

# Luke 1:46-55

## Worry and Worship: 10 Characteristics of God

### The Summit Church

**MPT:** Mary exhibits great faith in the promises and character of God—which she would've known from the OT and synagogue teachings—which leads her to respond in worship during a time she would've had every reason to fear and worry.

**MPS:** If we saw God the way Mary saw God, we would sing, too. And because of Christmas, we can.

---

## INTRODUCTION

Merry Christmas...for those of you still shopping remember that *presents are the best way to show someone how much you care. It's like this tangible thing you can point to and say, "Hey man, I love you this many dollars worth."*

Last week PJD kicked off the Christmas season...this week we're actually gonna go *back* one chapter to **Luke 1** and we're gonna read a part of the Christmas story that I imagine most of us have skimmed right over.

See, most of us know the story about the angel coming to Mary...but then we jump straight to Jesus being born.

- First off, **any woman who has ever been pregnant knows that ain't what happens.** There's *plenty* that happens during those 9 months, can I get an 'amen?'
- (In fact, **I've always wondered if Mary had normal pregnancy stuff happen** since it was Jesus in her tummy? **Morning**

sickness? Cramps? Can't find a **comfortable sleeping position**? We'll never know...I digress.)

Anyway, I wanna drop us right in the middle of Luke 1 and show you something incredible that happens *in between* the prophecy and the pregnancy.

## CONTEXT

While you're making your way there...**How many of you would classify yourself as a worrier?**

- Some of you didn't even hear me ask the question cuz you're busy worrying about something else.
- Others are like, *"Hm. I don't think so. Well maybe. Maybe not. Well now I'm worried that I might be a worrier. Hmmm.."*
  - You're proving my point. For many of you **worry is your middle name.**
- We worry about health, relationships, jobs, kids, finances...the list goes on.
  - Right this very moment you just remembered **you forgot to get someone important a Christmas present** and now you're worried about that.
- For some of you if you weren't worrying you wouldn't know what to do with yourself.

Well if there were ever someone to have **cause for worry** it was Mary the mother of Jesus. Let's get to know her a little better:

1. Pregnant with the Savior of the Universe
  - Along comes an angel who tells her, *"You're gonna be pregnant."* She's like, *"Hm. I know you're an angel and this might be a little hard to understand buuuuuut there's this whole 'virgin' thing..."* And he's like, *"Oh,*

yeah, well the Holy Spirit is gonna come upon you...yada yada yada...and you'll be pregnant. And, oh yeah, very important detail, **your son is God**. Soooo don't mess up."

- **She has pressure of being pregnant with the Savior to be worried about.**

2. With this pregnancy is coming a bad reputation

- Not just pregnant, but pregnant **out of wedlock**. This situation alone would've made ppl consider her to be 'loose.'
- "I mean *sure* she's engaged to that guy, but they lived apart so *obviously* the baby wasn't his."

- **She has her reputation to be worried about.**

3. Very poor

- PJD showed us this last week—when it came to the temple sacrifice Mary couldn't afford the lamb the law required so offered two turtle doves. Dirt poor.

- **She has finances to be worried about.**

4. Marriage is up in the air

- Mary is probably 14, 15, 16 years old. They got married young back then.
- Well Mary is betrothed to Joseph, and naturally what happens next? Naturally, a young girl gets all amped up. She's searching on Pinterest for ways to make her wedding amazing. She's practicing signing her new last name. She's naming her future children and making scrapbooks.
- NOPE. Not Mary. Mary is busy trying to convince her fiance that she hasn't been running around on him and she's facing the prospect of living forever as a **lonely woman seen as damaged goods** in a time where she would've had very little way of providing for herself.

- **She has her marriage and her future to be worried about.**

So here is a **poor, teenage virgin with a bad reputation** and a **marriage that's up in the air** who has been entrusted with the Savior of the universe.

- You understanding Mary's situation here? If anyone in the history of ever had cause for worry, Mary wins the prize.

Most of you know that an angel appeared to Mary...most *don't know* about the song she wrote after.

**Luke 1:46-55 (ESV) // \*\*STAND\*\***

<sup>46</sup> And Mary said,

"My soul magnifies the Lord,

<sup>47</sup> and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

<sup>48</sup> for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant.

For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed;

<sup>49</sup> for he who is mighty has done great things for me,

and holy is his name.

<sup>50</sup> And his mercy is for those who fear him

from generation to generation.

