Text: Luke 1:46-55
Title: "Glory to God at Christmas" Pt.1

INTRODUCTION

ILLUSTRATION – Video clip from "The Nativity"

The glory of God was about to explode onto the world scene with the birth of His Son Jesus Christ.

John 1:14 (NIV) - The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

And God would use a humble teenager by the name of Mary bring this to pass. For the Messiah to be fully God and fully man required that he should be born of a woman. And the woman God chose was Mary. And the way God revealed Himself to Mary was, in itself, glorious. The Bible says that God sent the angel Gabriel to Mary to break the news to her.

Open your Bibles to Luke 1. We're going to read vv.46-55. This is sometimes called Mary's song (or perhaps a poem).

> Now we're talking this Christmas season about the glory of God in Christmas. What is the glory of God? It is the manifold excellence of God on display for all creation. What is my response when I see "the manifold excellence of God on public display for all creation"? My soul glorifies the Lord! I reflect that glory back to Him.
>
> And this is what Mary does with the words she composes after God has revealed His glory to her. Read text.

The very purpose for which we are all created is to glorify God. And Mary is a tremendous example of how we live our lives in such a way as to bring glory to God, not only at Christmas, but at every other time of our live.

How do we do that? I mean, how does it actually work out that I can glorify God, the way I was created to?

1. THE <u>ACTIVITY</u> OF GOD <u>REHEARSED</u> IN YOUR HEAD (vv.48-55)

I must become a student of the ways and the means that God has used in history to reveal His glory.

ILLUSTRATION – Generally speaking, you see what you're looking for. A skilled surgeon is trained to look at an x-ray and find a tiny mass that needs to be removed. A skilled homemaker has trained herself to look for a bargain on groceries. A skilled accountant is trained to look for discrepancies in figures and to correct the problem. An entrepreneur has trained himself to spot opportunities for business.

And a skilled reflector of God's glory has trained himself/herself to spot the manifold excellence of God on display all around. And having spotted God's glorious ways, he thinks on them … she ponders them.

Rehearse the activity of God in your mind.

- **The activity of God revealed in the circumstances of life**

  Look at it again at …

  Luke 1:48-49 (NIV) - for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call <u>me</u> blessed, [49] for the Mighty One has done great things for <u>me</u>— holy is his name.

  Mary realizes that God is at work in her life … big time! He is about to do something in her (literally) and through her that is the fulfillment of His promise to send a Messiah. And she is blessed by God to be one of the human players in this drama.

  We need to watch for the activity of God in our own lives. We need to ask ourselves in every circumstance, "Where is God in this? What is God saying through this?"

  > Note: And no matter what it is you are going through, good or bad, God is in the picture. When the circumstances of our lives are "good," God is watching to see how we will respond. Will we be like Mary and praise Him? Will we take it for granted? When the circumstances are "bad," God is watching to see how we will respond. Will we turn to Him, or turn bitter?

  If we don't look for the activity of God in our circumstances, we'll miss opportunities, not only to do God's will, but also to glorify to Him through the circumstance.

- **The activity of God revealed in Scripture**

  Now Mary's song goes on to extol "the manifold excellence of God." She recites many of God's perfections, attributes and abilities.

  But there's something interesting about her song. It is remarkably similar to a song composed by another godly woman by the name of Hannah, the mother of Samuel. Samuel's birth was a miraculous thing, and Hannah knew it and glorified God.

  So when this happens to Mary, her soul lights up with the glory of God, the inevitable manifestation of it is the Scriptures on which she has fed her mind throughout her lifetime.

  I'll not ask you to turn but just look at the similarities in their songs:

  1 Samuel 2:1 (NIV) - Then Hannah prayed and said: "My heart rejoices in the Lord…"

Luke 1:46b-47 (NIV) - And Mary said: "My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior…

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1 Samuel 2:2 (NIV) - "There is no one holy like the Lord…"

Luke 1:49 (NIV) – "For the Mighty One has done great things for me— holy is his name."

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1 Samuel 2:4 (NIV) - "The bows of the warriors are broken, but those who stumbled are armed with strength.

Luke 1:52 (NIV) - He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble.

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1 Samuel 2:5 (NIV) - Those who were full hire themselves out for food, but those who were hungry hunger no more.

Luke 1:53 (NIV) - He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty.

This is important! When Mary rehearsed the activity of God in the circumstances of her life, she immediately connected it with activity of God in Scripture. Why? Because she had saturated her mind with the Word of God.

Note: When your mind has been saturated with the activity of God in Scripture, you know and understand the ways of the Lord. You know that God is always working to bring glory to His name. Sometimes He does that by blessing us, like He did Mary in the birth of a son, the Messiah. But God is also glorified in the difficulties and even in the tragedies of life. And when I have rehearsed the activity of God in my mind, I know that God has somehow managed to take tragedies and disasters and difficulties, and turn them around for His glory and for our good.

So it starts with the glory of God rehearsed in your mind.

2. THE <u>GLORY</u> OF GOD <u>REFLECTED</u> IN YOUR HEART (vv.46-47)

With her head filled with the manifold excellence of God revealed in Scripture, something powerful happens … her soul is ignited with the glory of God. And now we understand what is behind the first verses of our text.

