

WEEKLY SERMON

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The song we sing

Only when something is taken away do we really begin to appreciate it. For many Christians the recent return to music and singing in worship is a most welcome joy and delight. How we have missed the opportunity to express our love for God in hymns and songs!

The Gospel for this Sunday records one of the most familiar and well-loved songs of the Christian church, Mary's song, the Magnificat. It makes some extraordinary claims and should inspire us in our song. Not just what we sing in a service, but the music that comes from our lives, in other words what others see and hear from who we are.

But let me focus on the first words to learn what the song of our soul should be (Luke 1.46/47):
My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour.

A song of faith

Mary's song was an act of faith. It was likely that very soon after the annunciation Mary met with Elizabeth and before there was much evidence if any of a pregnancy. She believed that what she had been told was in fact going to happen. So our song needs to reveal our faith in who God has revealed Himself to be and what He has done for the salvation of the world, even if we have little tangible evidence to point to.

A song of witness

In one sense the Lord cannot be magnified. What Mary meant was she wanted to magnify Him in the perception and understanding of others, for them to see Him as He really is, Creator, Redeemer and Judge. So the song of our lives needs to bear a witness to others, not about ourselves, but about Jesus.

A song of joy

Notice how Mary rejoiced in God her Saviour. She delighted in Him and His extraordinary purposes for her life. As Isaiah delighted greatly in the Lord and Paul encouraged the Philippians to rejoice in the Lord, so we do well to find joy in who God is and what He has done and delight in Him. Not so much in His gifts and blessings, but in Him.

What song do we think we are singing? What song do others here us sing? As we return to singing together, is it from our soul and spirit? Is it Mary's song, a song of faith, witness and joy?

Bishop Julian Henderson, Bishop of Blackburn

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