<sup>51</sup> He has shown strength with his arm;

he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts;

<sup>52</sup> he has brought down the mighty from their thrones

and exalted those of humble estate;

<sup>53</sup> he has filled the hungry with good things,

and the rich he has sent away empty.

<sup>54</sup> He has helped his servant Israel,

in remembrance of his mercy,

<sup>55</sup> as he spoke to our fathers,

to Abraham and to his offspring forever."

So what was it that caused Mary—and can help us—to worship instead of worry?

## Two Fundamental Approaches to Life:

1) **BOTTOM-UP**. (Not *bottoms-up*...that's a different sermon) Start with your life: *your experiences, your feelings, your circumstances, your emotions* and project those on to God.

- When things are **good** you feel like God cares about you.
- When things are **bad** you feel like God doesn't care about you.
- This approach is a constant **emotional** and **spiritual** roller coaster. Whatever you're **feeling that day** is the emotion you project onto God...so it makes it feel like **God is wishy washy**; he's **changing every day**.

2) **TOP-DOWN**. Assumes God is who he says he is according to the Bible...which **reveals God's character, nature, and attributes**.

- **Begins with believing God is good**...he is always, altogether good. He made everything **good**. His plan that he **has been** and **continues to** work out is **good**.
- This approach believes God doesn't change—he's the same yesterday, today, and forevermore.

Mary lived with a top-down approach. Even though she's **probably illiterate** due to her life circumstance, she's **most likely heard the Scriptures** read to her in synagogues...she's obviously **committed them to mind and heart**...and now she's going to choose to live her life top-down: "*Who is God and what does the Bible have to say about him, his plan, and his purposes? Now I'm going to live in light of that.*"

The single most effective means of bolstering our confidence in God and his character is by spending time in the Word, because **you can only trust God inasmuch as you know him**...and how much you know him is directly tied to how well you know his Word.

- In the OT, Jeremiah would say, "**This I call to mind, and therefore I have hope.**"<sup>1</sup>

**Mary focuses on what she knows to be true about God**...and because of *that* she could not help but bust out and SING...and as **Ella Fitzgerald, *The First Lady of Song***, once said, "*The only thing better than singing is more singing.*"

In Mary's song she identifies at least **ten characteristics of God** that should **bolster our faith in God** and lead us to **deeper worship of God**. We're going to hit each of them briefly, but what I hope you experience—like Mary—is that as **theology** (the study of God) becomes **biography** (personal) then it will certainly culminate in **doxology** (praise to God).

First characteristic of God to help us **worship** instead of **worry**...

### 1. God is **LORD** (v46)

<sup>46</sup>And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the **Lord**,

God is Lord. **Kids**: that means **he's in charge; God is the boss**.

She looks at her **life** and **future** and **reputation** and **family** and **potential marriage** and says, "*You know what, the Lord is in charge and I trust him. So instead of worrying I'm going to worship.*"

---

<sup>1</sup> Lam. 3:21

I've said this before, but what makes this so hard is that God's **purposes** don't always come wrapped in our **preferences**. **Y'all ever notice how God doesn't seem to check your calendar?** It's because he's Lord; he doesn't have to!

- Remember, though, God is good. Everything he does is **good**. His plans are **good**. His purposes for us are **good**. **God is good all the time and all the time \_\_\_\_\_.**

I want to encourage you today, whatever happens: **don't let your plans and preferences make you miss God's purpose.**

- *Mary, I know you were planning a wedding, but while you were planning a wedding **God was planning to change the world.***
- *Mary, I know you didn't even get to finish your **wedding registry**, and now you gotta make a **baby registry**, but I need you to **take care of the baby who is going to take care of the whole world.***

Listen, God wants to change some of our plans today.

- That can be **cause for worry**, because you don't know what the plan is going to be...or it doesn't make sense to you...or you'd do things differently.
- Or that can be **cause for worship**, because God is Lord and **he's in charge** and **he is good**, and **he loves me**, and **great is his faithfulness to me**. So I'll live in light of that and I'll praise him for it.

God is Lord.

## 2. God is SAVIOR (v47)

<sup>47</sup>and my spirit rejoices in God my **Savior**,

Now this one's interesting because throughout history there's been a lot of controversy around Mary and whether she was actually 'perfect and sinless' like some denominations make her out to be.

- On the contrary though, Mary not only recognizes her need for a Savior but it's that very characteristic of God that leads her to worship.

