



Mary's Angel
 Rev. Dr. Glenda Hollingshead; December 7, 2025
 2nd Sunday of Advent
 Luke 1:26-38, 46-55

Last week we began this Advent series inspired by Erin Wathen's devotional *Calling All Angels* as an invitation to listen for the angels—those messengers who appear in the most ordinary places and ask us to see the world differently. Today, we follow Gabriel to a small town in Galilee, where he visits a young woman named Mary.

When we think of Mary at this time of year, we usually picture her in our Christmas pageants: quiet, serene, almost delicate. She stands beside the manger, usually played by the most well-behaved child (or adult) in the church. Generally, she says nothing at all for in many church traditions, including our own, her role is almost entirely silent.

But what about the Mary in Scripture? The Mary in Scripture is anything but silent. The Mary in Scripture has a voice—clear, courageous, and prophetic. Wathen points out,

The irony of the silent role of Mary in many of our church nativity plays is that the actual Mary of Scripture has quite a lot to say. More, in fact, than any other woman in the biblical narrative; even more than any other woman in Luke—which is saying something, as Luke's is the only Gospel in which women speak at all.¹

Ironic, indeed. The one who sings one of the most powerful songs in all of Scripture is often given no lines in our nativity scenes. But if we're going to understand what God is doing through her, we need to listen to what she says.

First though, let's look at what happens before Mary sings when she is visited by Gabriel—a messenger with a greeting that is almost too much to bear: “Greetings, favored one. The Lord is with you.” And the text says Mary is “perplexed”—which is the Bible’s polite way of saying she is overwhelmed, startled, maybe even scared out of her mind. Because everything about Mary’s life would suggest that she is the last person anyone should call “favored.”

Mary is young. Some scholars think she may have been barely a teenager. She is unmarried. She is poor. She is female in a culture where women have very little status. Mary has no safety net. No 401k. No privilege to fall back on. So, she has every reason in the world to be afraid. And now she is asked to carry a child—God’s child—into a world that already has a complicated relationship with power, with gender, with poverty.

Nevertheless, Mary listens to the angel. Nevertheless, she asks her honest question: “How can this be?” Nevertheless, she opens herself to possibility: “Let it be with me according to your word.”

Mary’s yes is not naïve. It is courageous. It is the kind of yes that comes from a person who knows fear intimately but refuses to let fear write the whole story. It is the yes that says, “I don’t know how this will all turn out, but I know God is with me in it.” Mary’s yes becomes the doorway through which God’s love enters the world.

But it’s not just Mary’s yes we need to hear. It’s her voice. Because after Gabriel leaves, Mary sings—not a lullaby—not a gentle, sweet Christmas melody. What she sings is a revolutionary hymn, a bold proclamation that God is about to turn the world upside-down:

He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.

This is not the silence of the pageant Mary. This is the fierce, strong, utterly grounded Mary of Scripture—a poor, young woman from an insignificant town declaring that God is about to reorder the entire world. Wathen writes,

The great reordering that Mary sings about here has already begun. Let the lowly be lifted up. Let the silent speak and be heard. A song like that can only be called “Magnificat.” A hymn of praise to the Lord.

Wathen continues,

As much as I love a good “marketable” church Christmas pageant, and as a pastor I have put one together myself a time or two, the world is waiting for the Mary who sings prophetic wisdom and shouts her praise, not the one who takes a reflective, submissive posture in the manger scene. Mary, pure and lowly. Mary, meek and mild...she appears for the grand finale, not a hair out of place after giving birth in a barn (with no drugs!), settling into the manger scene just in time to sing “Silent Night.”

Is that supposed to be the same girl who sings about sending the rich away empty and throwing the mighty from their thrones? Bring her back. We need her.

Yes! Please, bring her back for we need her voice now, perhaps more than ever. We live in a time when the gap between the richest and the poorest grows wider by the day. A time when billionaires can buy political influence, when vulnerable communities are pushed further to the margins, when many feel unseen, unheard, and unprotected. And into this moment, Mary sings her Magnificat—not only as a comfort to the oppressed, but as a challenge to all who have power, all who have voice, all who have privilege.

Mary reminds us that God does not sidestep the world’s injustice; God confronts it. God chooses to enter into the world through someone who had no worldly power so that divine power can be revealed in compassion, in solidarity, in justice.

Which means the question for us is not simply, “What do we think of Mary’s song?” The question is: “How will we add our voices to hers?” Because many of us have something Mary did not have: a measure of privilege, safety, influence, education, resources. Not enough to fix everything—but enough to make a difference. Enough to speak up. Enough to challenge the systems that harm the vulnerable. Enough to stand beside those who have been pushed aside and say, “Your story matters. Your life matters. Your hope matters.”

Mary didn’t have a position of power. She didn’t have a platform. All she had was her courage and her conviction that God was turning the world toward justice. So, she sang. Maybe our call this Advent is to find our own way to sing with Mary—to use whatever influence we have to amplify the stories of those who are too often silenced. To use our voices not only for praise, but for truth. Not only for comfort, but for justice. Not only for holy words, but for holy actions.

The angels are calling again this week—calling us to listen, yes, but also to speak. Calling us to use our words for healing, for hope, for equity and compassion. Calling us to let Mary’s song become our own. For the God who met her in Nazareth still meets us here—whispering courage into our fear, calling us toward a world made new, and inviting us, like Mary, to say yes. Amen.

¹ Erin Wathen, *Calling All Angels*, 36.

Cover Art provided by Erin Wathen, used by permission; *Affirmation of Faith* by Rev. Rebecca F. Harrison, Spanish Springs Presbyterian Church, Sparks, NV @ <https://www.liturgylink.net/2012/11/26/advent-statement-of-faith/>; Music: OneLicense.net A-729522