**Singing A Magnificat World**

In the last several months it has been hard to make sense of what is going on in the world. One has only to read the newspapers to be overwhelmed and confused. The news about COVID, Afghanistan, the environmental crisis, not to mention what is going on in this country, never mind what is happening in each of our lives, is hard to make sense of. It is all so confusing.

In the face of such overwhelming loss, grief, and confusion, words are often feeble at best, and sentimental at worst. What on earth is there to say that doesn’t seem silly, feeble, or sentimental?

Life for two cousins nearly two thousand years ago was not any different than it is for us. Like us, they lived in the face of loss and grief, and probably not a little fear. They didn’t know how to make sense of it all. They knew the stories of random killings, and senseless violence. They had probably seen some of it themselves. They knew about military occupation, disease, lost hope, and tragic death. Like us, they had somehow to make sense of it all. And it was no easier for them. Like us, words for them were often feeble at best, and sentimental at worst. What on earth is there to say?

In just a few days, we will be celebrating Christmas. In some homes reeling from death, loss, and violence, what on earth is there to say? Words are often feeble at best, and sentimental at worst. How on earth can we sing in the face of such overwhelming loss and grief?

Yet Mary and Elizabeth did just that, they sang, not in denial of the world they knew, but in hope of the world that could be. They sang not out of a sense of sentimental wishful thinking, but out of a conviction that God was about to do a great thing, in spite of and because of, it all. They sang, not as a way to turn their backs on the loss, and grief, and fear of their lives, but as a way to stare those losses, griefs, and fears, in the face. They sang and sang and sang.

*My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior; \*
for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant.
From this day all generations will call me blessed: \*
the Almighty has done great things for me,
and holy is his Name.
He has mercy on those who fear him \*
in every generation.
He has shown the strength of his arm, \*
he has scattered the proud in their conceit.
He has cast down the mighty from their thrones, \*
and has lifted up the lowly.
He has filled the hungry with good things, \*
and the rich he has sent away empty.
He has come to the help of his servant Israel, \*
for he has remembered his promise of mercy,
The promise he made to our fathers, \*
to Abraham and his children for ever.[[1]](#footnote-1)*

For some, Christmas is the apex of sentimentality. They forever attempt, and mostly fail, to achieve that Hallmark moment. Yet for others, and I hope for you, Christmas is not a time of sentimental wishful thinking, but a time to sing, not in denial of a world that is, but in hope of a world that could be.

Mary and Elizabeth knew firsthand about tragedy, grief, loss, and fear. And who does not have their version of that?

It seems to me that we have a choice at Christmas. We can either wrap our Christmas in feeble and sentimental words, trying to achieve that Hallmark moment for ourselves and our world, or we can sing. We can sing, not in denial of the world as it is, but in hope of a world that could be, a world of mercy, justice and peace, a Magnificat world.

The promise of God in the Magnificat which Mary sings is not a feeble or sentimental promise, full of wishful thinking, denying that things ever are. The promise of God that Mary sings in the Magnificat is a bold conviction of how things can be. And that is what we celebrate at Christmas, not that things ever were, but how things can be.

This week we sing! We sing in the face of COVID, and racial injustice, and climate emergency. We sing in the face of our own losses, griefs, and tragedies. We sing with Mary and Elizabeth, and the countless women and men, who have sung through the ages, perhaps feebly, but certainly not sentimentally. We sing, not turning our back on a world that is, but facing a world that God is making, even now: a world of mercy, justice and peace, a Magnificat world.

So, let us sing! Let us sing today, and tomorrow, and that day after that, and help God bring about a Magnificat world, a world where God’s dream of mercy, justice, and peace, is not a sentimental dream, but a reality for all the world.

**Date:** 19 December 2021

**Lectionary Year and Proper:** Advent IV, Year C

**Solemnity or Major Feast Day:** Advent IV

**Occasion:** 1720 Project

**Place:** Monastery of Saint Mary and Saint John

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1. Luke 1: 46 - 55 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)