

## **LUKE 1.46-48: MARY'S SONG**

*Chelmsford Carols by Candlelight 21/12/08*

Some years ago I preached at a small, struggling, London church. There were perhaps just a dozen of us at that Sunday morning service. Although located in one of the wealthiest and trendiest areas of London, the congregation was made up of a bunch of nobodies. Indeed, if the truth be told, they were a bunch of inadequates - each one of them represented a problem. One was a medium, one was a prostitute who had got herself pregnant, and another was in trouble with the police. Without exception all were on benefits - not one of them had anything going for them. They were a bunch of losers, a bunch of nobodies.

As I worshipped that Sunday morning with them, my mind went to Paul's description of the church at Corinth: "**Take a good look, friends, at who you were when you got called into this [Christian] life. I don't see many of 'the brightest and the best' among you, not many influential, not many from high-society-families. Isn't it obvious that God deliberately chose men and women that the culture overlooks and exploits and abuses, chose these 'nobodies' to expose the hollow pretensions of the 'somebodies'. That makes it quite clear that none of you can get by with blowing your own horn before God**" (1 Cor 1:26-29 The Message).

The fact is that God has always been in the business of choosing the nobodies of this world. We see that in his choice of Mary to be the mother of his Son.

We know very little about Mary - but certainly there would appear to have been nothing special about her - just an ordinary village girl. And yet God chose her. How amazing!

- From a Jewish point of view, if God were to enter the world in the way he did, he might at least have chosen a slightly more upmarket home - e.g. God could have chosen the wife of one of the Sadducean priestly elite, somebody perhaps well connected with Caiaphas, the high priest, and his cronies. But God chose Mary.
- From a Roman point of view, if God were to enter the world in the way he did, he could at least have caused his Son to be born in Rome, the imperial city, rather than in some provincial backwater. It would have made much more sense for God's Son to have been born into some distinguished Roman senatorial family rather than into some obscure peasant family who were part of an odd & obstinate nation. But as it was, he chose Mary.

Why did God choose Mary? Was there something special about her?

Yes, said Pope Pius IX, when in 1854 he promulgated the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of Mary. Mary was special – she knew no original sin - in every respect she was free from sin. But there is no support for Scripture for such a dogma.

Mary in her song of praise speaks of God as “**my Saviour**”.

She recognized that she was in as much need of saving as you and me.

Mary was a nobody. There was nothing outstanding about Mary.

Mary knew she was at the bottom of the pecking order.

In her song of praise she described herself as but a “**lowly servant**” (Lk 1:48).

God's choice of her to be the mother of his Son was amazing.

No wonder Mary sang: **"My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour"**

Or as Eugene Peterson puts it in his paraphrase:

**"I'm bursting with God-news;  
I'm dancing the song of my Saviour God.  
God took one good look at me, and look what happened –  
I'm the most fortunate woman on earth"!**

God chooses the nobodies of this world - we see that in his choice of Mary.

We see that in the church at Corinth - as also in that London church I described at the beginning of my sermon.

I would suggest that we see that also here tonight.

For, if we are honest, we too are a bunch of nobodies.

True, I can't see any mediums here tonight - nor any prostitutes for that matter.

In some respects we are much more respectable than either the church at Corinth or that church in London.

But we are in essence a bunch of nobodies, and would still be:

- even if our church were primarily made up of the county set, with the Lord Lieutenant of Essex among our number.
- even if all the high-flying Essex city dealers were members
- even if Anglia's vice-chancellor and his academic cohorts were part of our church,

For in the light of history - let alone in the light of eternity - who are such people?

Why, even within 50 years' time today's entries in *Who's Who* will look singularly unimpressive.

But to come back to things as they are, God's love for you and me is amazing.

Just think about it for a moment:

- we, very ordinary creatures bound within time and space, are the objects of the love of God who is beyond time and space
- Jesus, God's Son, came into the world for people like us.

True, normally most of us think that we are very loveable people, eminently worth loving - but if the brutal truth be told, there is no earthly reason why God should love us so - there is nothing that special about any of us.

Forgive me, I don't want to undermine anybody's sense of worth - in fact God's very love for you and me does give us all a sense of worth.

But from a rational point of view it has to be said that in God's sight we must be mere nobodies.

And yet God loves us - he sent his Son for us.

For in the words of the angel to the shepherds Jesus is **"good news of great joy for all (the) people"** (Lk 1.10).

Hence we too can say with Mary that God, **"the Mighty God has done great things for me"** (Lk 1.49).

So let's praise him - let's sing our own 'Magnificats'.

With Mary, let's magnify the Lord - let's rejoice in God our Saviour.