us especially do this in our daily life. I think that the doctrines of grace were never intended to be made into a dirge, but they make a most heavenly marriage song. The great truths of the Gospel were never meant to be told with dolorous tones as if they were sad solemnities, but they are meant to fill us with delight, and if they thoroughly permeate our nature, they will turn our whole life into a hallelujah, and make every breath a verse of a sonnet that shall know no end. Whenever you feel gladdest in the things of God, be sure you do as Mary did, sing out your gladness, and make the people of God know that the things of Christ are things of joy to you. Obey the poet's injunction—

*“Children of the heavenly King,
As ye journey, sweetly sing;
Sing your Savior's worthy praise,
Glorious in His works and ways.”*

I commend to you the song of Mary for another reason—not only because she turned truth into poetry and song, but because she sang of mercies which were not yet visible to her. She had with gladness beheld the King of glory in her own heart, although the promised Child was not yet born, so with exulting faith she sings, “My soul doth magnify the Lord.”

Brothers, there are some of you who cannot even sing over a mercy when it is born, but here is a woman who sings over an unborn mercy. Oh, what a faith is this! If you have like precious faith, what a joy it will give to your lives! Is there nothing to sing about today? Then borrow a song from tomorrow, sing of what is yet to be. Is this world dreary? Then think of the next. Is all around you dark? Then look upward, where they need no candle, neither light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. “Yet a little while,” and we know not how short that “little while” will be—and “He that shall come will come, and will not tarry.” Then shall the children of the bride chamber rejoice with joy unspeakable, because the Bridegroom Himself has come, and the day of His marriage has arrived.

I beseech you, if you have been silent, and hung your harps on the willows, take them down at once, and sing and give praise to God for the glory which is yet to be revealed in us, the precious things that are laid up for them that love Him, which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, but the certainty of which He

has revealed unto us by His Spirit. Sing unto the Lord concerning mercies yet unborn, sing those sweet verses which I so often quote to you—

*“And a ‘new song’ is in my mouth,
To long-loved music set;
Glory to Thee for all the grace
I have not tasted yet.*

*I have a heritage of joy
That yet I must not see:
The hand that bled to make it mine
Is keeping it for me.”*

There is something more than this in Mary’s song, for it is made up entirely of what God has done. Let me read you a verse or two, “He hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden. He that is mighty hath done to me great things. He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.” It is all about HIM, you see, all concerning what the Lord had done.

If I had to write a song about myself—humph!—well, that is all I could write, and if you had to write a song about yourself, it would be a wretched ditty if it spoke the truth, and I hope you would not want to sing it if it were not the truth. Some people’s songs are all about themselves, and very poor things they are. I heard of a brother, the other day, that made a speech, and someone said to me, “Would you like a full report of his speech?” I said, “Yes,” for I was curious to hear what he would say. The friend said, “I was there, and took a full report of his speech, here it is.” He passed it over to me, and there was nothing but one great capital letter “I.” I have known some people who could both speak and sing that way, but that straight, stiff-backed letter “I” makes a very poor song. The less we sing about it, the better. There is no such note in the whole gamut, so let us never attempt to sing it, but when we sing, let us sing unto the Lord, and let our song be concerning what He has done.

Where shall we begin, then? Let us begin with everlasting love. “I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee.” Where shall we end? Well, there can be no end to this song, for the Lord’s mercies are new every morning, great is His faithfulness, and His loving-kindness to His people never knows a pause, much less a close. Therefore, when we begin to sing of what He is doing, let us go on to sing it again, and again, and again, and again, but never let us spoil the tune by coming down to sing of what we have done, or offering any praise or glory to the sons of men.

See you, then, children of God, what an example Mary sets you. Turn the truth into song, sing of unborn mercies, and sing of what the Lord has done and will do world without end.

Now we come to consider the stanza of Mary’s song which forms our text. There are two parts to her music. “He hath filled the hungry with good things,” that is *the air*, or perhaps we may say, *the alto*. “And the rich he hath sent empty away,” that is *the bass*. As we mean to play the bass softly, and to give the other part more emphasis, we will take the bass first, and then afterwards we will have the alto.

