

My Christmas Song

Luke 1:39-56

Introduction

Christmas is one of the most recognizable holidays of the year.

- There are Christmas lights everywhere.
- IF you don't have your airline ticket yet, you are probably out of luck.
- The stores are crowded with shoppers. Don't even try to make a left hand turn along Bechtle Avenue unless you work your way to a traffic light.
- It is the one time of the year we unapologetically fill our house with fudge, and cookies, and candy.

But maybe more than anything else, Christmas is recognizable for the songs that fill the airways. The day after Thanksgiving, I turned my car radio to FM1650 – known as “Dayton's Christmas Station” – and there it will stay until New Year's Day.

- Some of the songs of the season are purely secular in nature (Jingle Bells, Frosty). They reflect the sentiments of season. This year we learned that it was now considered sexist to sing an old Dean Martin and Martina McBride song.
- Some emphasize holiday traditions (Sleigh Bells, Santa is Coming to Town)
- And of course, there are many that tell the Christmas story. (Silent Night, Joy to the World.) (COMMERCIAL FOR NEXT SUNDAY!)

And while they are not likely to be played on FM1650, the Scriptures have a number of Christmas songs too.

- When John the Baptist was born, and his father Zechariah regained his ability to speak, and then broke out into song (Luke 1:67-79). It begins with these words:

Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come to his people and redeemed them.

- The aged Simeon, who had been promised by God that he would not die until he had seen the Messiah, began to sing with he held the baby Jesus (Luke 2:29-32). It begins:

Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace.

In today's text there are two more: one by Elizabeth (mother of John the Baptist) and one by Mary (mother of Jesus).

1: ELIZABETH: A SONG OF ADORATION

Elizabeth:

- Was the aunt of the Virgin Mary.

- She lived some distance away – far enough that the two did not have regular contact with each other.
- She and her husband Zechariah were godly people with a genuine faith

Both of them were righteous in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commands and decrees blamelessly. (Luke 1:6)

- They had no children due to Elizabeth's infertility.

But they were childless because Elizabeth was not able to conceive. (Luke 1:7)

- And as a result they were now too old to have children.

Zechariah asked the angel, "How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years." (Luke 1:18)

Elizabeth did become pregnant and because of what the angel had said to her husband Zechariah, Elizabeth knew that the child she was carrying was to become the one who would prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah.

When she was at the end of her second trimester, her niece Mary came for a visit. Unbeknownst to Elizabeth, Mary was also pregnant. What an amazing meeting this must have been. Could there have been two more unlikely pregnancies? Both of them – biological impossibilities! One a virgin; the other post-menopausal! Isn't God amazing?

When they met the baby in Elizabeth leaped for joy to meet the baby in the womb of Mary. Elizabeth immediately knew she was in the presence of the Messiah and she began to sing words of adoration:

Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! ... Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!" (Luke 1:42, 45)

We used the word "blessed" very casually these days, but there is nothing casual it. To be blessed is ...

To be in the enviable position of having all of God's favor, mercy and grace concentrated in you.

If you are truly blessed, it means that I can see God and all of His glory when I see you.

So when Elizabeth says these "blessed," she is proclaiming that she can see God at work in Mary's life, in the life of the baby she is carrying and in the faith that Mary is expressing. Glory to God! O God, You are awesome! God is at work and I see it!

2: MARY: A SONG OF AVAILABILITY

All of that prompts Mary to sing her song, a song of availability. It is far better known than Elizabeth's song. We call it "The Magnificat" because it begins with the line about magnifying the Lord. Her song echoes her statement when the angel was with her:

I am the Lord's servant. May your word to me be fulfilled. (Luke 1:38)

Yes, I see it all now: I'm the Lord's maid, ready to serve. Let it be with me just as you say. (Luke 1:38, The Message)

I'm ready to serve. And as Mary heard and saw Elizabeth's response, that readiness was reaffirmed.

For Mary, being ready might well have meant far more than she understood at this moment in time. Thirty six years I could have easily said, "I'm ready to be a dad." I now know I had no idea what that meant.

Some of you are familiar with a more contemporary Christmas song titled "Mary Did You Know?" It's an interesting question. How much did Mary know at this particular moment?

- Did she know her baby would be a great teacher?
- Did she know her baby would be a miracle worker and that because of him the blind would see, the deaf would hear, the lame would walk?
- Did she know that at one point she would be so concerned about his sanity that she and her other children would need to come and try to take him home?
- She knew that he would be God's Son – the angel told her that. But did she understand that this meant he would be beaten and crucified?
- Did she know that one of his closest associates would betray him and another would deny him?

I personally think that Mary had a clear grasp of the big picture. She was a righteous woman, so she knew what the teachings of her faith said about the coming Messiah. But I don't think she could have known the details – the highs and lows of being the mother of Jesus.

And that is true for us, too. When we sing a song of availability we don't always get to know the details... at least not fully.

What Mary knew was that God had chosen her, and that God is always faithful. "Don't be afraid" – those were the first words the angel spoke to her. And she wasn't. She was simply ready to serve. She was available.

APPLICATION

What would your Christmas song be? If we gave you the next several minutes to put pen to paper, what would you write? Would you write ...

- Words of praise?
- Words of availability?
- Words of comfort and joy?
- Words of despair and hopelessness?

Amen.