

USE YOUR HOLY IMAGINATION

SERMON NOTES BY PASTOR STEPHEN HERROD
LUKE 1:46-55

MESSAGE:

USE YOUR HOLY IMAGINATION

PASSAGE: LUKE 1:46-55 ESV

46 Mary responded, “Oh, how my soul praises the Lord.

47 How my spirit rejoices in God my Savior!

48 For he took notice of his lowly servant girl, and from now on all generations will call me blessed.

49 For the Mighty One is holy, and he has done great things for me.

50 He shows mercy from generation to generation to all who fear him.

51 His mighty arm has done tremendous things! He has scattered the proud and haughty ones.

52 He has brought down princes from their thrones and exalted the humble.

53 He has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away with empty hands.

54 He has helped his servant Israel and remembered to be merciful.

55 For he made this promise to our ancestors, to Abraham and his children forever.”

MESSAGE GOAL:

The goal of this message is to emphasize the significance of holy imagination, rooted in God's word, as a powerful tool for envisioning a future beyond present circumstances. It encourages believers to use

their holy imagination in alignment with God's revelation, rejecting worldly rhetoric and pessimism.

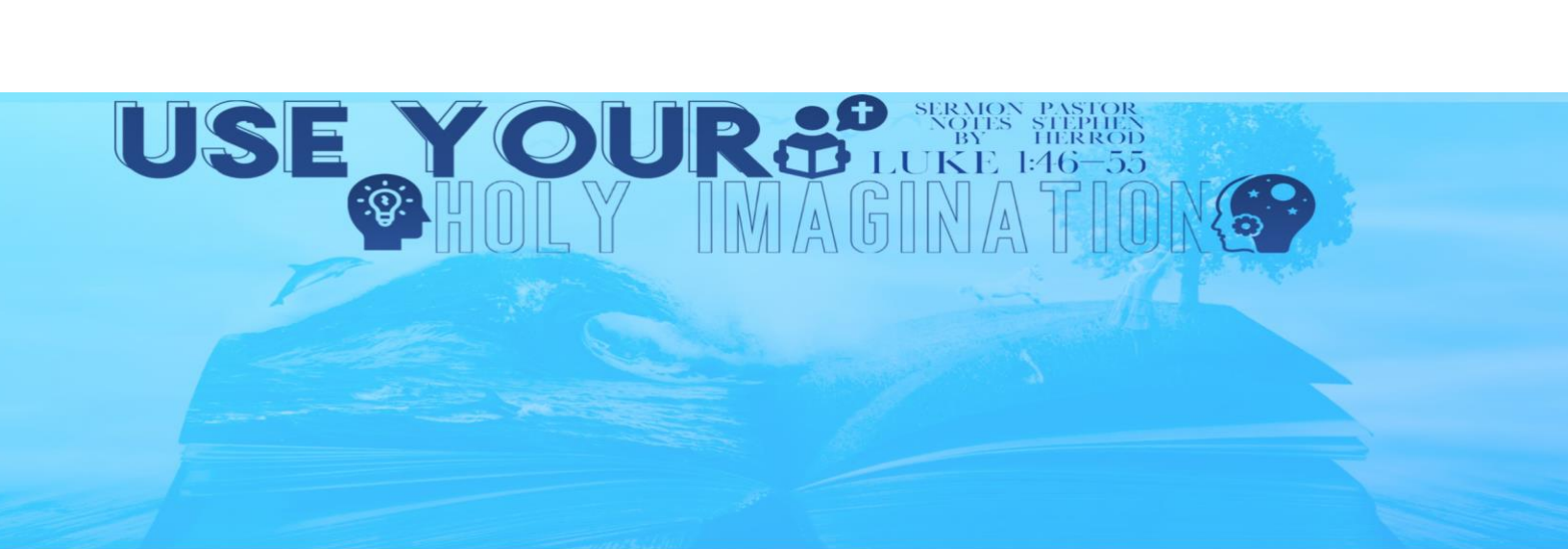
INTRODUCTION

The imagination is the mental faculty that enables us to transcend the limits of present reality. It's the cognitive space designed by God to create, simulate, and explore ideas beyond immediate sensory experience, contributing to our understanding of the world and our place in it. The imagination encompasses both cognitive and creative dimensions, involving the ability to form mental images, concepts, and ideas that go beyond immediate sensory experiences. The imagination is not confined to mere fantasy but plays a crucial role in problem-solving, innovation, and understanding concepts—a powerful aspect of human cognition influencing perception, creativity, and the exploration of possibilities.

Now, Holy imagination is distinct. While it includes all the elements and nature of imagination itself, Holy imagination refers to the intentional and sacred use of imaginative faculties in alignment with God, God's words, and all of God's creation. It involves envisioning, contemplating, and creating in ways that reflect and honor faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and one of the most

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important components of holy imagination is prophecy. The word is derived from the combination of two words, “pro” meaning before, and “phemi” meaning to tell; Prophecy literally means to foretell.

