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Beverly E.C.C., Chicago, IL

“THE KING OF HOPE”
Luke 1:39-56; Luke 4:1-12

What do we really want for Christmas? What are we hoping for, in our heart of hearts?

☐ Mary, the mother of Jesus, had a wish list. She spells it out in Luke 1:46-55.

There is a strong element of *now* and *not yet* here. What she describes is in its infancy yet its victory is assured, so she expresses praise for what God has done and hope in what God will do.

① Mary yearns for spiritual revolution.

• In verse 51 Mary declares, **“He has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.”**

⊖ The kingdom of the world lures us into self-absorption. It tempts us to put our interests first. It entices us to strive for independence from God in a spirit of self-sufficiency.

⊖ This is especially dangerous in the Church. God might count us among the proud if we: assume we are in good with God because we profess traditional faith and avoid the big sins; take it for granted that God is on our side because we are the *right* people in the *right* church, living the *right* lifestyle; or are unconcerned that our neighbors might be going to Hell, even as we seek God’s blessing for ourselves and our dear ones.

Inspired by God’s Holy Spirit, Mary says “Enough!”

■¹ Her son will cast aside all who exalt themselves **“in their inmost thoughts,”** yet He will save those who cry, {Lk 18:13} **“God, have mercy on me, a sinner.”**

② Mary longs for social and political revolution.

• In verse 52 she proclaims, **“He has brought down rulers... but has lifted up the humble.”**

⊖ The kingdom of the world is concerned with acquiring, keeping and utilizing power. In the world, power is both a means and an end, a tool to achieve one’s goals and a goal in-and-of-itself.

⊖ Most of us recoil from the idolatry of power revealed in physical abuse, assault, violence, warfare and torture. Yet it is also sinful in its subtle manifestations: verbal abuse; the exploitation of people’s fear or anger; the use of exaggeration, half-truths, and lies to control others; manipulating the law to keep others in their place; and so on.

Inspired by God’s Holy Spirit, Mary says, “Enough!”

■^{2,3} Her son will bring down all who wield power to the detriment of others. Upon them {Mt 23:35} **“will come... the righteous blood that has been shed on earth”**; yet He will choose {1 Co 1:27} **“the weak... of the world to shame the strong.”**

③ Mary aches for economic revolution.

• In verse 53 she testifies, **“He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty.”**

⊖ The kingdom of the world worships wealth as the source of security, power, pleasure, status and

importance. Many sacrifice marriage, family life, friendships, health, and integrity in service to it. They see it as a measure of divine approval or intelligence and hard work.

⊖ Most of us disapprove of extreme economic injustice. Yet we are tempted to: envy and idolize the wealthy; resent nations that threaten our economic dominance; cross ethical lines to make or keep a dollar; protect ourselves at the expense of the poor.

Inspired by God's Holy Spirit, Mary says, "Enough!"

■^{4,5} Her son will send the rich away empty. Their {Hab 2:7, NLT} "**debtors will rise up in anger... turn on [them] and take all they**" have; yet He will choose {Jas 2:5} "**those who are poor in the eyes of the world to... inherit the kingdom.**"

Mary's deepest hope is for God to work a spiritual, social, political and economic revolution on the earth. Her most profound longing is for the Lord to usher in his kingdom. Confident He will accomplish it through Jesus, she lifts her voice in praise.

Still, she does not grasp *how* He will do it. Mary's Messianic expectations probably resemble those of her neighbors, who assume the Messiah will destroy Rome with violence *and* compel spiritual revival among the Jews *and* restore Israel's military, political, and economic dominance.

□ Please turn to Luke 4. I have never seen this text paired with Mary's song, yet it speaks directly to Mary's hopes and Israel's Messianic expectations.

●^{A1} Would someone read verses 1-3?

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.

The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread."

●^{A2} Why shouldn't He? Jesus is {Jn 6:35} "**the bread of life. Whoever comes to [him] will never go hungry.**" Why not satisfy his own hunger?

Jesus is here to break our love of wealth so we can love God (who will satisfy our soul hunger) and others (which inspires us to help satisfy their physical hunger). For this to succeed, He must empty himself.

■^{A3} God's Word in Philippians 2:5-7 challenges us to, "**Have the same attitude of mind Christ Jesus had: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing.**" The original Greek literally says, "**he emptied himself.**"

Using supernatural power to benefit himself will short-circuit his mission. It is precisely because God is bringing economic revolution that Christ's own belly must remain empty for now. So the devil hisses, "**Tell this stone to become bread.**"

●^{A3} In verse 4 Jesus answers, "**It is written: 'People do not live on bread alone.'**"

●^{B1} Would someone read verses 5-7?

The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And he said to him, “I will give you all their authority and splendor; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. If you worship me, it will all be yours.”

•^{B2} Jesus cannot really worship Satan; but why not go through the motions and do a little bow in return for all the military and political power in the world? He could install righteous leaders, establish good laws, and enforce justice. He is {Rev 19:16} **“KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS”** – why not bring **“down rulers”** now?

Jesus is here to break our love of power so we can love God (who acts powerfully in us when we realize our weakness) and others (which equips us to serve them). For this to work, He must himself forego the coercive use of power.

•^{B3} What does the Lord Jesus say in Mt 20:25-28?

“The rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave – just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

•^{B4} Seizing kingdom of the world power will kill the kingdom of God before it is born. It is precisely because God is bringing social and political revolution that Christ

must take {Php 2⁷} **“the very nature of a servant.”** So the devil hisses, **“I will give you all their authority and splendor.”**

•^{B5} In verse 8 Jesus answers, **“It is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.’”**

•^{C1} Would someone read verses 9-11?

The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. “If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down from here. For it is written: ‘He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’”

•^{C2} Why shouldn't He? It would absolutely prove that Jesus is the {Jn 1:14} **“Word [made] flesh.”** He would be perfectly positioned to transform Israel's spiritual life overnight, then the world's. He has come to **“scatter the proud”** – why not do it by showing them his greatness?

Jesus is here to break our love of self so we can love God (who loves us perfectly) and others (which enables us to be humble with them). For this to succeed, He must humble himself.

•^{C3} Philippians 4:8 puts it like this: **“he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death – even death on a cross.”**

Performing miracles to show-off will disqualify Jesus from his purpose. It is precisely because God is bringing spiritual revolution that He must act in meekness

and not pride. So the devil hisses, **“Throw yourself down.”**

- ^{C4} In **verse 12** Jesus answers, **“It is said: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”**

☐ Back to Luke 1. Mary is right on target: her son will bring {Wright} **“mercy, hope, fulfillment, reversal,”** by winning a decisive **“victory over the bullies, the power-brokers, the forces of evil.”** He *will* initiate spiritual, social, political and economic revolution.

Only, she has no inkling that Jesus will scatter the proud by humbling himself, bring down the rulers by refusing worldly power, and feed the hungry by emptying himself.

You and I do. We have the benefit of the written Gospels and New Testament.

God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is inviting us not only to hope for these things, but to participate in them.

We cannot do so by trusting wealth, seizing power over others, or exalting ourselves. We can do it by trusting, loving, and following Jesus, the King of Hope.