Luke 1:46-47 (NIV) - And Mary said: "My soul glorifies the Lord [47] and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

And Mary is so moved by this vision of God as the lover of the lowly, that she breaks out in song … a song that has come to be known as the Magnificat, which is the first word of Mary's song in the Latin version.

The word "glorify" there literally means "magnify" or "to make great."

It occurs to me that what Mary is doing here is the exact opposite of what happens in the soul of a non-believer. Speaking of the non-believers Paul says…

> **Romans 1:21 (NIV) - For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.**

This is essentially the difference between a true believer and a non-believer. They don't give God glory when they see the activity of God revealed in their lives, in their world and in the Scripture.

ILLUSTRATION – Can I just take this opportunity to address a matter that has come up in this Christmas season's crop of films? One of particular interest is The Golden Compass. The Star-Telegram featured this movie on the front page of the entertainment section on Friday: "Compass points the way." Does it? As it turns out the author of the books upon which the movie is based is a British guy by the name of Philip Pullman. The trilogy he has written has made to the "must read" books for children. Let me read you part of the analysis of Dr. Daniel Heimbach, a professor of Christian ethics at one of our Southern Baptist seminaries:

> "Marketed as a wholesome family story resembling the tales of Narnia or "Lord of the Rings," the film coming out Friday starring Nicole Kidman and Daniel Craig is a celluloid version of the first in a three-book series by British author Philip Pullman. It is a story in which two 12-year old children -- a girl named Lyra and a boy named Will -- have adventures rescuing the world from institutional Christianity, learning along the way that sin is the key to "wisdom" and saving the universe depends on killing the God of the Bible.
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> "Replete with sympathetic talking animals and heroic battles, Pullman's story rides a wave of well-publicized books by atheists crusading to rid the culture of its debt to Christianity. These include "The God Delusion" by Richard Dawkins, "God Is Not Great" by Christopher Hitchens, and "Letter to a Christian Nation" by Sam Harris. But while these are written for savvy adults, the Pullman story aims at leading children to reject the biblical God.
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> "Some could wonder if Christian reaction to Pullman's books popularized by the coming movie is perhaps overstated or hypersensitive. But it may if anything be understated, because there is simply no doubt in this case about what the author intends. Philip Pullman has made that all too clear in repeated statements reported in publicity surrounding his work.
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> "Pullman has recently risen to sensational status due mainly to the opening provided by the extraordinary popularity of J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter series. Pullman credits the Potter

series for easier acceptance of his own work saying, ‘I was quite happy for Harry Potter to get all the attention so I could creep underneath all of it.’ He explains that while the Potter series conditioned readers to favor the occult, he was ‘flying under the radar, saying things that are far more subversive than anything poor old Harry has said.’ Subversive in what way? Well that is because, he admits, ‘My books are about killing God.’”

“Pullman is not shy about his spiritual views. He announces: ‘I'm an atheist. There is no God here. There never was.’ He is ‘all for the death of God’ and attributes his writing success to ‘pigheaded self-belief, undamaged by the facts, that's what you need.’”

Daniel R. Heimbach is professor of Christian ethics at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C.

So you see that this is essentially the difference between the soul of woman like Mary, and the soul of a man like Philip Pullman.

How do you glorify God? Rehearse the activity of God in your mind. Reflect the glory of God in your heart. But the next thing is …

3. THE <u>WORSHIP</u> OF GOD <u>CONSUMING</u> YOUR LIFE (vv.46)

Luke 1:46-47 (NIV) - And Mary said…

Glorifying God is our reflection back to God of His glory.

- **OUR <u>VOICES</u>**

  Did you notice that “Mary said” what was in her soul and in her heart.

- **OUR <u>FACES</u>**

  2 Corinthians 3:18 (NIV) - And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

- **OUR <u>CHOICES</u>**

CONCLUSION

ILLUSTRATION - Several years ago, Orel Hershiser was pitching for the Los Angeles Dodgers. They had just won the World Series, and Orel had been named the Most Valuable Player.

A sports report of the game showed Hershiser in the dugout just before the 9th inning started. He was leaning against the wall, and his lips were moving.

Later Orel appeared as a guest on the Tonight Show, back before Jay Leno when Johnny Carson was the host. Johnny Carson asked him what Orel had been saying. "I wasn't *saying* anything, " Orel responded. "Well then, tell us what you were doing." Finally Orel replied, "I was *singing*." Johnny said, "You were singing? I didn't know you were a singer. Come on, let's here it!" And Orel said, "Nah. I don't want to." And the audience clapped and said, "Yeah! Let's hear it!

So Orel Hershiser started to sing: "Praise God from whom all blessings flow. Praise Him all creatures here below. Praise him above Ye heavenly host. Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost! Amen!"

Johnny Carson sat at his desk speechless. The whole audience was dead silent. Then one person stood up and started clapping, and soon the whole audience joined in applause.

Maybe this was Orel Hershiser's way of saying, "Lord, the only reason I'm a Most Valuable Player is because you are the Most Valuable God."