Just like you and me, Mary is a sinner in need of a savior. A savior is a **rescuer, a deliverer, a hero.**

- In the Bible, God is the hero. God is the deliverer and rescuer. He sent himself as the Savior of the world in the form of his son—*her* son.
- And this son of Mary's was to be born, w/o sin, yet would die for her sin, yet rise for her salvation.

Isn't it amazing that she starts her song saying, "God is my Lord and my Savior"?

- She doesn't start with all of her complaints toward God. *"God, you know, the dress isn't going to fit. Joseph is kinda freaking out. My parents are wondering how to explain this to my grandmother. It's going to be really awkward at synagogue with a baby and no husband quite yet. Oh and by the way, I'm in junior high, and this seems like a lot for me."*
- She starts with who God is, *"He's the Lord, whatever he wants, he's my Savior. He'll get me through."*

## 3. God is PERSONAL (vv48-49)

<sup>48</sup>for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant.

For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed;

<sup>49</sup>for he who is mighty has done great things for me,

This one is probably my favorite—and it’s certainly one of the things that separate Christianity from other religions—God is *personal*.

- He **pays attention** to you.
- He *knows* you...in fact, he knows *everything about you*. The **good** and the **bad**. The **pretty** and the **ugly**.
- He knows **every thought** you’ve ever had.
- He knows **everything you’ve ever done** and **everything ever been done to you**.
  - And, listen, **HE LOVES YOU**.
  - If you believe that about him then you’ll **sleep** differently; you’ll have a different kind of **peace**; you’ll sing differently.

This is one of the reasons Mary sings so magnificently: God knew who she was. He **noticed** her...*her*! A **poor, peasant** woman from Nazareth...not considered to be important by anybody except her family. BUT GOD CHOSE HER. God hand selected her to be the mother of Jesus.

Because God is personal, **Mary experienced what every human being wants to experience**: a sense of her dignity.

- God is **personal** and **respectful** and he **gives dignity to those whom dignity has been taken from them**—to the point he adopts and calls you sons and daughters.

This is **what our God does**, church. This is **who our God is**, high schooler.

- Have you been humiliated?
- Parents say horrible things to you?
- Your father walk out on you?

- You been cheated on?
- You been lied to or lied about?
- You been betrayed?
- You had people say things that are devastating or demoralizing and denigrating?
- Been humiliated?
- You been beaten?
- You been molested?
- You been abused?
- Been cheated on?
- Been humiliated?

Dignity has been taken *from* you. But the God of the Bible, he’s a personal God and he gives dignity back.

#### 4. God is **HOLY** (v49) and **holy** is his name

**Holy**: holiness means “wholeness;” “perfection.” God is lacking nothing and he’s perfect in every way.

One of the problems living in this world is that we get used to sin. We get used to **hatred, division, racism, immorality, and debauchery**. We get used to **lies** and **deceit** and **drunkenness**. But God will never get used to it.

**PIPER**: God is incomparable. His holiness is his utterly unique divine essence. It determines all that he is and does and is determined by no one. His holiness is what he is as God, which no one else is or ever will be. Call it his **majesty**, his **divinity**, his **greatness**, his **value as the pearl of great price**. In the end, language runs out. In the word “holy” we have sailed to the world’s end...of reverence and wonder and

awe. There may yet be more to know of God, but that will be beyond words.<sup>2</sup>

Mary worships God because he is in a class all by himself—he is holy.

## 5. God is **MERCIFUL** (v50)

<sup>50</sup>And his **mercy** is for those who fear him  
from generation to generation.

God withholds from us **justice that we deserve as sinner** and **replaces it with grace**. That's mercy.

- **KIDS**: This just means God is the best at forgiving.
- We keep messing up...we deserve to be punished...yet God keeps forgiving.

“Because he's **holy**, he had to do something about our sin.  
Because he's **merciful**, he wanted to do something.  
Because he's **powerful**, he was able to do something.”<sup>3</sup>

## 6. God is **POWERFUL** (vv51-52)

<sup>51</sup>He has shown **strength** with his arm;  
**he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts;**  
<sup>52</sup>**he has brought down the mighty from their thrones**

God is both **merciful and mighty**.  
Both **sovereign and strong**.  
Both **personal and powerful**.

