

Luke 1:46-55 - Mary's Song of Praise: The Magnificat

⁴⁶ And Mary said,

“My soul magnifies the Lord,

⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

⁴⁸ for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant.

For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed;

⁴⁹ for he who is mighty has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.

⁵⁰ And his mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.

⁵¹ He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts;

⁵² he has brought down the mighty from their thrones
and exalted those of humble estate;

⁵³ he has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he has sent away empty.

⁵⁴ He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,

⁵⁵ as he spoke to our fathers,
to Abraham and to his offspring forever.”

Reader: Hear what the Spirit is saying to the church.

PEOPLE: Thanks be to God. Amen.

“Music is, to me, proof of the existence of God.” – Kurt Vonnegut

Mary was so moved by a vision of God, the Lover of the Lowly, that she broke out in song – *“My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.”*

The Kurt Vonnegut quote above goes on to say, *“Music is so extraordinarily full of magic. In the tough times of my life I can listen to music and it makes such a difference.”* I suspect he is not alone. Have there been times in your life when something happened that you couldn't help but break out in song? Perhaps, it was a time of great joy – like the night before you were to be married? Holding a newborn child or grandchild in your arms? Or at the news of the illness of a loved one or the struggle of a parent worried about raising their child?

Music moves us. It lifts us up, soothes our wounded soul, strengthens us or makes us laugh. During worship, in every culture, music helps open a spiritual connection to God.

Music accompanies us during so many times of our lives. What were some of the songs you remember from when you were growing up? Church songs? Popular tunes? There are days when I have trouble recalling someone's name or even what I had for lunch yesterday but, if you were to ask me what the words to my favourite songs as a teenager were _ I would respond singing them:

“Sing, sing a song. Sing out loud, sing out strong. Don’t worry that it’s not good enough for anyone else to hear. Just sing, sing a song.”

Those of you who were present at Joyce Curran’s memorial service on Wednesday will, no doubt, recognize this as the music played during the video tribute in honour of her. I don’t know about you but I haven’t been able to get the tune out of my head ever since. Joyce was another lover of music and she used it to build up a community of people. She used music like a carpenter uses a hammer. From Joyce’s daughters, Audrey and Jennifer, I understand that right about here, their mother would’ve broke out singing, *“If I had a hammer, I’d hammer in the morning.”* It was Joyce’s practise to include music in many areas of her life. The phrase, *“It’s like living in a musical,”* comes to mind. Such are the antics of those who are tmusically gifted.

At the opposite end of the spectrum as those who feel they can’t sing. John Bell, former leader of the Iona Community, writes, *“Everybody can sing. It just so happens that one in four people believe they can’t, usually because of the ‘friendly’ advice of a parent, teacher, boyfriend or girlfriend during a delicate stage of development.”* If you are one of those individuals, you’ll remember someone saying something akin to, *“Don’t sing! Just stand there and mouth the words.”* The bible says, make a joyful noise. It doesn’t say anything about being on key! Your voice is an instrument and, like any instrument, it needs to be used and it needs practise.

Alannah Mitchell, is an award winning Canadian Science Journalist, who was the guest speaker at a social justice conference I attended a few years ago. From the podium she shared that her

father was the musically gifted person in their family and that she was one of those children who had been told not to sing by a teacher. The words to a Frank Sinatra song say it best, *“Someone people just like steppin’ on dreams.”* As part of Alannah’s mid-life transformation she decided to join a choir and face her life-long fear of singing. From the podium, in front of 400 strangers, she reclaimed the dream that had been taken from her. Alannah sang and as she sang many of us welled up with tears. Following her final note, a thunderous round of applause went up.

Music is the universal language and it belongs to everyone, not just a chosen few. If you, like Allannah, have been wounded by the careless words of someone in your life – be it about singing or some other dream you had, I encourage you to reclaim that vision of yourself: join the choir, take up dance lessons, write a book or climb a mountain!

Musicians are a wonderful lot! They share their gift of music and song willingly and lovingly as was evident so clearly this week. Amidst the pre-concert Christmas busyness of their lives, members of the Amabilis Choir and the Kent St. Choristers joined the BNUC choir to celebrate Joyce Curran’s life and offer their own gift of song as a tribute to a woman of song.

I invite you to join me this morning to give special thanks to our own musical talent: the choir, the worship band (Jonathan, Lisa, Isobel and Neil) and most especially, Dolores and Kelly. I am deeply thankful for the joy of sharing in worship leadership with such gifted musicians. We are so deeply blessed by their presence of all of these people in our lives.

During this Advent season, we will have several opportunities to enjoy the gifts of music and musicians. It began with the Lyric Singers at the Madrigal Dinner last night. To be followed by concerts for the Kent St. Choristers, Panorama Community Children's Choir, the Don Stewart Christmas Concert and the Peace Arch Choir.

Mary sang the Magnificat. What's your song of praise to the Maker? If you know what it is, great! If not, find it and sing it, dance it or write it...as an offering back to God. Let's make a joyful noise as we – singers and singers yet-to-be – join our voices together to sing a paraphrase of Mary's Magnificat and may our souls truly magnify the Lord this Advent season. Amen!