I. First, then, here is THE BASS, “The rich he hath sent empty away.”

Are there any such people in the world in a spiritual sense? Yes, every now and then we come across them. They are not truly rich, they are naked, and poor, and miserable, but they are rich in their own esteem, and think they need nothing. They have kept the law from their youth up, or if they have not done that, they have done something quite as good. They are very full of grace, and sometimes they wonder that they can hold so much. They are as good as ever they can be, and they hardly know how to put up with the company of some Christians, especially those who are mourners in Zion, and are lamenting their sins and their departure from God. They have no patience with these people. They stand

by themselves, as did he who was called a Pharisee, and who went up to the temple to pray, and as they hear others making confession of sin, they proudly say, “Lord, we thank thee that we are not as other men are.” Very superior persons indeed are they—sometimes in education—sometimes in rank and station—sometimes in the weight of their moneybags, but anyhow, very superior indeed—the “upper-crust” of society. They are spiritually and morally rich before God, so they think.

What does the Lord do with such people? Mary says He sends them away empty. They verily thought that he would come out to them, they are so respectable that they are accustomed to be run after, and they are greatly astonished that Jesus of Nazareth does not at once bow down to them, and thank them for patronizing Him, instead of which He sends them away empty. He wants nothing of them, and while they are in such a condition, He has nothing for them. Off they must go with such a word as this in their ear, “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners unto repentance.”

So He sends them away. Does He not give them something as they go? No, He sends them empty away, giving them no comfort, no joy—certainly no flattery, for His lips are lips of truth—no encouragement, for His office is to pull down the mighty from their seats, and to spoil the glory of all human boasting, and make it bite the dust. He sends them empty away. Does this seem to you like hard treatment? Mary did not think so, she sang about it, she was glad of it, and so am I. “Why?” say you. Why?

Well, first, *how could Christ fill these people?* They are full already. What can Christ do for a man who has no sin? He came on purpose to save His people from their sins, but if we have not any, He has nothing to do with us. How shall Christ be bread to a man who is not hungry? How shall He be life to a man who has life in himself? How shall He be the Alpha and Omega of the salvation of a man who is the first and the last to himself, and who begins and carries on his own salvation? No, a doctor does not go to heal the man who has no sickness, and Christ does not give His alms away to those who are not needy. When He makes a feast, it is for the poor and the hungry, for they cannot recompense Him, except by giving Him their gratitude and their love. So that it is right, since Christ cannot do anything for these rich people in their present condition, that He should send them empty away.

And, next, *what glory would Christ have if He were to fill them?* To fill the full, is no great achievement. To heal the healthy, is no great triumph. To save those who are already saved is surely a superfluity. To give righteousness to those that are righteous already is ridiculous, and to find eternal life for those who have all the life they want, is an absurdity. It is well, then, that those who are so full should be sent empty away. They cannot be filled, and if they could be, there would be no glory for Christ at all in filling them.

Next, supposing that Christ were to do something for them, then *His riches and theirs would have to mix together.* That would never do—human merits and Christ’s merits to be placed side by side as of equal value. Who thinks of sewing on a royal robe a rag picked off a dunghill? Yet, what else are those men doing who think that they can add their own righteousness to the righteousness of Christ?

No, sir, if you are rich and increased in goods, you would only have to take Christ’s goods into your store, and lay them by along with your own goods, and what a come-down that would be for the righteousness of Christ to lie side by side with your own as though it were worth no more. You would want to put up over your door the name of your firm “Self and Christ,” and salvation would have to be the work of yourself and the Savior too, and you would want to share the glory of it. No, no, that can never be, send that man away empty who has the impertinence to think that he can add something of his own to the merits of Christ the only Savior.

Yet again, well may such people be sent empty away, and we may be almost glad of it, and sing about it as we see what they do. If a man does not really want salvation, and he reads the Bible or hears a sermon, *he criticizes the style of it.* When some gentlemen go out to dinner, they are very busy examining the table and the ornaments with which it is adorned, they watch the waiters and criticize every dish that is served. Oh, how daintily they taste everything, for they are connoisseurs, and everything must be most *recherché* to please them! But when you and I come home from a day’s work,

we do not trouble about that kind of thing, we want something to eat, and are grateful to have it. Those who have no appetite for Christ begin picking first at this and then at that, and even the Bible is not good enough for them, they want to have this amended and that altered.

