

Weekly Encouragement

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God is Mindful of Your Situation

By Rev. Peter Eng

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"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" (Luke 1:46-48). NIV.

Those of you who are successful can easily see God's goodness to you – at least you ought to. But there are many who struggle. Many live pay-check to pay-check. Many live on overdraft accounts. Many are still looking for jobs. Many lost their homes in the current crisis. It is therefore natural for many of us to identify with Mary. Her life-situation is humble.

The nuances of both the Greek and English for the word "humble" are pleasantly similar. "Humble" is often a euphemism for "poor." But a humble state is more than the scarcity of money.

Many poor people are also humiliated on account of their poverty. They are beaten down so often they know their place in society. They live carefully, never to be presumptuous so they will not be humiliated. Never to be assertive so they will not be disappointed or bitter when the rich and powerful deny their rights. They cannot get away with anything, but always pay for everything. If you have been there, you know. Mary tells us she is in a humble state.

Mary magnified God and rejoiced in him because he was mindful of Mary's humble situation. We must draw comfort from the unshakable truth that God is mindful of us as humans. But Mary's assertion went beyond that. God was mindful of her humble life-situation. She did not say, "God is mindful of me," of which we may be assured. Mary magnified God because God was mindful of her "humble state" (NIV, ESV, NASB, etc).

God is mindful when we are in a humble state!

"Would it spoil some vast eternal plan if I were a wealthy man?" asked, Tevye in "Fiddler on the Roof. Like him, we focus on the wealth aspect of being lifted out of our humble state, and ask if God would not do something about our poverty. We imagine we will be contented if we have a little more wealth. But let's turn to Mary and gain perspective.

Mary never became rich. Mary never enjoyed political power. In fact, it is likely she endured the scourge of wagging tongues because of her pregnancy.

She was lifted from her humble state by only one fact. Mary was the bearer of the Christ-child. With that surpassing promotion, she knew she would see the Mighty One do great things for her! For Mary, her greatest work was done when she was a young virgin. Nothing in her later life could rival that.

For some of us, our greatest work is behind us. Jonathan Edwards was God's agent for the Great Awakening. But he was dismissed by his church and spent the next six years in the boondocks serving a small congregation of Native Americans. After six years, his time finally came. He was appointed President of the College of New Jersey, later renamed Princeton University. But within a year, he died from a small pox vaccination. Why did his life end in such a whimper and not a bang?

It is ridiculous to think we will do greater and greater work till we go out in a huge display of fireworks. Even Mary, the bearer of the Christ-child did not live that way. There is as much reason to magnify God for the work he will do through us as there is for the work he has already done through us. Of course, we can also be like Moses who gave up on his personal ambition to lead the Hebrews, only to be summoned by God to do the same after he had given up.

We are elevated from our humble state not when we strike the lottery. When we fulfill God's purpose for our lives, we are raised from that humble state to true wealth. If that is in the past, we look back and rejoice in it. If that is the future, we look forward and enjoy

the adventure ahead. When God lifts us out of our humble state, he replaces our humble state with honor, gratitude, peace, and, if it does not "spoil some vast eternal plan," perhaps a more comfortable life!

Take encouragement. God does not delight in the humble state of his servants. He is mindful of our humble state. He will lift us out of it as we seek first his kingdom and its righteousness.

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Rev. Peter Eng is an ordained minister from the Reformed Tradition, but he is truly global in perspective. He served the Lord in various capacities starting from his teenage years in the 70s. His undergrad studies were done in Singapore, his grad studies in the USA, and post-grad studies in the United Kingdom, with additional post-grad research in Germany.