To use your holy imagination is to engage in the prophetic, but not prophetic in the sense of telling someone that a blessing is coming for them by the 31st of the month; that can be better defined as prophe-lying. It's not prophetic in the sense of telling someone that if you sow a certain amount of money aligned with some numerological component then you will be blessed; that is a scam. Nor is it prophetic in the sense of telling somebody they are about to get a car, house, boo, or bae if you give God a certain type of praise; that is not prophecy, that is heresy. I'm talking about prophetic in the sense of receiving the true revelation of God to declare the word of God to the people of God!

To use your holy imagination is not to see something that God has not said, but it is to envision what God has already said, even though you do not literally see it!

I'm not telling you to "name it and claim it" nor am I telling you to manifest it, for those forms of prophecy are rooted in other practices and traditions from other gods. What I am telling you is to use your holy imagination that takes the revelation of God

to declare the word of God to your spouse, kids, grandkids, partner, friends, co-workers, and to yourself!

Holy Imagination involves perceiving what God has said and revealed, and materializing that reality before it's actualized, through your words and declarations. Holy imagination is not rooted in some fantasy, but it is rooted in God's word, and this holy, imaginative power is exemplified by Mary, a socially marginalized, young, unmarried woman of color living in the Roman Empire-occupied ghettos of Nazareth.

SERMON POINTS

1. *USE YOUR HOLY IMAGINATION TO KEEP YOUR FAITH INTACT, SPIRIT ENCOURAGED, AND HOPE ALIVE.*

In response to the revelation that the deliverer of her people was about to come, Mary employed her holy imagination, transformed her words into lyrics and prophecy, and utilized the melody from her vocal chords to declare this:

“Oh, how my soul praises the Lord.
How my spirit rejoices in God my Savior!
For he took notice of his lowly servant girl,
and from now on all generations will call me blessed.

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His mighty arm has done tremendous things!
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He has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away with empty hands.
He has helped his servant Israel and remembered to be merciful.
For he made this promise to our ancestors, to Abraham and his children forever.”

You see friend, Mary was living at the margins with regard to social location, gender, and economic status, but in response to receiving the revelation of God, she boldly declared the word of God that spoke of a future that was beyond her present reality!

You see, At the time, the Jews of Nazareth were oppressed by the Roman Empire, but this was a song of liberation! The unjust structures implemented and managed by the powers and principalities had fashioned them into a subaltern state of existence, and all they had was a word from the Lord promising a deliverer. And upon hearing a message from God, affirming the arrival of the promised deliverer and echoing a previous message from God, as any