As for the poor sermons preached by mortal men, this does not suit them, and the other does not suit them, and nothing pleases them. There are some children who always pick over their food, and their father says, “Ah, my boy, if you are sent to the workhouse for a week, and get put on short commons, I’ll warrant that you will eat that good meat, you will find an appetite then!” So Christ, when these people are at His table turning over every morsel of the heavenly meat, sends them packing, and it serves them right, for they spoil the banquet for those who would enjoy it.

Beside that, they not only criticize, but *they also cavil*. Preach the doctrines of grace to a man who never had a sense of sin, and he says, “I don’t believe in Calvinism.” Tell him of the sovereignty of God, which is a sweet morsel to God’s own people, and he says “I, I, I—I don’t believe in that doctrine. I think there is some merit in the creature—some claim in fallen humanity to the goodness of God.” Solomon said, “To the hungry soul, every bitter thing is sweet,” but to this man, who is so full of conceit, there is nothing in the Gospel that is good enough, so he puffs at this and sneers at that, and “pshaws” at the other, and if you put the butter in a lordly dish, such as the children like to see, he will not have it. Therefore Christ will not have him, He sends him away empty.

I do not know whether it is not the very best thing that could happen to some of those who think themselves rich that they should be sent away empty, for if they were once to feel their emptiness, they would then come to Christ in quite another style, and then would they join in singing Mary’s song, “He hath filled the hungry with good things.”

If any of you are satisfied with your own goodness—and perhaps there are some such people here—I would remind you of what the farming man said to Mr. Hervey. When Mr. Hervey had become the rector of the parish, he went round, and spoke to his parishioners, and he asked a plowman, “What have we to overcome in order to get to heaven?” “Well, sir,” he replied, “you are a clergyman, and I think that you ought to tell me, and not ask me to tell you that.” “Well,” said Mr. Hervey, “I think that the most difficult thing to overcome is sinful self.” “Excuse me,” said the plowman, “but I have found one thing harder than that.” “What is that?” inquired Mr. Hervey. “To overcome righteous self,” answered the man, and that, I believe, is a most solemn truth.

In the case of some of you, I am a deal more afraid of your self-righteousness than I am of your unrighteousness. One thing I know, Christ thinks more of our sins than He does of our righteousness, for He gave Himself for our sins, but I never heard that He gave Himself for our righteousness. By His most precious blood, He has put away the sins of all who trust Him, but take care that your self-righteousness does not come in between you and the Savior, for, if it does, you will be among the rich whom He will send empty away. Empty your pockets, and make yourselves poor—I do not mean in money, but in spirit. Get down to spiritual poverty and beggary, for that is the only way to attain spiritual riches.

So much for the bass, “The rich He hath sent empty away.”

II. Now we come to THE ALTO of this song of Mary, “He hath filled the hungry with good things.” I have not many minutes left, so I will pack my thoughts closely.

First, here is *chosen company*, “He hath filled *the hungry* with good things.” Who are the hungry? Well, they are men and women full of desires for spiritual blessings, they are always desiring good things. They do not say much about what they think, but they have great longings for many things that they do not yet possess. Are you dear friend, desiring to be saved? Are you desiring to be reconciled to God? Are you desiring to look unto Christ by faith? Are you desiring to be sanctified? Are you desiring to grow in grace? Then you are among the hungry ones.

But hunger is more than a desire, it is an appetite, it is a craving born of a stern necessity. A man must eat, or he must die, therefore, hunger is not a desire that he can lay aside. Have you come into such a condition of heart that you must have Christ or die—that you must have mercy or be lost—that you

must be forgiven or be cast into hell? And do you begin now to really hunger and thirst after the righteousness which is in Christ? If so, you are among the people whom He will fill with good things.

The hungry man sometimes becomes a fainting man. He may tighten his belt to try to stop the gnawing of the inward wolf, but it cannot be stayed so, and he gets to feel as if he had no strength, and were ready to be dissolved. Do you feel like that? Do you want mercy so badly that you hardly know how to ask for it, you have become so weak, you have sunk down so low? Well, I am glad of it, you are among the very first of those whom Christ will fill with good things.