I think some of the best theology comes from kids songs: *“My God is so big, so strong, and so mighty. There's nothing my God can't do!”*

Mary looks at God and sees a loving, merciful, *powerful* Father for whom **nothing is impossible**. See when your God is **all-powerful** then there's no problem that can become **all-consuming**...because you have faith that the **all-powerful one has strength, Lordship, and power over the all-consuming situation**.

God's got a strong arm. You think of a soldier. You think of a warrior. You think of a fighter. You think of someone reaching down into history and grabbing people and saving them, and defending them, and protecting them, and securing them, and embracing them, and cherishing them. What she says is, “My God is powerful.”

Mary knows there's a God **above** her, who has gone **before** her, who lives **within** her, who is always **for** her...so she bursts into worship instead of worry.

“Because he's **holy**, he had to do something about our sin.  
Because he's **merciful**, he wanted to do something.  
Because he's **powerful**, he was able to do something.”

## 7. God is **GENEROUS** (vv52-53)

<sup>52</sup>he has brought down the mighty from their thrones  
and **exalted** those of humble estate;  
<sup>53</sup>he has **filled** the hungry with good things,

What's terrifying about this passage is that it represents ppl who feel so **rich** and **full** and **satisfied** who are no longer pursuing the Lord anymore—the **“proud and mighty”** as vv51-52 put it.

And you can't help but think how Jesus would say later in Luke, *“Woe to any of you who have it all in this life. If you think you've got it all,*

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/holy-holy-holy-is-the-lord-of-hosts>

<sup>3</sup> Keller, *Luke 1:46-55*

*then that's all you'll ever have. . . But **blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.***<sup>4</sup>

Mary is certainly of “humble estate.” She is certainly “hungry.” But because she knows who God is—a **generous God**—she can rejoice in her humility and hunger and say, “*God, you exalt those of humble estate and you fill the hungry with good things!*”

In a world where we want things to happen fast, there’s something about hungering and thirsting that is glorifying and sanctifying. The angst of being hungry forces you to rely upon God, which should actually be a cause for rejoicing.

Some of you are experiencing this “hunger” in a spiritual way. You really are trying—you’re doing the church thing, reading your Bible, learning to pray...but it just doesn’t seem like much is happening in your life. You feel like nothing you do is getting God’s attention.

Listen, God is generous, and those who hunger and thirst for righteousness **will be filled**. So if that’s you **don’t let the desire to be further along than you are rob you from joy today.**<sup>5</sup> You *will* be filled. Remember *who God is*. Don’t rely on your feelings...rely on facts about God.

- He *is* personal. He *is* generous.

Mary doesn’t know what will happen, but she does know who God is. It changes everything.

## **8. God is JUST (v54)**

<sup>54</sup>He has **helped** his servant Israel,

<sup>4</sup> Luke 6:24; Matthew 5:6

<sup>5</sup> Chandler, *Magnify*

in remembrance of his mercy,

God being just means he will come to "make the **wrong things right** and make the **dark things light**."

In God’s kingdom, the **hungry** will be fed. The **poor** will be housed. The **needy** will be cared for. The **marginalized** will be protected. And **that kingdom ethic** is supposed to **live and be active** among God’s people.

Here’s how I know God is just and cares about these things: God is about to change the course of human history by sending Jesus to earth, right? All the **promises, prophecies**, etc...**the rescue mission is beginning** and *the most important three decades of all time are about to begin*. **And where do we find God?** Here in Luke 1, where’s God? He’s occupying himself with two obscure, humble women—Elizabeth and Mary. One is **old and barren** and one is a **poor young virgin**.

Even in her situation, Mary need not worry for she knows her God is JUST. He is the champion of the **poor**, the **oppressed**, and **despised**. He’s a **personal** God and a **generous** God who is the **lover of the lowly**...who cares for the **helpless**, the **humble**, and the **hungry**. And **because of who he is** Mary deems him **worthy of praise** even when everything around her says to worry.

## **9. God is FAITHFUL (vv54-55)**

<sup>54</sup>He has helped his servant Israel,

in remembrance of his mercy,

<sup>55</sup>as he spoke to our fathers,

to Abraham and to his offspring forever.”



Mary could've gone with her emotions: *God, what are you doing with my life? What the heck is happening?*

Instead, Mary celebrates the **God who remembers and is faithful to his covenant**. The promise that had been made to Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is now here in the "fullness of time."