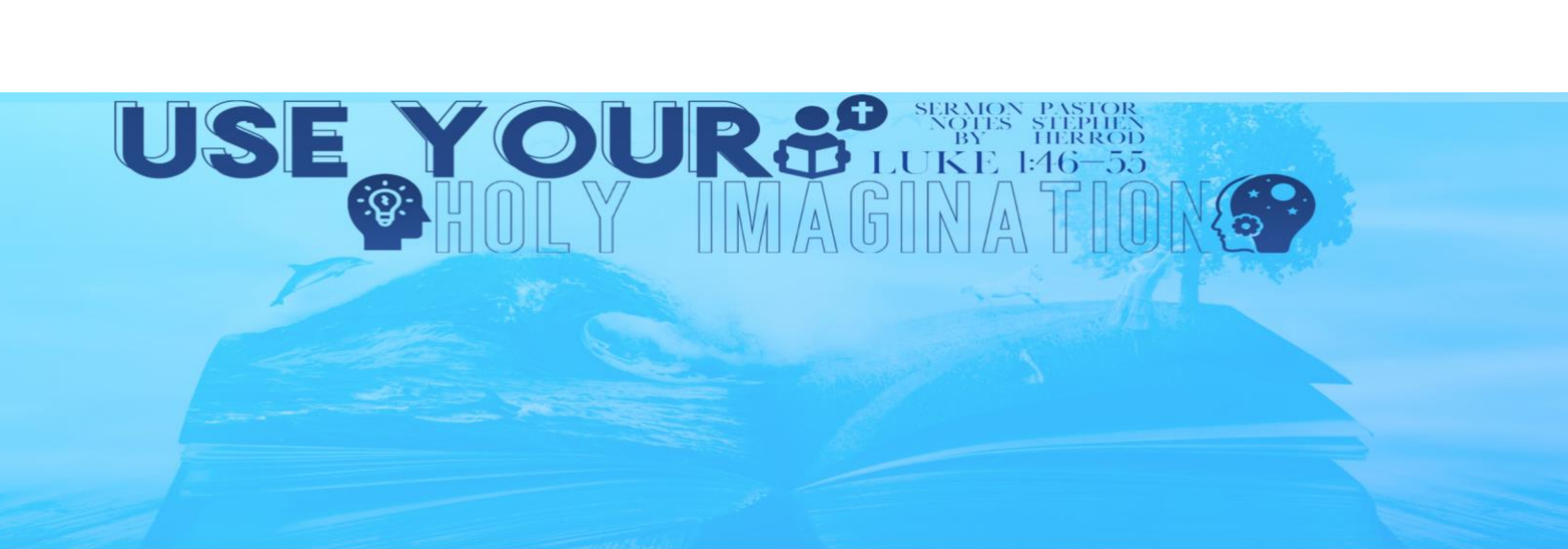
message, sermon, or song of praise and worship should do, she took hold of the word of the Lord and then used her holy imagination to craft her own message, which by the way echoes another previous message from the Lord! And strikingly, she didn't spend her costly words glorifying the Roman Empire; instead, she used her costly words to glorify God. It's noteworthy that, though poor and oppressed, she chose to sing the words of God rather than the blues. The blues provide language for our experiences, but a song of prophetic praise provides language for what God is about to do based on what God has already said!

And that is what using your holy imagination is all about. Don't limit yourself to only singing the blues; but you need to also export some words that speak to a hopeful future and a hopeful reality based on what God has already said!

Let me shed light on something that is common in the faith community:
Many people are not using their holy imagination, and it is getting drowned out by pessimistic and worldly rhetoric. It is getting drowned out by:
Pessimistic thoughts, ideas, conversations, viewpoints, declaration, and disposition.
You pray to God, praise God, and acclaim to have faith in God, but paradoxically you are more pessimistic than optimistic, and more negative than positive!

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They claim to believe in God's word, but their present and future are shaped more by news, blogs, YouTubers, podcasts, and posts than by the word of God. While they profess to read and follow God's word, they daily language reveals that you quote and speak everything but God's word. They've replaced holy imagination with worldly imagination, imagining a future that leads to a dead end rather than carving a path rooted in God's word. Is that you?

