

“Magnifiers” (19Dec21) Luke 1:39-55

My soul proclaims your greatness, O God!  
With all my heart I glorify the Lord!  
My soul cries out with a joyful shout!  
Magnificat anima mea, Dominum!  
My soul magnifies the Lord!

These reiterate the start of Mary’s song, with big emotion. Would you say, heart and soul, you’re ready today for a joyful shout? Are you a magnifier of God’s greatness?

For one starting point in how we interact with this or compare with Mary, a fellow board member of Lutheran Peace Fellowship shared a writing that began sadly remarking on another COVID Christmas, and then turned to recognize that “Once again, the majority of the national and world population faces the daily and heartbreaking challenges imposed by the deepening of economic inequality, climate change, structural racism,” with hate, scapegoating, exploitation, and more. The author noted “It is hard to reconcile the bleakness of the daily news with the joyful and festive spirit that Western Christian culture has come to associate with Christmas. Yet, the world that generated the gospel’s stories was also [as] complex, brutal, and in need of hope and transformation as ours. It was a world where injustice and domination were not exceptions but were embedded in the fabric of society and history.”\*

So you might name situations that could reduce your soulful rejoicing and diminish your magnifying. But that was Mary’s world, too—perhaps more so as an unmarried pregnant girl under poverty and patriarchy and empire.

Now, please don’t at all take this to say that Mary had it bad and still could get around to praising God, so you better just get over it, start magnifying, and get your spirits up. Rather, it seems like lifting spirits isn’t something we’re much capable of on our own. We need a boost, need spirits to be raised. Which starts to sound a lot like resurrection.

Even before the ultimate end of God breathing

the inspiration of new life into tired out old corpses, let’s notice what it is already lifting Mary’s buoyant spirit, by what she expects of God. As I repeat Mary’s phrases, hear the expanse of the expectation of what God is doing, coming amid the embedded complex and brutal injustices in her time with transformation, and envision where you still expect that to happen now, for you or for others. And Mary said:

God has looked with favor on the low.

God shows mercy to everyone, from one generation to the next.

God has scattered the arrogant and proud.

God has pulled the powerful down from thrones and lifted up the lowly.

God has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty-handed.

Now, if you find yourself in particularly dejected and sour spirit, you may be tempted to point out places this hasn’t come about. But I hope you can glimpse—and admit—it IS happening, and is God’s revolutionary saving work, confronting the bleakness and overturning the domineering of society. The same author I cited before reminds us “Mary’s song is [more] a protest song, full of anger and affirmations of hope...than a bland Christmas carol full of angels and snow.”

Yet that brings another thought. You may well rejoice with Mary and be inspired by these revolutionary activities of God in the world, brought by this Jesus whose first adult public words will be “The Spirit has anointed me to bring good news to the poor, to release the prisoners, give sight to the blind, to liberate the oppressed” (Luke 4:18).

But I won’t rule out that God might also be lifting your spirit and inspiring you in Christmas carols full of angels and snow. The twinkly lights and familiar traditions and warm feelings of this week don’t have to be bland or a distracting opiate. They may also be how God comes to meet you still in joy.

Like in this little visitation Gospel reading, of Mary going to visit her elderly cousin, both surprisedly with-child, the pairing and meeting of

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\*by Gabriella Lettini at <https://www.religionandjustice.org/interventions->

[forum-climate-change-and-capitalism#contributorthree](https://www.religionandjustice.org/interventions-forum-climate-change-and-capitalism#contributorthree)

wombs, leaping and joy, exclamations of blessing. It might be delight in relationships, about family, shared experiences, and spirits raised.

It might be more: God revealed, though in hiddenness moving inside these women, of first trimester Mary, with a mostly “invisible—yet amazing—transformation,”\*\* the tiny God incarnate nevertheless enormously present in and through her, and Elizabeth’s interior recognizing it even though her senses couldn’t. I obviously and lamentably can’t begin to say what the feeling is of a baby dancing and leaping inside of my body; the closest I can get is the term gut instinct. Yet here’s an intensity of God’s unmistakable goodness inside these two women, and inside you, too.

I invite you, as we’ll turn next to pray together with Mary’s revolutionary words, also to hold and feel this inside your body. Hold a hand on your stomach—or your heart, if you prefer—and feel the leaping as God comes close, of something outside of you, larger than you yet also part of you, magnified as the Word of God dwells in you, as this comes to fruition.

Shortly after that, again for interior sensation, through communion Jesus comes yet again to dwell in you, a tiny bite yet more than you could contain or comprehend, notice those feelings inside you, the arrival of the one whose mother sang that he “fills the hungry with good things.”

With Mary, let us pray.

**My soul cries out with a joyful shout that the God of my heart is great,  
and my spirit sings of the wondrous things that you bring to the ones who wait.**

We reflect on what joys we await...

**The hungry poor shall weep no more, for the food they can never earn;  
there are tables spread, every mouth be fed, for the world is about to turn.**

We consider the needs around us...

**My heart shall sing of the day you bring. Let the fires of your justice burn.**

**Wipe away all tears, for the dawn draws near, and the world is about to turn.**

We bring the tears we have wept and other injustices...

**Though I am small, my God, my all, you work great things in me,  
and your mercy will last from the depths of the past to the end of the age to be.**

We recall how we’ve done God’s work...

**Though the nations rage from age to age, we remember who holds us fast.**

**The saving word that our forebears heard is the promise which always lasts.**

Through global difficulties, we turn to trust...

**My soul cries out with a longing shout: for God’s goodness we all yearn.**

**My heart shall sing of the day you bring, for the world is about to turn. Amen** (based on ELW 723)

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\*\* a description from Mayo Clinic’s website