



**Joy to the World (Luke 1:26-46)**  
**Practicing Christmas pt. 3**  
Pastor Tim Peck

**THE BIG IDEA**

Mary embodies the Advent theme of joy. Her spiritual practices of surrender to God's sovereignty, sharing in the joy of others, and praise of God in song enabled her to remain joyful in troubling circumstances.

**OPENING**

- How is joy different than happiness?
- What is your favorite Christmas song? Your least favorite? Why?

**DIGGING DEEPER**

- The *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* describes biblical joy this way: “[Joy is] delight that runs deeper than pain or pleasure. Biblically it is not limited by external circumstances. Joy is God’s gift, and it can be experienced even amid extreme difficulty.”<sup>1</sup> Can you think of an experience where you experienced joy amid extreme difficulty?
- Some Christians idolize Mary, while other Christians tend to minimize her role in the Christmas story. Evangelical theologian Michael Bird describes Mary this way: “She was elected to take on one of the most important tasks in the history of the cosmos, to be the human carrier of God incarnate in her womb, to nurture him, to love him, and to raise him into manhood. She showed her worthiness for that role throughout her life, and though far from perfect (e.g., Matt 12:47–50), she remains a paragon of humility, virtue, godliness, and dedication. What is more, the Lord Jesus retained a special affection for her (John 19:26–27)”<sup>2</sup> Bird then asks the question, “Should not the followers of Jesus share his affection” for her? How would you answer this question?

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<sup>1</sup>Daniel J. Treier and Walter A. Elwell, eds, “Joy” *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017), p. 451.

<sup>2</sup>Michael F. Bird, *Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), p. 365.

- Read Luke 1:31-33. What important truths does the angel reveal about Jesus' identity?
- How does 2 Samuel 7:12-13 inform what the angel says about Jesus?
- Read 1 Samuel 10:1-10 and then Luke 1:46-55. How are these two songs of praise similar? How are they different? What themes do you notice?

## **PUTTING IT TO WORK**

- Each day this week, start your day with the words of Mary: "I am the Lord's servant" (Luke 1:38).
- Call someone you know this week who is going through something good in their lives just to encourage them and share in their joy.

## **PRAYER REQUESTS**