I have a couple of questions for reflection: My first question is, do you even have a sense of vision, whereas you can transcend the limits of your present reality? If so, do you have a worldly imagination or holy imagination? Are you living from your history or your holy imagination? Next, where are you drawing inspiration for your vision of tomorrow, the rest of this year, 2024, your future, and the future in general?

Mary, under the rule of oppressors, used her holy imagination to envision a reality beyond her immediate circumstances—a reality far better than her present situation.

Family, you are to use your holy imagination, and let me remind you that your holy imagination is distinct from worldly imagination. The world has a vision that is rooted in worldly input that comes from a myriad of influences, but holy imagination is a vision that is rooted in what

God has said! It is literally a reality that is shaped by God's words! The world cannot see things the way God sees them, because the world rejects the revelation of God, and since they reject the revelation of God, they cannot use their imagination to proclaim and cast a vision based on God's revelation!

You'll hear things like "there is no hope for the youth!"—that's worldly rhetoric. But holy imagination declares that our youth will surpass us because, in the last days, our sons and daughters will prophesy!

You'll hear things like "things are never going to get better," but that's worldly rhetoric. Holy imagination asserts that the sufferings of this present time don't compare to the glory that shall be revealed!

You'll hear things like "it has never been done before, it can't be done," but that is worldly rhetoric! Holy imagination acknowledges it hasn't been done before yet insists that you can't say it can't be done because with men these things are impossible, but with God all things are possible!

It was the holy imagination of Harriet Tubman that guided her to lead slaves to freedom, even when slave masters tried to oppress, and distorted the words of God.

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It was the holy imagination of the Rev. Dr. Praitha Hall who was preaching a late-night mass meeting service and inspired a young man by the name of MLK Jr. who was in attendance as she began to speak to God saying “I have a dream”, envisioning a world that was based upon what God had already revealed!

Then, it was the Holy Imagination of Martin Luther King Jr. who took the prayer of Praitha Hall, and the word of God to articulate a vision of freedom, justice, and equity, rooted not in fantasy but in the words of God.

Friend, use your holy imagination as a form of expression to envision God's promises! You have received revelation from God! Jesus the Christ is the physical and literal revelation of God!

In Christ, God has communicated plans for hope and a future.

In Christ, God has communicated a way of salvation.

In Christ, God has communicated a sin debt cancellation program.

In Christ, God has communicated to us a coming kingdom and world that is free from demonic influence sickness, sin, injustice, poverty, racism, division, and death.

And in this age, we need believers who dare to dream in the midst of a living nightmare, who dare to hope against hope, and who dare to see things as God sees them.

You may not be called to prophesy like the Biblical figures, but with the revelation God has already given you, you are to love God with all your mind by using your holy imagination to keep your faith intact, your spirits encouraged, and your hope alive by envisioning and striving towards a future that is based on what God has already said!

2. *USE YOUR HOLY IMAGINATION TO ENVISION AND STRIVE TOWARDS A FUTURE THAT IS BASED ON WHAT GOD HAS ALREADY SAID.*

Mary's song wasn't just a melody, but it is a vision of God's deliverance, God's promises, God's love, God's mercy, and God's plan!

Mary's song wasn't just a composition; it was a Gospel song. And for that matter, all our praise and worship songs should be singing the word of God! The lyrics to our songs and the lyrics to our life should be nothing but a reiteration of God's word!

When it comes to praising and worshiping God, and when it comes to the songs of the church and the songs of our life, they should be nothing more and nothing less than a reiteration of God's words! One remarkable thing about this young teenage girl who would soon be pregnant named Mary is that she knew her word! And when you have

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God's word in you, it will come out of you and guide you to the future. Mary knew the words of God, and when she envisioned the future based on the message she received, the words of God came out of her mouth!