The hungry man is often a despised man. They say of such a person, "Ah, he has a lean and hungry look!" People do not like to associate with men who are very hungry, and they say, "Ah, poor beggar! I do not want to be where he is." You have heard that said, have you not? And that is just what men say of those who are spiritually hungry. "Very poor company is that man. The other day, when he was sitting in the room where we were all making fun, he was sighing all the time. There is no merriment about him, he sits by himself in the corner, or he gets into his own room alone, and he begins crying, and says that he is a lost man if God does not have mercy upon him."

Ah, that is the man for me! I would sit up all night, seven nights running, I think, to meet with people of that kind. They are the sort for whom Christ died, they are the sort Christ loves to feed, "He hath filled the hungry with good things."

And you know that when a man gets to be very poor and hungry, not only do people think little of him, but he generally gets to think very little of himself. When the bread is out of a man, the spirit is out of him too, and he goes groping up and down the streets to try to find a place where he may beg a bit of bread, he is "down at the heel," men say.

Is there anyone here who is "down at the heel" spiritually, altogether done for? Poor creature, you are the one Christ came to save, you are the very sort for whom the banquet of love is spread, your emptiness is that for which Christ is seeking, "He hath filled the hungry with good things." He has been doing this ever since Mary sang of it, He has done it in the case of many who are now present, and He is ready to do it for you. Only open your mouth wide that He may fill it, and put your trust in Him, and you shall be filled with good things. That is the first part of this sweet song—the chosen company, "the hungry."

Note, next, *the choice meat*, "He hath filled the hungry with *good things*." Mary might have said, "He hath filled the hungry with the best of things." See what "good things" Christ puts into a hungry man's mouth. "Lord," he says, "I am a sinner, I want pardon." Christ answers, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and as a cloud, thy sins." Is not that good meat to put in the hungry man's mouth?

"Lord," he says, "I want renewal, I need a change of heart." The Lord replies, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh." Certainly that is a good thing with which to fill his mouth. "But, Lord, if I am saved, I am so weak that I do not know how I shall stand." "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as your days, so shall thy strength be." Is not that a good morsel with which to fill his mouth?

"Ah, Lord!" he says, "I am prone to wander, and I fear that I shall go astray again." "I will put my fear in thy heart, that thou shalt not depart from me." Oh, is not that a blessed morsel to fill his mouth? There is no need which a poor destitute sinner can have which is not provided for in Christ. Listen, poor hungry man! There is laid up in Christ all the food that you want between here and heaven—the best of food, the very food that your sickly fainting spirit needs is all stored up in Him. But how sweet is this song! "He hath filled the hungry with good things."

The third thing to be noted is this, *the completeness of the supply*, "He hath *filled* the hungry with good things." It is a good thing to give a hungry man a bit and a sup just to stay his stomach for a while, but that is not Christ's way of feeding the famishing, "He hath *filled* the hungry with good things." I appeal to those of you here present who were once hungry, and who came to Christ, how did Christ treat you, my brethren? Did He give you just a little scrap of spiritual food, or has He filled you with good

things? I think I hear you say, “Sir, now I have Christ to live upon, I want nothing besides. There is nothing outside the great circle of Christ that I could possibly wish for, He is all I want, all I desire, all I can imagine, all for life and all for death, all for this world and all for the world that is to come.” I ask you—“Are you perfectly satisfied with Christ?” “Ay!” say you, “I want none but Christ. He is my All-in-all.”

Ah, my brother! I also can speak as you do. There is an intense enjoyment in the man who has received Christ. He has not only enough, but sometimes he so overflows with satisfaction that he does not know how to tell his tale to others, and he longs for the time when he shall get to heaven, when the strings of his tongue shall be loosed, and he will stop the angels as they go down the golden streets, and say, “Please, bright spirit, stay a while, and let me tell you what Christ did for me, for He has filled me brimful with His own dear self and His own infinite love. He has fed me till I want no more.” Is not that a blessed word? “He hath *filled* the hungry with good things.”

