

# **She Said a Revolution**

Judges 13:2-7; Luke 1:46-56

Mary's Magnificat and the pink candle! Joy Sunday has arrived and we are careening toward the bounty of the Service of Lessons and Carols and the glory of the Christmas Eve services.

And today we bask in this familiar passage from Luke, this proclamation from Mary's mouth, Mary's Magnificat. In the Bible Study this week, Jack reflected on just how often Mary's Magnificat has been set to music. There are so many versions. Perhaps you have a favorite.

I used to sing the one from the musical Celebrate Life. Perhaps this version by Buryl Red and Ragan Courtney also decorated past Christmases for you. I decided to listen to it as I prepared to preach this week and it is everything I remembered - it begins with gentle oohs, a pure light voice sings of God's greatness, and the big climax is "all generations shall call me

blessed.” And so the two refrains are that God is great and that Mary is blessed. It is safe and sweet and pure.

Can you see where I’m going with this? What is missing?

The whole rest of the magnificat. The rest of the story. All of the good stuff.

- God has scattered the arrogant.
- God has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly.
- God has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.

Mary’s Magnificat is not safe and sweet and pure.

And songs and tellings of her story that paint her as sweet and demure and doe-eyed, a model of quiet acceptance, are improper, if not dangerous, examples of virtue signaling that actually point away from the narrative.

Mary said a revolution. She spoke of revolution. And the Magnificat uses this verb tense, this “God has done this,” that evokes a sense of past and present. This is a story of animation and agitation.

And her thanksgiving makes a turn away from those that celebrate fertility after barrenness. It also makes a turn away from those that celebrate the child because it will be the source of generations of life. Her thanksgiving is for what this child will become.

Wil Gaffney says “[Mary’s] miraculous pregnancy relates her to women like Samson’s mother, literally introducing a significant child...Her thanksgiving is about what this child will do with his life, not whether he will create life.”

Did you catch that bit about Samson’s mother?

Samson was a nazirite to God, the same priestly class as Hannah’s son, Samuel. (And thank you to Barbara for highlighting to me that men and women were both eligible to be nazirites).

Samson, whose strength came from his long, never cut, hair, is also understood to have ushered in, to have led, the Israelites in their battle with the Philistines. His story is found in Judges, and on the whole Judges tells a story of the violence that comes from Israel moving into territory already populated by others. The geo-political and humanitarian crisis that we see in Israel and the Gaza strip to this very day reflects stories as old as the story of Sampson, which means we have a lot of reckoning to do and a whole lot to learn.

But today, in this space where we are holding together these stories of Mary, the mother of Jesus, and the unnamed mother of Samson - we lean into stories where propagation takes a back seat to revolution.

Both of these women announced children who would lead a revolution.

She said a revolution.

The holiday that we celebrate with hot cocoa and fireplaces and silent nights and twinkling lights is lovely. It's an important part of winter for our family.

But if we listen to Mary, then what we prepare for during Advent, what we celebrate at Christmas, is something else entirely. We come to worship the One that changes everything.

She who knit you together in your mother's womb has words of revolution for you. What is She saying? Can you hear it yet?