Verse 46 comes from 1 Samuel 2:1-10

Verse 47 comes from Habakkuk 3:8

Verse 48 comes from Psalm 138:6

Verse 49 comes from Psalm 126:2-3

Verse 50 comes from Psalm 103:17

Verse 51 comes from Psalm 98:1

Verse 52 comes from Ezekiel 21:26

Verse 53 comes from Psalm 107:9

Verse 54 comes from Isaiah 41:18-19

Verse 55 comes from Genesis 17:19

Friend, the words of God are the key to our future. God's word is a lamp unto our feet and a light to our pathway.

Don't be scared to use your holy imagination and have the audacity to declare the goodness of God concerning your health, concerning your life, concerning your relationship, concerning your kids, concerning your children, concerning your church, and concerning other matters. Speak the word of God over yourself. Speak the word of God over your kids. Speak the word of God over your city. Speak the word of God over your family. Speak the word of God over your relationship.

Use your holy imagination!

QUOTES BY STEPHEN HERROD

"Holy imagination refers to the intentional and sacred use of imaginative faculties in alignment with God, God's words, and all of God's creation. It involves envisioning, contemplating, and creating in ways that reflect and honor faith in the Lord Jesus Christ."

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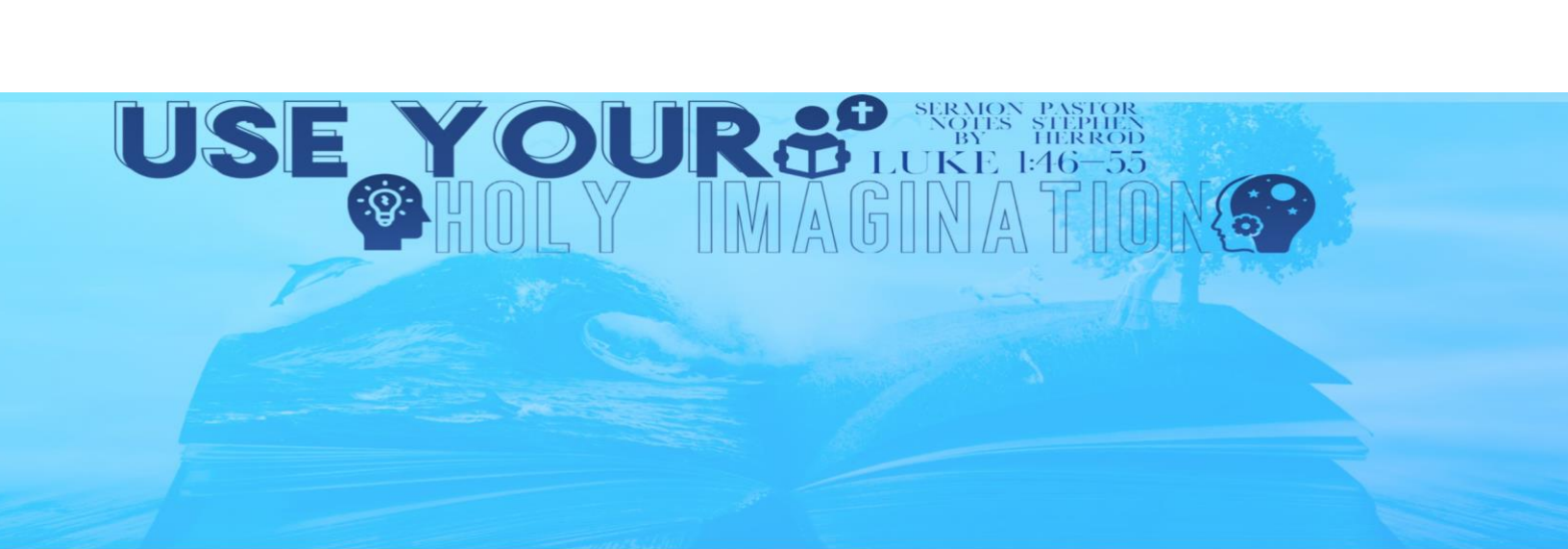
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