She could've focused on how unbelievable this whole situation was and said, *"Ah, I'll just hope for the best and see what happens."*

- She could've focused on her fear which would've said, *"Just stay silent...don't express any hope at all cuz God probably won't come through anyways...don't get your hopes up."*

But, see, **fear is just another version of faith**—fear is just placing our faith in the worst-case scenario:

- *What if nobody believes I'm a virgin?*
- *How will I take care of this baby if I'm by myself?*
- *What if the economy falls apart? What if I lose my job? What if someone I love gets cancer? What if I never, ever get married? What if I marry a jerk? What if I marry a jerk, and they we kids that are just like my jerk spouse, and then they're an eternal reminder I've married a jerk?*
  - And the fears just go on and on: *What if...? What if...? What if...?*

How about this, though—**what if God is faithful?**

- What if God really is for you?
- What if God really is merciful and kind and loving?
- What if God really is faithful to do and fulfill what he has said he was going to do?

If God really is the faithful one the Bible says he is then that's reason to worship instead of worry. God is faithful.

Last one...

## 10. God is **ETERNAL** (vv54-55)

<sup>54</sup>He has helped his servant Israel,  
in remembrance of his mercy,  
<sup>55</sup>as he spoke to our fathers,  
to Abraham and to his offspring **forever.**"

If God **has been** good, he **will be** good...because he is the same **yesterday, today, and forevermore**.

In light of who God is—and because he is eternal and doesn't change—now we can choose to replace **worry** with **history**.

- Again, **worry** and anxiety ask the question, *"What will happen if...?"*
- History, however, asks the question, *"What do I know to be true about God and what has he done?"*

## (VAMP)

"Well I heard about this guy named Abraham. He was old, his wife was barren, they couldn't have a kid. God gave them Isaac. Then came the nation of Israel with a bunch of promises for an eventual child who would be the Savior of the world.

- Well, **based on God's history, I think he's good for this**. He's been working on this for thousands of years.
- He's Lord, Savior, personal, holy, merciful, powerful, generous, just, faithful, and eternal...so I think he's good for this."



- Mary says, *“That’s my God and I’m gonna sing **to him** and **about him**. I’m gonna sing because my Savior is worth it. I’m gonna sing because it’s my anthem as I await the kingdom. I’m gonna sing because God is worthy.”*

But **most importantly**, church, we sing because God came to live with us.

## CONCLUSION

Listen, more than anything else *that’s* the one detail that moves Mary to praise. She knew all 10 of these things about God the day before Gabriel arrived...the one thing **she didn't know** is that God would come to earth in her time.

I think that's the main problem most of us have. It's not that we think God is weak or evil. We agree that he is holy, powerful, merciful, and all the rest. What do we doubt?...**WE DOUBT THAT HE IS NEAR**. And that is precisely the doubt that God attacks at Christmas.

I told you 10, but here’s a bonus: knowing **God is with us**—that he is Emmanuel—*that* is the **one thing**, the **one characteristic**, above all else, that will lead to worship over worry.

“The Christmas story is dark, but what prevents us from reading this story in despair is *that* name: ‘Emmanuel.’ In Jesus’ birth God delivered so much more than Israel ever expected...God sent them not just a King...**he sent himself**. Christmas commemorates the moment when God entered into our **messy, injustice-filled, worrisome, frustrating, sinful, tired** story, and he came in flesh and blood to rescue you and me.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> From Pappalardo’s recent article

- If we saw God the way Mary saw God, we would sing, too. And because of Christmas, we can.
- Jesus, Immanuel, **God with us**, is the good news that leads to great joy this Christmas.

Which approach are you going to take to life?

- **Bottom-up approach**...constantly swayed by your feelings, circumstances, emotions?
- **Top-down approach**...believing God is who he says he is according to the Bible...believing
  - **God Is Lord**
  - **God Is Savior**
  - **God Is Personal**
  - **God Is Holy**
  - **God Is Merciful**
  - **God Is Powerful**
  - **God Is Generous**
  - **God Is Just**
  - **God Is Faithful**
  - **God Is Eternal**

Here’s what I’m gonna do: I’m gonna pray but then I want to leave you by yourself with all ten of these up. And I want you to think about how different your life would be if you took a top-down approach to life and truly believed God is who he says he is.

- Let’s just take some time to focus on who God is and let the Holy Spirit move amongst us...then our teams will come and lead us.

## PRAY

*May we **grow in worship** and be able to **sing with hearts like Mary**. May we worship and sing because Jesus is our Savior and he’s worth it.*