

*And Mary said: "My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me— holy is his name. His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, just as he promised our ancestors." – Luke 1:46-55*

Mother's Day is approaching quickly, so as I said yesterday in the video blog, we're going to take a look at mothers in the bible. While our modern lore, from Disney to Star Wars to Marvel, doesn't have many (any?) strong mother figures, the bible is full of them. And you can't talk about biblical mothers without starting with Mary.

A parent's primary job is to help a child grow up in God. This is difficult for myriad reasons, including our own upbringing and past. Mary was raised a young woman in an occupied territory. She was Jewish, living in Israel under Roman occupation. Life was not easy under the best of circumstances, but in an occupied land, where a soldier at any moment could make you do anything he wanted, from slapping your face to taking your clothes to making you carry his load for miles to... well, anything he wanted, you learned to keep your head down, your mouth shut, and your eyes and mind sharp. "Say little, but ponder everything you see in your heart so you're ready for any surprises." No wonder so many mothers named their female children "Mary", which means "bitter".

But Mary was also a member of the *Anawim*, the Pious Poor. Living in poverty, Mary was raised in a family utterly devoted to God. They spent an unusual amount of time in the temple in prayer and worship, longing for the Messiah to come and free them.

All of this went into Mary's mothering of Jesus. In Mary's song she sang, traditionally called "The Magnificat", we can see so many of these themes of Mary's upbringing. Hope for the poor and defeat for the powerful. God's power and faithfulness. Honor for the humble and humiliation for the proud. And as much as this was part of Mary's upbringing, it had to have become part of Jesus' upbringing as well. As Mary raised Jesus with Joseph, these themes became part of Jesus' life and ethic as well.

How many times can you think of where Jesus upheld the poor, the outcast, the powerless and stood against the powerful and the rich? Jesus was in fact known for His association with prostitutes, traitors ("tax collectors"), and sinners. He touched the untouchable lepers, He spoke with the thrice-cursed Promiscuous Samaritan Woman, and He lauded the offering of the poor widow over that of the wealthy. Every theme that Mary was raised in, that Mary brought to this Song of hers, becomes a part of Jesus' teaching.

A parent's primary job is to help a child grow up in God. Keeping them safe and happy is secondary to keeping them holy. Mary knew this in her bones. May the parents in our lives, and we ourselves, know it as well.

Questions to Ponder:

1. What were the parts of your childhood that have been or will be passed on to your children?
2. How can parents best help their children grow up in God? (Parents, maybe you should just take notes as the kids share this one!)