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The Wisdom of the God Bearer

Sometimes you sing when you forget where you are.

My aunt had just died. In the warmly lit hospice room we were praying, and tending to her body. And all I could think to do was sing. Sing to point us towards Christ- the dawn.

For generations, singing Mary's song has been a daily dose of defiance against the forces of death. Proclaiming every night that the reign of God will come.

It must have been startling and a thousand other things. This news. This calling.

I'm one of those people that feels all the emotions at the same time. Especially when it comes to stepping into an unknown future. You know-- the trifold mixture of excitement, grief, and terror when risk is going to be required?

I was 23 years old. I was leaving a tradition that was familiar. One I had known for all of my formative years. I had always been good at connecting and finding my people. Now, I was faced with the prospect of losing so much. I even had preached at some churches I would not be invited back to. There was a future for me but I couldn't see it.

I was in the process of coming out. I finally listened and realized that was what God was calling me to do as those baptismal waters continued to wash me up on new shores.

Where have you experienced an earth shifting moment? marriage, divorce, death, a loss that shook you to your core? Your own coming out? Not your sexuality but something else? Where have the tides in that great ocean of mercy led you and opened up a new landscape before you on the other side of risk? Where are they leading you now? What future is God beckoning you to? What song must you sing?

Greetings, Favored one. Hail Mary- full of grace. The Lord is with you!

Much perplexed, she pondered what sort of greeting this might be. She wrestled with what kind of calling/life/future this might lead to.

Mary- the poor, peasant teenager who we confess to be the mother of God speaks and sings with such power.

On the other side of this proclamation she seems to have such freedom. She moves with such bravery and strength. No wonder she has been held up as an icon of faithfulness down through the ages. Who does she remind you of in your life?

Luther connects the annunciation of Mary to justification by faith. Mary receives the favor of God and the gift of carrying God in her body by grace alone and a love that crosses borders and boundaries. Love that creates. Love that is generative and calls us into a new futures. Love that God delights in lavishing on all creation. The word of God that she carried is the word that raises her to life. This word is the one that places her on a new path. This word reorients her. This word is the one that comes to you and me and does the same.

We were estranged and cast out because of our sin. Now by this lowly and vulnerable child we have been rescued. Called out. In baptism a voice greeted you, spoke your name. In our deaths in that water we received favor. You dwell with and are related to the triune God. That is where you belong alongside Mary. There it is not class or rank or status or station or bloodline or ancestry or inheritance of any human distinction that defines you but the name you bear. Now you live with your face always toward the sun, with nothing left to be afraid of, for even death is in your past. This is what she proclaims. No wonder she was so free to speak and sing with such risk, power, and courage.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer called Mary's song "the most passionate, the wildest, one might even say the most revolutionary hymn ever sung."

As written "In the 1980s, the Guatemalan government decided that Mary's words about God's love for the poor were too dangerous and revolutionary. The words of the Magnificat had been stirring the hearts of Guatemala's poor population. Mary's words about the Christ child were inspiring the poor to believe that freedom and change were possible and that following the way of Jesus would interrupt the flow of civilization as they knew it. As passion swelled, the government banned any public recitation of the Magnificat." In other words, they had to sing it!

Mary's son is our brother. The horizon of our days. In our world the future seems so inevitable and the past so alluring. We face our own losses and pain. In that cocophany may Mary's song bend our ears to Christ. The word that greets you, recreates, reorients, turns you around, and announces to you who you are. And caught up in the song may we imagine what it might sound like coming from our lips. In this time, in this place. Embodying risk and courage and resurrection. Daring to imagine that what God has promised will come. Singing in the reign of God on this late Advent Sunday. In this place we leave all of yesterday's graves and walk towards the dawn. Christ's body our food we interrupt the powers of this world too. It starts with a song.

In many and various ways God spoke to his people of old by the prophets and now in these last days he has spoken to *you* by his son.

And where the word reverberates, the future has already come toward you and you bring it to this tired world. Where bread is broken, wine is poured, the cross stands center, sinners are forgiven, and in all the lost and forgotten places encircling us. There, Christ is born and Mary's song still resounds.

In the face of death, when we forget where we belong- we must sing.