

Our theme for today: God sees! You see that, right?

Mary grew up in difficult circumstances. She was a young woman growing up in a rural culture in the villages of Galilee where fisherman and tradesmen tried to eke a living from the sea. She probably saw lots of poverty, may even have been poor herself. She was probably pledged to be married (based on the culture of the time), which from our perspective is not something our young people would likely wish for nor choose. She was likely very young, and a virgin, a teenager having to contemplate being with this man Joseph. Just think of your teenage daughter, having to be with another – these are challenging circumstances. In many ways, Mary was a person who was captive to others – she was told how to live – and, given her circumstances, she probably had no great lofty ambitions such as teenage girls today might have.

To make matters even more challenging, she lived in a land occupied by a foreign nation. She would have walked the streets with soldiers always around her. And, then, let's not forget (in Luke 2:1-5) we see that this young couple have to travel to Bethlehem (probably by foot) to pay taxes. How many of our teenagers have to pay taxes? How many have to walk miles by foot to do so? Mary grew up in difficult circumstances. The ceiling of her dreams was probably low. Happiness was often brushed aside.

Scripture

*⁴⁶ My soul magnifies the Lord,
⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
⁴⁸ for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant."*

Luke 1:46-48

Thought provokers

- Given all the circumstances that have been described (and there are likely more), consider how it is possible that this young woman rejoices?
 - How would you react in such circumstances? How would your own children react?

Reflections

Today we've described many of Mary's circumstances, and maybe you can add some (please send those ideas on to us!) Her circumstances were poor, even abysmal; her opportunities miniscule. Yet, somehow, she rejoiced. In her heart of hearts, she knew that God had regarded her humble estate.

For many of us, we've lost our sense of joy – or you might know someone who is in a joyless place. There might be many reasons for that, but today, it's worth reflecting and considering this notion: maybe you believe that God has lost sight of you or your loved one. There's that feeling of being disconnected, of thinking you're just a nameless face. It feels like you are barely making it through to the next week, or even less. But there is hope, right?

Can we turn our face, our precious face, in a new direction? Instead of seeing our circumstances, can we, perhaps, learn a lesson from Mary, here? The lesson is this: that God knows your humble estate, too. He knows you by name. He knows what you are working with. He knows the challenges that you are facing. He knows your circumstances.

Our God wants to walk with you, with whatever you are going through. He has not forgotten you. He sees your humble estate. God sees! You see that, right?

What is the pathway to joy? Very simply put – to reconnect with God. Even in our circumstances, God is with us, He is walking with us, and He wants to free us.

Instead of magnifying our circumstances, instead of putting our gaze only on our troubles, maybe we can sing the same verse as Mary... *"My soul magnifies the Lord!"*

Prayer and Song

Take time to pray and sing praises to Him. Today's song is a beautiful song by Lara Martin.

God sees you

*God sees you
He knows where you are
You are not forgotten
God knows you
He chose you
You're spoken of in heaven
Only God, Only God can see inside every human
heart
Only God really knows you*

*God made you
He loves you as you are
You are not just a face in a crowd
God hears you
He's near you
And He's closer than you think*

*Only God, Only
God can see inside every human heart
Only God really knows you
Only God truly understands the issues of the
heart
Only God, Only God
You are God's masterpiece
When will you realize that it's true*

*There is a God who cares
A God who loves
A God who sees
God hears you
He's near you
And He's closer than you think*