

# My Soul Magnifies the Lord

Luke 1:46-56

Sermon notes from the pulpit of  
First Presbyterian Church, Champaign, Illinois  
December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Second Sunday of Advent/Music Sunday  
Matt Matthews

When we are excited, we sing. When our team scores a touchdown, we sing the fight song. When our beloved turns thirty-years-old for the fiftieth time, we sing Happy Birthday.

We sing when we suffer: *Nobody knows the trouble I've seen; nobody knows my sorrow.*

We sing to soothe our babies.

When we are afraid, we sing: *Precious Lord, take my hand, lead me on, help me stand.*

We sing when we soothe our babies. We sing when we gather to bury our dead. We sing when we march off to war. We link our arms and sing at Armistice Day.

We sing when we've been carried off into exile: *By the waters, the waters of Babylon. We laid down and wept, and wept for thee Zion. We remember thee, remember thee, remember thee Zion.*

We sing when only song will do.

\* \* \*

Is it any wonder Mary sang?

Her words in Luke are collected in a Psalm-like form. They are written as a poem. This is the second of three “evangelistic canticles” of the Gospel. (Zechariah, Mary, Simeon.)

In these words, she expresses awe and wonder and hope. *My soul magnifies* (glorifies, praises, lifts up) *the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my savior.*

She can't contain it. She sighs with relieve. She sings with joy.

And—notice, won't you—she tells it like it is, and like she believes and hopes it will be: *He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. 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.*

If Mary is right, when God comes, some will sing praises, and others might sing the blues. But heaven and earth will sing, sing, sing.

I don't want to put words in Mary's song, but I think she'd nod her head about what I'm suggesting she believed. She felt this truth rising up within her.

Mary  
believes . . . I believe love will win.

Mary  
Believes . . . I believe justice will prevail.

Mary  
Believes . . . I believe those who abuse power,  
and hoard wealth, and disregard  
their neighbors will face a reckoning.

Mary  
Believes . . . I believe people accustomed to evil  
will be compelled to repent, hearts will be  
warmed, made-up minds will be changed.

Mary  
Believes . . . I believe in reconciliation.

Mary  
Believes . . . I believe that those who are too hopeless  
will be given a song of hope to sing, and  
people who are too sad will be given a  
song of joy to sing. And through the  
generations these formerly hopeless  
and joyless people will join me in  
singing my song: *My soul magnifies the  
Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my  
Savior.*

And the songs of all these saints will mingle with the songs of angels:

*"Before the marvel of this night,  
Adoring, fold your wings and bow,  
Then tear the sky apart with light  
And with your news the world endow.  
Proclaim the birth of Christ and peace,  
That fear and death and sorrow cease:  
Sing peace, sing peace, sing gift of peace."*

(Carl Schalk/music; Jaroslav Vajda/text; Before the Marvel of this Night)

Mary  
Believes . . . I believe the word of God can be trusted.

Mary  
Believes . . . I believe God's seeds of hope—even now—are growing.

Mary  
Believes . . . I believe God's promises will come to pass.

This is good news—the blessing entrusted to Mary's care and this baby growing in her body, is such amazing good news, that Mary does what the human body is made to do. *Mary sings.* Mary believes God's order will be restored. Mary believes God's kin-dom will come. Mary believes the son she carries in her body will usher in a new heaven and a new earth. Mary sings. She sings: *My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my savior.*

*O burning mountain, O chosen sun,  
O perfect moon, O fathomless well,  
O unattainable height, O clearness beyond measure,  
O wisdom without end, O mercy without limit,  
O strength beyond resistance, O crown beyond all majesty:  
The humblest thing you created sings your praise. Amen.*

Mechthild of Magdeburg (1212-1283)

God deserves to be magnified: God is worthy of our praise, our gladness, our song.

Mary got it right.

She sang.

AMEN.

### **Luke 1:46-56**

46 And Mary[f] said,  
“My soul magnifies the Lord,  
47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,  
48 for he has looked with favor on the lowly state of his servant.  
Surely from now on all generations will call me blessed,  
49 for the Mighty One has done great things for me,  
and holy is his name;

50 indeed, his mercy is for those who fear him  
from generation to generation.

51 He has shown strength with his arm;  
he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.

52 He has brought down the powerful from their thrones  
and lifted up the lowly;

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

54 He has come to the aid of his child Israel,  
in remembrance of his mercy,

55 according to the promise he made to our ancestors,  
to Abraham and to his descendants forever.”

56 And Mary remained with her about three months and then returned to her home.