

## **Crushing Fulfillment**

by Pastor Kurt Hoover

### **Litany adapted from Mary's Song (Luke 1)**

**Pastor:** "My soul magnifies the Lord,

**All: and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,**

**Pastor:** for he who is mighty has done great things for me

**All: and holy is his name.**

**Pastor:** And his mercy is for those who fear him

**All: from generation to generation.**

**Pastor:** He has shown strength with his arm;

**All: he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts;**

**Pastor:** We worship You Lord in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**All: Amen**

**Psalm 119:123-125** My eyes long for your salvation

and for the **fulfillment** of your righteous promise.

<sup>124</sup> Deal with your servant according to your steadfast love,  
and teach me your statutes.

<sup>125</sup> I am your servant; give me understanding,  
that I may know your testimonies!

**Luke 1:39-45** <sup>39</sup> In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, <sup>40</sup> and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. <sup>41</sup> And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, <sup>42</sup> and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! <sup>43</sup> And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? <sup>44</sup> For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. <sup>45</sup> And blessed is she who believed that there would be a **fulfillment** of what was spoken to her from the Lord."

**Luke 23:44-49** <sup>44</sup> It was now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour, <sup>45</sup> while the sun's light failed. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. <sup>46</sup> Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" And having said this he breathed his last. <sup>47</sup> Now when the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God, saying, "Certainly this man was innocent!" <sup>48</sup> And all the crowds that had assembled for this spectacle, when they saw what had taken place, returned home beating their breasts. <sup>49</sup> And all his acquaintances and the women who had followed him from Galilee stood at a distance watching these things.

*...blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord. – Luke 1:45*

How is it that we become who we are? Our jobs, our families, where we live, who our friends are... how we spend our time.

You might have some goals in life, a 10 year plan... but in the long run we have no idea how God is going to fulfill his promise that we will have life with Him and live it abundantly (John 10:10).

I remember walking on the Rockrun trail in 2020 between Essington and Black Road Library. I was walking slower than the rest because I had just recovered from my first bout of COVID. It was Spring but still cold enough for a hat and a puffy vest. I hadn't shaven in 4-5 days. I wasn't going to run into anyone.

I remember for the first time in a long time I felt like I had finally made it. This is what life was all about. Relief from recovery. My

wife and kids were healthy and gotten by with much less severe symptoms than I had. We had made it past a scary obstacle.

I had gotten some unplanned rest and reflection. Always a plus. I had been a Senior Pastor for almost a year. That is about as high as you can go and all the higher I would like to go in my career.

It was beautiful Spring day. They had recently done a control burn on the prairie and there was new life coming out of the ashes. Plants of all types and sizes sprouting everywhere around me.

I felt like I had made it. I was at the top of the hill. There was nowhere else I needed nor wanted to climb. I had all that I had ever wanted in life. This is it. The life I had hoped and prayed for had been fulfilled. What else could there be but to live life to the fullest.

As you and I both know there have been a couple of ups and downs since then in the life of the church, my own health.

But that sense of fulfillment was still clear. I had been faithful to what God had asked of me as a pastor, and I had all that I needed and more. Family, friends, calling and health.

Have there been similar moments in your life where you have made it to the top of a hill you had been climbing for some time, and you realize this might just be the moment that God has fulfilled what he asked me to do. What I have been created for has happened. I have made it. No more climbing. Just enjoy the view and privilege of what has been accomplished. Have you had a similar sense of accomplishment as a parent, in a job, different seasons of friendship and community.

*...blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord. – Luke 1:45*

God spoke and Mary believed that what he said would happen ... was going to happen. She had some questions to be sure, but as Elizabeth said the blessing comes in trusting that what God promises will be fulfilled.

It is not different for us. We hear God's voice in different ways than Mary's privilege, but there is still blessing when we believe that God fulfills His promises. That is the Kingdom we live in. This trust is the tool God uses to achieve His will in our lives.

God speaks and we act. (Luke 8:21 – My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it.) And why do we act, we obey? ...because trust is built. We act - not because we debated in our head if we are capable, or if we are the right person, or many and other various reasons we are slow to respond... When we trust someone. They speak and we act.

When you hear a promise spoken by God in the Bible, in worship, often even in a devotion or a conversation with a trusted friend... there is a blessing, an outcome ... your day will go differently because you trust God to fulfill what he has promised.

For example when Jesus says in Matthew 22:9 - Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find.' – Blessed are you when you believe that God is speaking to you and going to make it happen.

Research tells us that people are more open to a church invitation during the Christmas season than any other time of year. That neighbor who's been on your heart. That coworker who mentioned they've been searching for something more. That family member who hasn't been to church in years. Christmas Eve is a beautiful, low-pressure way to say, "Come and see." You might be surprised who says yes.

## God fulfills His Promises!

When is it, do you suppose, that Mary had that sense that this is it. This is what God meant when he said I would bare a child and he would be the savior of the world.

I am sure the birth brought with it a sense of accomplishment as more and more shepherds and wise men made it obvious this wasn't just an idea she had made up in her head.

Maybe when he entered Jerusalem riding on a donkey and the whole city skipped the High Priests festival to shout Hosanna to the King.

However the reality is Mary probably didn't get that sense of fulfillment. Because how could she have imagined that the fulfillment would come in her son's last breath. *Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" And having said this he breathed his last. (Luke 23:46)*

This we know Mary saw because Luke tells us 3 verses later that *the women* were there watching the shock and awe of the bystanders who went home beating their breasts.

What a crushing fulfillment.

How could she have known that this is the promise that would be fulfilled. Her child making a sacrifice for all of humanity that we could not make for ourselves. And that is the point. That is why our trust in God is called faith. We don't know how He will fulfill the many and varied promises of the Bible. The promise of abundant life, the promise of repentance and Baptism, the promise of our personal forgiveness and sanctification again and again with His people in this place.

And yet God still gives us the ability to hear a promise and take it to heart, trust God knows best, and the future is in His hands. And in that moment... Not later when we get some proof that God is going to come through for us. But in that moment that we trust in His fulfillment we are blessed. Because for God it has been about the relationship the whole time. He has wanted nothing more than you would turn to him with the trust of a child. Clinging to the power and righteousness only a heavenly Father can bring. This trust is the tool God uses to achieve His will in our lives.

The Kingdom, this relationship, has been there the whole time. It began with the birth of a child. It began with the Baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist. It began when Christ promised to take the sin of the world upon His shoulders in that Baptism. And it was fulfilled, it was finished when Christ took the sin of the world with Him into his death. When Christ breathed his last so also did any claim your sin has over you. You were set free from what you deserve by one who took your place. You were given a righteousness you could not earn and do not deserve. The hope of your salvation became very, very real. Not only will you be with him in Paradise ... but He will fulfill all the promises of the Bible in astonishing ways.

*...blessed [are you] who believe that there [is] a fulfillment of what was spoken to [you, here and now] from the Lord. – Luke 1:45*



James Tissot (Nantes, France, 1836–1902, Chenecey–Buillon, France). *The Magnificat* (*Le magnificat*), 1886–1894. Opaque watercolor over graphite on gray wove paper, Brooklyn Museum.