

Micah 5:2-5a  
Luke 1:47-55

**Mary's Song**  
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She has traveled to the home of her relative, Elizabeth. She is young, unmarried and pregnant. Her relative, Elizabeth, is well beyond child bearing, she is far too old to be bearing children and yet she, too, is pregnant. Both pregnancies are the result of God's intervening in history. Elizabeth's son, John, will prepare the way for the coming of Mary's son, Jesus. They both have wonderful stories to tell – two women living in obscurity are drawn into God's history.

What song would you sing? You are Elizabeth. You are well beyond the years of child bearing. It is a different day and time – she has carried the shame of being childless all of her adult life. Now this shame is lifted. And yet, she goes into seclusion for five months (Luke 1:24). How does she explain this to the women at the well? To those she meets in the village? Her husband cannot tell the story, he has been struck mute. She has a sense of joy mingled with awe and maybe unbelief. God is moving.

After the angelic visit Mary goes immediately to see Elizabeth (Luke 1:39). The angel has told her of Elizabeth's pregnancy. Can this be true? Mary has just agreed to be used of God. She has taken a step of extreme faith. There are laws that will or could be used against her. Who will understand her situation but another woman who has been the target of God's movement in history? Does she seek confirmation, wisdom from Elizabeth? Two women come together with stories to tell. Two women chosen to be a part of God's great story.

Their lives are now forever changed. Children will do that anyway. If we remember our lives before children we know that they were forever changed when children came. Many have said they thought they knew all there was to raising children, and then they had them!!!

For Elizabeth the shame of years of barrenness is lifted. For Mary the situation is far different. She could be put away, shunned and maybe even stoned to death if the letter of the law were carried out. Even her betrothed, Joseph, does not know what to do with her. An angelic visit is needed to confirm Mary's story to him.

Who will believe Mary's story? Mark's Gospel has the scene of Jesus returning to his home town and Mark records the response of the people, "Is this not Mary's son?" (Mark 6:3). This is unheard of. The proper question should be, "Is this not Joseph's son?" To refer to Jesus as Mary's son is a slur reflecting back on his birth. Even thirty years after his birth there are still those who remember the scandal of the years past. Who is this child?

Micah spoke of the coming of the Messiah. Micah speaks of God's redeeming action in history. A child is to be born—the promise of God is to be fulfilled. The child will come with all the glory and majesty of God. He will be like a shepherd to care for the flock. He is coming to redeem creation. He is coming as an instrument of God's peace. Micah fills his prophecy with wonderful images of God's coming. But where does Mary fit into this story?

Think for a moment. How would you have responded if you were her parents? Would you have believed her story? Or, how would you respond had you been Joseph? We might think we would respond differently but we know the end of the story. What if we were there at the beginning? She has said yes to a proposition that no one will understand. She has taken a giant step of faith into the unknown. I am not sure we can fully understand her decision or comprehend her faith.

Mary sings. Her song is a song of promise. Her song is a song of an uncertain future. Perhaps only Elizabeth understands the song at this moment. Elizabeth knows what happens when God unexpectedly enters our lives. She is aware that “all things are possible with God.” How great is our faith when God comes and asks?

I wonder if Elizabeth gave Mary any advice. Maybe it was enough for Mary to know that the words of the angel were true, Elizabeth is pregnant! Prayers are being answered. Something is happening in the world. But why this way?

For me, Mary finds strength in Elizabeth and perhaps Elizabeth in Mary. Here in the lives of two women God is acting. The story of God is being written in dramatic form. This is not how they had expected their lives to play out. This is not how they had anticipated God moving. Together they are able to walk and talk about the potential and promise for each child. They gain strength, hope and peace from each other. The song Mary sings could be Elizabeth’s song. Together they will be stronger than if they were alone.

So, what do we do with Mary? Thought of the song from *The Sound of Music*, “How do you solve a problem like Maria?” What do we do with Mary? There are those who elevate her to a position that, I believe, is far greater than the story allows and because of that there are others who simply want to ignore Mary and her part in the story. But without Mary there would be no story. Without Mary there would be no child in Bethlehem’s manger. Without Mary we have no Calvary or empty tomb. We cannot escape the part she played in the story. Her faith was a faith that should be lifted up as an example. The future consequences of her actions were unknown to her. God has asked, she has said yes. Yes, to a journey of faith and hope.

Mary does not know how the story is going to be played out. She does not foresee a cross or an empty tomb. What she does foresee is God moving in history and she is willing to play a part in God’s great drama. She sings a song of hope and trust. A song of joy and celebration. A song of promise. The song of a young woman standing alone, if necessary, against the world of her day.

Like Mary, we, too, are called to play a part – the moment we accepted Christ, we, like Mary, said “yes” to God—to our faith journey. May Mary’s song influence our song – Mary’s faith our faith.

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Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quoted is from NRSV, NCCC/USA 1989  
NIV, New International Bible Society, Zondervan, 1989