

Despair Not

Luke 1:46-55 ⁴⁶ And Mary said: "My soul magnifies the Lord, ⁴⁷ And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. ⁴⁸ For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed. ⁴⁹ For He who is mighty has done great things for me, And holy *is* His name. ⁵⁰ And His mercy *is* on those who fear Him From generation to generation. ⁵¹ He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered *the* proud in the imagination of their hearts. ⁵² He has put down the mighty from *their* thrones, And exalted *the* lowly. ⁵³ He has filled *the* hungry with good things, And *the* rich He has sent away empty. ⁵⁴ He has helped His servant Israel, In remembrance of *His* mercy, ⁵⁵ As He spoke to our fathers, To Abraham and to his seed forever."

Mary is in a bit of a pickle. She is not married but is pregnant, of course no one is going to believe her about what is really happening. If she tries to tell anyone (except Elizabeth) she will be in a worst condition. We know from the gospel of Matthew that Joseph is going to plan to "put her away." She is going to lose her fiancée and possibly have to raise the child on her own. You think that it is difficult to be a single mom in modern American think about what it would have meant in ancient Galilee. There is quite a bit of reason to despair, but instead of despair Mary glorifies God. Despite all the reasons for despair her Christmas is filled with joy, because what really matters is that Jesus is to be born.

The central theme of Mary's Magnificat is that with the fulfillment of the promise of the Messiah the lowly are lifted and the high are brought low. This means that those who like Mary might normally despair now have every reason to rejoice instead.

Despair Not, Jesus is Born

Despair not because His name is Holy

51 He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. 52 He has put down the mighty from their thrones, And exalted the lowly.

His name is holy and because His name is holy He will set things right. This is the 2nd commandment and the first petition. We pray that His name may be holy not because God needs our help in keeping His name holy but that we might remember it and keep it holy as well. This truth is commanded, prayed for, and confessed by all the saints

Psalm 111:9 He provided redemption for his people; he ordained his covenant forever— holy and awesome is his name.

The holiness of His name gives us assurance that we do not need to despair because He will set all things right. As Mary sings in the Magnificat those who have set themselves too high and taken advantage of others will be brought down. Those who are mistreated and stamped upon will be delivered. This will not happen because the lowly are good and the high are evil, all are likewise sinners. It will happen because Jesus is holy.

All too often we find ourselves in situations where we think we have to make sure that we set things right, and when we fail we despair. We might even think to ourselves we might as well join them, since the evil always win. But the problem is we are not holy and therefore we cannot make things right. As hard as we try we often just make things worse.

Rather we can trust Him that in His time He will make all things right. His name is holy therefore we do not need to despair, but instead rejoice.

We do not need to despair because His name is to be feared

50 And His mercy is on those who fear Him From generation to generation.

The fear of the Lord is also commanded and is the beginning of wisdom but more important it is seen.

To fear God means to stand in awe of his power and who he is.

The disciples of course were astonished when they saw the power of Jesus who calmed the wind and the wave, healed the sick and even raised the dead.

Mark 4:41 They were terrified and asked each other, “Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!”

This power of Jesus is something we would have to be afraid of, except that Mary says His mercy is on those who fear Him. If we set ourselves against Jesus then we have reason to despair, because we will never win against that power. But if we repent and trust in Him, then we are lifted up and carried by His power. No longer do we need to be afraid but instead we are in awe of the power that sustains us. Those who wait on the Lord will renew their strength.

Kaylee’s speech therapist was telling us how her new puppy was terrified of the Christmas tree at first. Until the puppy learned that it was not going to hurt him. We would be terrified of his power except we know that he is not going to hurt us.

Mary reminds us that when we fear His name we receive his mercy, instead of despair we rejoice.

Despair Not, Jesus is Born.

Despair Not He humbles the mighty.

53 He has filled the hungry with good things, And the rich He has sent away empty. 54 He has helped His servant Israel, In remembrance of His mercy,

Those who are against us in this life are strong and powerful and we might easily despair. Imagine how helpless you would feel if King Herod was searching to kill your child. Yet Mary understands as did Elisha that “those who are for us are greater than those who are against us”

We might despair for example of ever overturning laws in our land that allow the killing of unborn babies. We might think they are too powerful who oppose us. Yet the Lord will in His time take down those who oppose Him. He will humble the mighty.

This includes humbling us when we become “too mighty.” One of the recurring themes of the Marvel movies is the worry that the “hero” will become so powerful and so sure of himself that he will become the villain. There are many stories along this line, some fictional but others all too true.

We may not like it when Jesus “pricks our bubble” so to speak, but what a comfort it is to know that he will. He sent the “thorn in the flesh” to trouble Paul. Maybe none of us have to worry about abusing our superpowers but we do sometimes get above ourselves. When Jesus humbles us we don’t have to despair, we remember His love

There is no more reason to despair, the Lord is Holy and His power to be feared. He will take down the mighty and establish justice. It might be long years of suffering before the Lord delivers us but while we wait (and twiddle our thumbs) we don’t ever have to despair.

Despair Not, Jesus is Born. Amen