

A Christmas Glow-Up

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Date: 21 December 2025

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[0 : 0 0] Hello everyone, it's brilliant to see you all. Boys and girls, why don't you come down to the front. Young people, young at heart. As the angel said to the shepherds, don't be afraid. Come on down. Hands up who's looking forward to Christmas. It's not long now. Who's pumped for Christmas? Rachel is. Loads of people are brilliant. It's not long now.

And I managed to go Christmas shopping with our two kids yesterday and forgot my wallet. So hopefully you're a little bit better organized than I am. Well, today we're going to be thinking about a Christmas glow up, but not the kind you see on YouTube.

Oh dear. Oh dear. Well, this is one kind of Christmas glow up, I suppose, but definitely not the kind that Mary had. This is the I want to look amazing glow up. And there are all sorts of glow ups, I suppose.

Well, Mary's glow up wasn't about looking out of this world amazing. It was about something happening inside of her. Her glow up was a joy glow up. The kind of glow up that only God can do. Thanks, Amy and Alice.

The real Christmas glow up isn't about looking shiny on the outside. It's about God giving joy on the inside. It's a joy glow. And so every time we hear a joy moment in the passage, we're all going to make a sound.

[1 : 5 3] Ah, just an exhale and an ah sound. Ah, we can all do it. Big voices, little voices, young and old. One, two, three. Ah, excellent. So listen carefully and see how the joy spreads.

So glow up number one.

Ah, well done. Well, Mary wasn't important. She wasn't powerful. She wasn't famous. She lived a very ordinary life. She was a young girl, a teenager who lived in a small place.

But God saw her. And God noticed her. And God came near to her. And when someone realizes that the living God comes near to him, to them, joy lights up their whole life.

This joy comes from God in our hearts. Not from when life is becoming easy or something like that. It's from when God is in our hearts. Did you notice that joy doesn't stay still? Mary arrives. John leaps. Elizabeth shouts. And Mary sings. When God comes near, joy spreads. It overflows. It doesn't keep quiet.

[3 : 4 5] So Mary is glowing with joy. But her song is about more than warm, fuzzy feelings. It's bold. Something big is happening. God is doing something incredible.

It's about a world that's about to be turned upside down. And we're going to think about that in just a minute. But first, let's stand. And we're going to sing our next song about that holy, joyful night when God drew near.

Jesus came into the world. But Mary's song tells us something else about that night. Because God wasn't just coming quietly. He was starting to turn the world upside down.

So let me show you what I mean. Who knows this game? Snakes and ladders. This game, ladders are good. Up we go. Snakes are bad. Down you slide.

Well, Mary says that God's kingdom is a little bit like this. But everything is the other way around. The snakes and ladders are in completely different places. See, in our world, people think they know where the ladders are.

[5 : 02] And if we, Innes is going to bring on the ladder now. At the 9.30, there's a lot of kids down here. So it's slightly more dangerous. There's less risk, except to Innes and myself, I suppose.

But in our world, people think they know where the ladders are. The world says build your life on being powerful.

Or being proud. Or being rich. Or being admired. The world says climb. Get higher. Be impressive.

Now, these things aren't necessarily wrong in and of themselves. But they do make terrible gods. So listen to what Mary says in verse 51.

God has scattered the proud. He's brought down the mighty from their thrones. Mary says the things that we thought were ladders, if that's what you're building your life on, are actually snakes.

[6 : 15] Pride slides down. Power slides down. Living like you don't need God slides down. But that's not the end of her song.

He has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things. God's ladders aren't always what we expect.

God lifts up people who know that they need help. He fills people who know that they're empty. People who say, God, I can't do this on my own.

It's not about how much you have or don't have. It's about who you trust. What does it say in verse 50? His mercy extends to those who fear him.

That is those who put their trust and hope in the Lord Jesus. Now let's pause there because Mary isn't just describing a game.

[7 : 17] She's making a huge claim. She's talking about the future. One day, everything that's wrong with this world, everything that's sad, everything that's bad, will be turned upside down.

And in that day, wealth, celebrity, or power will all count for nothing. But here's the big question. How can we be sure?

How can we be sure? Well, Mary gives us a clue. In verse 54, she says, God has helped his servant, Israel.

Israel was meant to be God's servant. The people who trusted him, who listened to God, who obeyed God, who did what he said, who showed the world what God was like.

But again and again and again, Israel failed at being God's servant. They couldn't climb the ladder. They couldn't live the life that God called them to.

[8 : 20] And so you know what? God made a promise. He promised a better servant. One who could do what Israel couldn't do.

And Mary is singing with joy because that servant is on the way. That servant is in her womb. That servant is Jesus. And this is where the biggest reversal begins.

Because this is the biggest ladder that anyone has ever stepped down from. And the longest way down that anyone has ever taken. Jesus is the king's son.

He starts high in glory. But he comes down. Born poor. Rejected. Treated like a criminal.

And at the cross, Jesus goes all the way down. Lower than the proud. Lower than the powerful. Lower than everyone. Cursed and forsaken on our behalf.

[9 : 27] But the good news is that that's not the end of the story. Three days later, God lifts him up. Raised from the dead. Honored.

Alive forever. Jesus went down further than anyone ever has. So that he could lift up his people to where we could never climb by ourselves.

And so if you're trusting in Jesus, whether you're young or old, whether you're rich or poor, his future becomes our future.

Now Mary sang of this before any of this had happened. Before the cross, she sang before the empty tomb. Before anyone had seen the ending.

She was joyful because she trusted what kind of God this is. A God who lifts up the lowly. A God who keeps his promises and turns the world upside down.

[10 : 31] And as Christians, we get to share the same joy. Not because life is easy, but because the future is sure. The joy that Mary had wasn't a pretend smile.

It was the glow of hope. She could see the light before the sunrise. And because Jesus has died and risen, we don't just hope like Mary did.

We know. We're sure. We know the proud won't win forever. We know that death doesn't get the last word. We know that God has come to bring in his kingdom.

So when life feels unfair, when life feels upside down, remember this. In God's kingdom, this world, this world is the upside down kingdom.

And Mary sang because she believed God was turning the world upside down. We sing because Jesus has already begun to do so. The king has come.

[11 : 38] The future is certain. And joy has broken into the world. So let's stand and sing our final song. Joy to the world. Joy to the world.