Now, lastly, this song tells us of *the glorious Benefactor*, “HE hath filled the hungry with good things.” It is God that does it all. He provides the feast. He invites the guests. He brings them to the table. He gives them the appetite, He gives them the power to receive what He has prepared. It is He who fills the hungry with good things. I am so glad of that, for I know some poor hungry souls that cannot even feed themselves, but the Lord can fill them with good things. We have brought them to the table laden with spiritual dainties, yet their soul has abhorred all manner of meat, and they have drawn near to the gates of death.

But when no preacher can feed you, God can, and when your very soul seems to turn away even from heavenly comforts till you say with the psalmist, “My soul refused to be comforted,” the Lord, the Holy Spirit, *the Comforter*, can bring the truth home to your heart till you say, “He hath done it. He hath done it. He hath filled the hungry with good things.”

If I had the time and the power, I would like to take that word, *He*—*HE*—*HE*, and speak it out as with a trumpet voice, “HE hath filled the hungry with good things.” Who made the earth and the heavens, and filled them with light and glory? The answer is, “*He* hath done it.” It was the Lord alone who redeemed His people from their sins, who paid the purchase price, who wrestled with their adversaries, and trod them under His feet as grapes are trodden in the winepress. “*He* hath done it. *HE* hath done it.”

Unto His name be all the praise! Who began the good work in you, my brother, my sister in Christ? Who has carried it on hitherto? Who will perfect it? Like thunder claps, I hear the answer from all the redeemed who are before the throne—“HE, HE, HE hath done it, and unto His name be honor and glory forever and ever!”

Go to Him, sinners! Go to Him, hungry souls! Go to Him, thirsty ones! Go to Him by a simple, childlike faith, and you shall then come and join with us in the song, “He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He has sent empty away.” The Lord bless you, for His dear Son’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

PSALM 148, LUKE 1:5-35, 46-56

We will first read a short Psalm inciting all to praise the Lord, and then we will read part of the first chapter of Luke’s Gospel, especially noticing Mary’s song of praise.

It is a blessed thing to indulge our holy gratitude, and to let it have speech in sacred psalm and song. Praise is the end of prayer and preaching. It is the ear of the wheat, it is God’s harvest from all the seed of grace that He has sown.

Psalm 148. Verse 1. *Praise ye the LORD.*

Hallelujah!

1. Praise ye the LORD from the heavens:

Begin the song, you holy angels before the throne, lead us in praise, O you glorified spirits above!

1. Praise him in the heights.

Sing aloud, you that sit at God's right hand in the heavenly places, let the highest praises be given to the Most High.

2-3. Praise ye him, all his angels: praise ye him, all his hosts. Praise ye him, sun and moon: praise him, all ye stars of light.

Shine out His glory. You are but dim reflections of His brightness, yet praise you Him.

4. Praise him, ye heaven of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens.

Stored up there for man's use and benefit. You clouds that look black to us, and yet are big with blessings, praise you the Lord.

See, beloved, how the song comes down from the praises of the angels nearest the throne, to the glorified saints, then to the sun, and moon, and stars, and the clouds that float in the firmament of heaven.

5-6. Let them praise the name of the LORD: for he commanded, and they were created. He hath also stablished them for ever and ever; He hath made a decree which shall not pass.

Or, pass away.

Now the psalmist begins at the bottom, and works up to the top.

7. Praise the LORD from the earth, ye dragons, and all deeps:

Right down there, however low the caverns may be, let the strange creatures that inhabit the secret places in the very bottoms of the mountains and the depths of the seas—let them send out the deep bass of their praise.

8-10. Fire, and hail; snow, and vapor; stormy wind fulfilling his word: mountains, and all hills; fruitful trees, and all cedars: beasts, and all cattle; creeping things, and flying fowl:

If you cannot praise God by soaring up like eagles, if you feel more like the creeping things of the earth, still praise Him. There is something very pleasant in the spiritual allusion that grows out of this verse. You who seem like poor worms of the dust, or insects of an hour, can yield your little meed of praise to God.

