

## “A Song of Joy”

Luke 1:46-55

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An angel visits Mary. Announces she will carry God’s Son in her womb. She ponders this mystery for many days. She sleeps on it, reflects on it. Then, she sings a song of joy! It’s as if Mary is singing, “Just think! God is using me for a divine purpose! Me! Little me!” I doubt that Mary had finished high school; didn’t have her GED; and certainly had not been to college. There’s no evidence she had started her own business or run for public office. She’s simply Mary. And when Mary realizes God is using her for a divine purpose, she belts out one of the most joyful songs ever sung. We call it The Magnificat. She sings, “For God has looked with favor on the lowliness of this servant.”

What I want to say to the church this morning is that there is a Mary in all of us. We each have a calling. God is using every one of us to accomplish some divine purpose. It’s just that some of us are more conscious of our calling than others. Everyone who’s ever been baptized into the Christian faith has a calling. That’s the deal! Mary’s story is the one that made it into the Bible. But there is a Mary in all of us. The work of God’s Spirit is to awaken us to this reality, to the truth that we are all called by God to be bearers of the Gospel of Love. This was the source of joy for Mary. It is the source of joy for me. It is the source of joy for all who think of themselves as Christians.

Even me? Yes, even you!

The car accident across the street at 2 Hopewell has been the talk of the town. For those of us who have been around for awhile, we still think of that building as Jim Kinne's Corner Store. Jim was a one-of-a-kind guy. Though he ran a general store and served as a volunteer fireman, God had a special calling for him. He was to be an affirming presence for children. He may not have run his shop according to the principles set out at the Harvard School of Business, but he found ways to let children know they mattered, that they are loved. If you didn't have even a nickel, you could go into the Corner Store and Jim would give you a popsicle. He'd call you by name and give you a smile that made your day. I sort of picture him walking home at the end of the day singing a song of joy, knowing God was using him as a bearer of the Gospel of Love. This is the real reason I sometimes sit on that bench out on the southeast corner of the church lawn. I listen for Jim singing his version of The Magnificat.

Let me introduce you to Sister Joli. She is from India. She is a Catholic sister. She is a registered nurse. She runs the clinic at the St. Mary's Orphanage which South Church supports. Her song of joy is not sung with her voice. It is sung with her feet! She carries herself with an unmistakable joy! She embodies joy. Do you know anyone like this? How providential that her name is Joli. She is the humblest woman I know. Her calling is to heal the sick and the broken hearted. On one of my mission trips there, I arrived limping on a swollen knee. After three days, I announced I would be leaving for other parts of Malawi. Sister Joli stated forcefully, "Oh no! Bambo, you are staying right here so I can take care of you." And I did. I stayed right there two more days. When I finally departed, I was the one singing a song of joy!

Mary's Song is an invitation for each of us to ponder the question, "How is God using me to make love real in this world?" For some, it becomes a vocation. For some, it is simply a matter of taking advantage of the moments that present themselves, moments when God's love can be revealed in me, even me.

Here at South Church, I look forward every year to the Homeless Awareness Sleepout. It always seems to fall on the coldest night of the year! What thrills me is watching 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders, 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders stand out on the front lawn by the burn barrel drawing attention to the plight of homeless folks. Our neighbors see us out there and at first they think we have lost our minds. But, then, they get it that we are out there as an expression of love. Then those same neighbors return to drop off warm coats and mittens and caps. One year a patron at 2 Hopewell walked across the street, saw what we were doing, and handed us his winter overcoat! A local restaurant owner stops by with spring rolls and curried rice as a midnight snack. It turns into a kind of love feast. I like this event so much because it is one way for God to deliver love through our teenagers. At the close of each shift, those warming their hands at the burn barrel sing a song of joy, knowing they have a Mary within them.

When I read Luke's account of Mary singing The Magnificat and realize we all have a Mary within us, that's when I know for sure we're living in the greatest of hope. Amen.