

Do we sing the song of Mary? - Luke 1:46-56

Last week we heard Mark's gospel **begin** with John the baptizer preaching about repentance and **new beginnings** for people, as God's mercy and forgiveness changes our direction.

This week we hear about this same baptizer, but in a different "light". He's unconventional. He doesn't fit our categories . He is not the anointed king, he is not the prophet, he is not Elijah. He is known simply as "**The Voice**".

Kind of makes the reality show seem unoriginal doesn't it?

But it's not John's voice I'm drawn to today, it's **Mary's**. It's the song Mary sings while visiting Elizabeth as two not-supposed-to-be-pregnant women ponder God's ways. As we've heard, songs are powerful. The "Magnificat" (as Mary's song is called) is a song that "Magnifies" God's gracious action toward her. It's a song that rejoices in God choosing the least and lowliest to accomplish the greatest of things.

Filled with familiar motifs from the song Hannah sung in the temple centuries before, Mary's song reaches back into the long history of God's people and sings not only about God's character **but also about God's activity**...and so if we stop and listen to the lyrics, instead of just dancing to a familiar beat, we will discover something daring and perhaps **dangerous** about this tune.

Mary's song is the mother of all protest songs.

The Magnificat...a protest song? How can that be? Isn't it all...*my soul proclaims your greatest O God and my Spirit rejoices in you...* (Holden Evening Prayer melody)

Yes..but then it gets to that other part... *"He has cast the mighty down from their thrones and uplifted the humble of heart, he has filled the hungry with wondrous things and left the wealthy no part."*

Now it doesn't matter how sweet the melody, those words **protest** a world like ours, where personal "worth" is measured in dollars and where the powerful rig the system against others, eventually making them feel as if their lives don't matter.

Virtually every social movement, in every corner of the world, seeking to change the status quo, has their own protest songs because songs have a special kind of power not found in political machinery or military might.

Songs move hearts and minds. Songs spark ideas *and inflame the conscience* so that one cannot just sit and tap your toe. You have to get up and do something.

Protest songs are so important, even our stories use them as a way for the characters to mobilize a movement. That's what the "Hanging Tree" does in the Hunger Games series ...and we resonate with songs and characters in those imagined places because the same longings are present in our own world today.

We make up songs about hanging trees because there have been too many of them in the real world. In 1939, Billie Holiday recorded "[Strange Fruit](#)", a song protesting lynching of young African Americans two decades before the civil rights movement.

And when Willie Guthrie wanted to protest what he saw as unrealistic portrayals of America in popular culture he wrote, "[This Land is Your Land](#)"

Which was sung again by Dylan, and Peter Paul and Mary, along with all of the other protest songs of the 60's. Too many there to even count.

Even the 80's , which which some of us are familiar, had it's share of protest songs, although not many people recognize them as such,....

[99 Luftballons](#) protested that in the hypersensitive days of the cold war, even floating balloons might initiate hostilities.

[All She Wants to do is Dance](#) actually protests the "party on" attitudes of governments and people while much of the world was erupting in violence. Haven't we all wondered about that line, "Molotov cocktails, the local drink" :)

One that especially hit home with me was "[A Month of Sundays](#)" recorded by Don Henley. It protested what was happening to folks caught up in the farm crisis.

But even if you too missed the 80's, songs of protest continue singing chords of change in the world today. "[I Can Ride my Bike with No Handlebars](#)" by Floots protests the violence inflicted by unrestrained power that dominates and destroys.

And "[Same Love](#)" by Macklemore protested stereotypes and labels while allowing hundreds of millions to hear about the love shared within same gender relationships which helped move the needle of public acceptance.

But it's not just about singing a song for a cause. Mary helps us to see that God is the One inspiring the music. Mary's song is the mother of all protest songs because in it **she births the idea that God is the One working to up-end the status quo.**

When we long for freedom from oppression, when we long for recognition of our intrinsic value as human beings, we are longing for what God longs for.

Which means the justice we seek, the righteous causes we take up, are not simply random notes. **They have tonal roots** within the song God has been singing throughout creation. **Our protest songs are verses of the Magnificat...** which is a melody composed by the Spirit of God flowing from Mary's mouth, through Luke's pages, to our ears right now.

So now the question becomes, "**How do we sing Mary's song?**"

Knowing and believing that God loves us and saves us from everything we need fear... that God calls us "child" with all the privileges and responsibilities that come with that identity, how do we sing? How do we help others to sing?

Sometimes people don't get why we sing in church. They think the songs seem old or difficult or perhaps even irrelevant. Some people think they can't sing. (Not)

But singing has meaning in the act itself. Singing is our shared voice. Singing **as** worship, is a sign of our shared membership in the one body of Christ. Singing with others is a testament to our shared humanity - despite evil's attempt at discord.

When we join in song during worship, we are not simply making sounds. We are doing something from the heart...and maybe even **TO** the heart. That's where singing comes from you know. Not from the vocal chords but from the heart. **That's why even though something can silence my sound, my song will always continue.** And it also why everyone...EVERYONE, can make a joyful noise, especially in a crowd of others!

So perhaps the best way we can sing Mary's song is to sing it together. Yesterday I had a conversation with a musician who travels around the world. As we spoke about so many issues currently fanning the flames of violence and distrust, he wondered out loud, "What would happen if we would sing together instead of fight one another?" We do it on a small scale a lot already, whether it's at a community club meeting, at bible study, a sporting event, funeral or wedding. Singing together connects us to one another and for a time, allows us to belong to something bigger.

So is it an unrealistic dream? Maybe... but then again we are talking about God and if God's promises are true, the unrealistic dreams are the ones God makes true. Just consider the song of Mary, the song of a young virgin pregnant with salvation. Amen.