11-14. Kings of the earth, and all people; princes, and all judges of the earth: both young men, and maidens; old men, and children: let them praise the name of the LORD: for his name alone is excellent; his glory is above the earth and heaven. He also exalteth the horn of his people, the praise of all his saints; even of the children of Israel, a people near unto him.

They ought to sing best and most sweetly, because they are nearest to His heart. "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so." If all other tongues are silent, let them praise the Lord.

14. Praise ye the LORD.

The Psalm ends, as it began, with Hallelujah! "Praise ye the LORD."

Luke 1. Verses 5-6. There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.

There have been some good people who have lived in very bad times; never was there a worse reign than that of Herod; seldom or never a better man and woman than Zacharias and Elizabeth. Let no man excuse himself for sinning because of the times in which he lives. You may be rich in grace when others around you have none, even as Gideon's fleece was wet with dew when the whole floor was dry. God help us, in these evil days, to be "righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless"!

7. And they had no child, because that Elizabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years.

We do not, at the present time, understand the anguish which filled the heart of an Eastern woman who had no child. It was considered to be a disgrace, and many suffered very bitterly on that account; as did Hannah, and Rachel, and others besides.

8-12. *And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course, according to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense. And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.*

Zacharias must have been astonished as he saw that strange visitant; no wonder that "fear fell upon him."

13-17. *But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.*

Happy is the father of such a child! Happy is that man whose office it is to be the herald of Christ! Brethren, many of us are called to that office in a certain sense as we come in our Master's name, and preach concerning Him.

*"Tis all my business here below
To cry, 'Behold the Lamb.'"*

And in this way we may be partakers of John the Baptist's joy.

18-20. *And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years. And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to show thee these glad tidings. And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things—*

These glad tidings—

20. *Shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.*

Many a child of God is dumb, because of unbelief. Mary believed, and therefore she sang a holy, joyous song—a sweet canticle of delight: "My soul doth magnify the Lord." But Zacharias, because of his unbelief, was unable to speak. I wonder whether there is a man here who might have spoken for his God with power, but whose mouth is closed because of his unbelief. If so, may the Lord hasten the time when his dumbness shall be ended!

21-22. *And the people waited for Zacharias, and marveled that he tarried so long in the temple. And when he came out, he could not speak unto them: and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple: for he beckoned unto them, and remained speechless.*

By the signs he made, he impressed them with the fact that something extraordinary had happened.

23-25. *And it came to pass, that as soon as the days of his ministration were accomplished, he departed to his own house. And after those days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and hid herself five months, saying, Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he looked on me, to take away my reproach among men.*

I do not wonder that, in her solemn joy, she shunned the gossips of the neighborhood, and kept herself in seclusion. I believe that there is many a soul which, when it has found Christ, feels itself much too full of joy to speak, and asks not for a crowded temple, but for a quiet chamber where the heart may pour itself out before God.

26-35. *And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's*

name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that are highly favored, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favor with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call His name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.

So was she thus visited, and thus she believed with a wonderful faith, much too wonderful for me to describe in this place.

But now let us see what Mary said when she went to visit her cousin Elizabeth.

46-47. *And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior.*

She needed a Savior, you see. Though about to become the mother of Jesus, Mary did not think herself without sin. Her eyes still looked to him who should be her Savior from guilt and condemnation.

48-55. *For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name. And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation. He hath shown strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away. He hath helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy; as he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed forever.*

This is one of the sweetest songs that was ever sung, and is equal to any of those which came from the inspired lips of the Hebrew prophets. Well might she sing who had been thus favored. Oh, if Christ Jesus should come to any of us by faith, what reason would we have for singing! And will not each one of us, who has been thus honored, cry with Mary, “My soul doth magnify the Lord”?

56. *And Mary abode with her about three months, and returned to her own house.*

What wonderful interviews those two holy women had! The one well stricken in years, and the other youthful, yet both highly favored of God. I wonder what they said; doubtless angels remember their charming conversation. May the day come when all that fear the Lord, both men and women, shall speak often one to another concerning their Redeemer, and all that relates to His glorious cause; and then the Lord shall write another Book of Remembrance concerning their hallowed fellowship and intercourse!

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—397, 778

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