Scripture: Luke 1:46b-55; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

At 15 worked at camp… learned guitar… collage learned to play/song write…

My friend went on to make her career song writing.

I wrote a few terrible heart-broken songs and one about Ben… never wrote again.

Our Scripture -a teenager with lots of hormones and emotions – also wrote a song

I wrote those few songs because I couldn’t keep them in any longer, the emotion had to find an avenue to pour out of me.

I imagine it was much the same for Mary.

Her song springs forth from her soul!

Let’s zoom out from the song a little and place it inside it’s story:

* The angel Gabriel leaves after telling Mary her life altering news of this unusual pregnancy,
* and Mary runs. "With haste,"
* this newly pregnant teenager makes for the hills, not slowing down until she reaches the home of Elizabeth, her also-pregnant cousin.
* When her kinswoman welcomes her, Mary bursts into song — a song so subversive, governments twenty centuries later ban its public recitation. (res-a-tay-tion)

In fact: When the British ruled India, the Magnificat was prohibited from being sung in churches. Similarly, during the "Dirty War" in Argentina, after the mothers of disappeared children postered the capital plaza with the words of the Magnificat, the military junta banned all public displays of the song. Too much hope, they decided, is a dangerous thing.

I love this story. One of the rare narratives in the Bible that is female-centered.

* It is both intimate and global
* Both childish and prophetic
* It balances fear with courage, doubt with faith, vulnerability with strength

I also love it because it’s this 1st C teenage girl with a Greta Thunberg kind of attitude singing in the Magnificat of the overthrow of the social order where the hungry are fed and the rich sent away empty handed.

At least that’s how I like to imagine it…

So… here we have a young teenage girl. She’s a peasant and she’s engaged to a pretty religious guy. An angelic figure visits her saying that she’s found favor with God and is going to conceive a son by the Holy Spirit.

To give her some credit, one of the remarkable things: says “ok, lets do it!”

Based on very little solid evidence or information, she said “yes, I am God’s servant, let it be according to God’s word”

If there was a behind the scenes special on Mary and angel Gabriel, I would like to know how many girls said no that night before the angel found one who would say yes?

What was she going to get out of it? Would I have said yes?

And then she runs off to Eliz who calls her blessed and Mary sings that for generations to come people will call her blessed.

But lets think about that. Blessed.

Is that was being blessed looks like? We usually use that word a bit differently, like: “You’re so blessed to have that new boat”.

But how exactly is Mary using that word?

* Did she feel blessed as her unwed belly grew under the gaze of disapproving others?
* Did she feel blessed when traveling away from her family at 9 month pregnant?
* Did she feel blessed when laboring amongst sheep and straw?
* Did she feel blessed to flee to Egypt, away from anyone she knew with her young family to escape a child massacre?
* Did she feel blessed when her heart dropped realizing she left her 12 year old in Jerusalem?
* At his arrest did she feel blessed seeing rope dig into the wrists of her precious son?
* Did she feel blessed when they lifted him up on to that cross?

“Blessed are you among women”. But if that’s what blessing is, I might have to pass, I’d rather have the boat.

This is why I hate the #blessed trend

The boat, the trip, the sun shining on our picnic, is not exactly blessed -it’s wealth, and good fortune, and plain old chance.

Being blessed mean to be fully satisfied by God’s favour, regardless of the circumstances.

Being blessed means seeing God in the world and trusting that God is at work even in things we can’t see, or understand, or imagine.

Mary saying “God, I’m yours. Let’s do this thing” In her yes, she is blessed.

She didn’t say yes because she thought by doing so God was going to shower her with cash and prizes. No.

She understands something our culture struggles to get: that getting a blessing is not the same as getting a present.

She said yes not based on the expectation of things being awesome for her but based on the expectation that God can create something out of nothing.

To be a people marked by the faith of Mary is to be a people, who say “Ok, I don’t understand what’s going on and I know that my life isn’t going to end up looking like one I would choose out of a catalogue but I trust that God is at work in all of it and I’m pleased with that.”

Blessedness is being used for God’s purpose more than it’s getting what we want or things being easy.

God's call on Mary's life requires her to be profoundly courageous and countercultural, to trust an inner vision few others understand or value.

Christmas really isn’t about getting what you want, or making sure you’re giving others what they want.

**To experience Christmas is to trust that God can do this thing again. God become flesh in our world again. God can again be born in me, in you, in this broken mess of a gorgeous world.**

In the 4th century St Gregory of Nyssa wrote, “What was achieved in the body of Mary will happen in the soul of everyone who receives the Word.”

The HS has come to work in our lives as well, and when we open ourselves to trust that God is at work in our lives, we can follow Paul’s words found in 1Thessalonians;

“Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. Give thanks in all circumstances.”

Paul is not just telling us to be happy and optimistic. Paste on a smile and pretend everything is all right.

Paul is writing this letter to a community in Thessalonica, who were concerned that the coming of Christ has not happened yet (it had been 20 years since X had ascended into heaven and still no sign)

So they are asking: “what do we do in the waiting?” “How shall we live?”

This was a town that was deeply entrenched in Greco-Roman politics and religion and was a place of severe persecution for those of Christian faith. This was not an easy place to love Jesus and rejoice.

And yet, that is what Paul’s advise for them is: Hold fast to what is good, rejoice always, pray continuously, and give thanks.

They might have thought, (sarcastically) Thanks Paul. That’s easier said then done. …

And then Paul reminds them (v24) “The One who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.”

It’s an invitation to trust that God is faithful. God will lead the way.

When we trust in God’s plan, and say yes to God’s plan, then we can live Paul’s words to rejoice, and we can sing Mary’s song of praise of a world made right.

We don’t know what’s next in our lives, we can make plans but we also know that all that we have built up around us can change in an instant. We know that we will have to face hard things in our life, we know choices will have to be made.

Will we choose to trust God? Will we choose God’s blessing?

Mary was facing all sorts of difficult things, and yet she sung (not of lament, which would have been a fair response) but a song of praise, a song of God’s vision for the world.

So, as we wonder in Advent, at what God has in store for us next, may we wonder with joy on our lips, a song in our voice, and have the faith to say Mary’s confident yes: “Here we are, we are your servants, may it be so according to your Word.” Amen.