

**Gracious God, take our minds and think through them;
take our hands and work through them;
take our hearts and set them on fire.
Amen.**

Yes, we just heard the Magnificat twice – reading it together as the Canticle and then hearing it as a part of the Gospel. This scripture, oddly enough, is the focus of an opinion piece in the Washington Post last week. Has anyone here read it?

Titled “Mary’s ‘Magnificat’ in the Bible is revolutionary. Some evangelicals silence her.”¹ – it’s written by author D.L. Mayfield, who herself grew up in an evangelical tradition.

In it, she reflects on her experience, and the experience of many evangelicals, who historically jettisoned devotion to Mary as a Roman Catholic practice. In their tradition Mary was silent, meek, and mild – what Mayfield described as simply “a holy womb” – never given a speaking part in the pageant, only there to be seen.

And so, it was a shock to her as an adult when she opened her Bible and read the entirety of The Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55).

There, behind Mary’s soul proclaiming the greatness of the Lord and her spirit rejoicing, were verses she had never heard emphasized before – and which amounted to a call for revolution: the scattering of the proud, the mighty cast down from their thrones, the rich sent away empty, all while the lowly are lifted and the hungry fed.

¹ https://www.washingtonpost.com/religion/2018/12/20/marys-magnificat-bible-is-revolutionary-so-evangelicals-silence-it/?fbclid=IwAR3eg5TwctPC4yD08WFIUZdZbaif8WbE1fto_iferuUDs3pDt0QYQY6bXvs&noredirect=on&utm_term=.7b4f075079fd

As Mayfield points out in her article, the Magnificat has historically been viewed as dangerous by people in power because of the way the oppressed and marginalized identify with it. Some countries, throughout time, have outright banned it from being recited in liturgy or in public.²

But it's not just our evangelical sisters and brothers, or those in power who feel indicted by Mary's words, that have silenced her.

How many folks here today have a default setting for Mary as meek and mild, obedient and silent – always pondering things in her heart?

I too was well into adulthood before I uncovered the depth of Mary's radical **faith** in God and understanding of how God's **LOVE** transforms the world.

Because it was her **faith** that led her to say **yes** when God's messenger told her of God's plan in the incarnation.

Because God's **LOVE** is what she sang about – a **LOVE** so powerful that it could, and would, turn the world upside down and break down the barriers that we humans erect to set ourselves one over another.

That **LOVE** who came down at Christmas – born to and among the lowly, who would then have to flee as refugees to Egypt to escape the violence of their King.

That **LOVE** who learned at his mother's apron strings – and then preached her lessons, what we call the Beatitudes, in the Sermon on the Mount (seriously, read Matthew 5:3-12 alongside Luke 1:46-55).

² <http://enemylove.com/subversive-magnificat-mary-expected-messiah-to-be-like/>

That **LOVE** who was killed by human fear – and whose resurrection taught us that nothing, not even death, can keep us from the promise of that **LOVE** for all eternity.

This is why, when we silence Mary, we silence Jesus too.

Mary teaches us to magnify God. She shows us how to live our lives in such a way that we literally magnify – make larger and clearer – the **LOVE** of God for all the world to see.

On this fourth Sunday of Advent, as we arrive at the doorstep of Christmas, let us join Mary in song and action – preparing our hearts and lives to receive this gift of **LOVE** that God gives us again every year.

~ AMEN ~