

# “Love All”

Part IV of VI in the sermon series,  
“The Advent/Christmas Conspiracy”  
Micah 5:2-5a, Hebrews 10:5-10, Luke 1:39-55

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From the Pulpit

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A Baptismal Meditation delivered by The Rev. Dr. Timothy C. Ahrens, Sr. Minister, The First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, Columbus, Ohio, Advent 4, December 20, 2015, dedicated to Evin, Simone, Natalie and Taylre who take such great care of our church's babies, infants and toddlers, to the blessed memory of Betty Cameron, to Wesley David Kiesel on his baptism into Christ & always to the glory of God!

*“More Love”*

*Part IV of VI in the sermon series,*

*“The Advent/Christmas Conspiracy”*

*Micah 5:2-5a, Hebrews 10:5-10, Luke 1:39-55*

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Let us pray: May the words of my mouth and the meditations of each one of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our rock and our salvation. Amen.

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The Magnificat – “The song of Mary” - is our first and oldest Advent Hymn. Mary sings her hymn of praise to God with passion, honesty, directness, and vehemence. It is the most revolutionary Advent hymn ever written and ever sung. No hymnal carries Mary's words with revolutionary tunes, although there is still time to match them if someone is courageous enough to put powerful music to

revolutionary words! I recommend starting with **Les Miserables** for musical measures of power in sound. Perhaps Alain Boublil and [Claude-Michel Schönberg](#) are ready for “one more song!”

Here we find no gentle, sweet, dreamy Mary that we hear about in Christmas carols through the ages. Here there is no glowing, sugary, demure Mary that we see painted on canvasses through the ages. This 14-year-old country girl **doesn't look like much, but watch out when she starts singing!** Just like Loretta Lynn, the **Coal Miner's Daughter**, she moves mountains with her song. All the tones, tunes and echoes of powerful and prophetic women in the Hebrew Scriptures – Deborah, Judith, Miriam, Esther, and especially Hannah – come out prophetically in the song of Mary.

In Mary, we see and hear the passionate, powerful, proud, enthusiastic, uncompromising Mother of God. In **her words magnifying God and God's glory, we see exactly why God chose this woman to conceive, bear, birth, raise-up and teach Jesus.** We see why Mary is the right choice to be **Palestine's #1 mom of God's #1 son, and our beloved Savior, Jesus Christ.** God chose Mary because she was strong, able, open, and she was in love with God. And God knew she would be in love with His son, too – never

apologizing, rationalizing or explaining away his incredible birth and her role in bearing the son of God.

**The God of whom Mary sings is a revolutionary God!** Her God (our God) will knock rulers off their thrones. God will humble the proud, raise up the humble. God will fill the hunger of the needy and makes the rich who created hunger conditions regret their greedy decisions.

Let's listen more closely to God's four revolutionary melodies woven through Mary's song. Her song is sung with four strains carrying the tune.

First, we hear the Base-line of *moral revolution*. **God scatters the proud from the plans of their hearts.** If you and I are to follow Christ, we have to put to death the pride of our hearts. To follow Christ is death of pride. When we open our souls to Jesus, he removes the last vestige of pride in our heart. God empowers us to see ourselves as we really are. God opens our heart to see ourselves as God sees us.

Second come the Tenors voices giving rise to *social revolution*. **Here God casts down the mighty and exalts the humble.** God puts an end to the differentiation between rich and poor. We are no longer known by our titles or degrees. We are not known by the letters attached on either side of our baptismal names. Our vitae are simple and resumes carry only a few words. We are all children of

the living God. There are not common men and women and socially exalted ones. We are all one in Christ.

The third line of Mary's music comes from the Altos who sing of *economic revolution*. **God fills the hungry and sends the rich away empty.** This is not happy news to those who like things just like they are. But, for those who have never had a chance in this world, these words ring true. They sing to the heart and soul of justice in God's realm ("three revolutions" are drawn from William Barclay's Commentary on Luke, 1:45-55).

Finally, the sopranos pick up the tune singing of the *Revolution of Love*. Although Mary never gives breath to the love she feels for God and the child in her womb, watch what she does when the child is born. She holds on to him for dear life. From birth, to their narrow escape to Egypt, to their return to the carpenter's house in Nazareth – all the way to the cross, Mary is there to support, love, nurture and care for her firstborn son. This is love in action.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer reminds us in a sermon delivered December 17, 1933 in London England that the manger **and the cross** are **THE** two pivot points in the Christ story. He writes:

*There are only two places where the powerful and great in the world lose their courage, tremble in the depth of their souls, and become truly afraid. These are the manger and the cross of*

*Jesus Christ. No man of violence dares to approach the manger; even King Herod did not risk that. For it is here that the thrones tumble, the mighty fall, and the high and mighty ones are put down, because God is with the lowly.* (Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Christmas Sermons, editor and translator, Edwin Robertson, Zondervan Publishers, Grand Rapids, MI, 2005, pp. 102).

Remember, there are only two who were present at the manger and the cross. They are Mary and Jesus. No one else. In these two, God comes to us with world changing purpose.

**Moral, social, economic and love revolution come together in four parts to give Mary's song its revolutionary depth and power.** You see why God chooses Mary. In Mary, God find God's instrument of mercy and justice. In Mary, God enters the cave at Bethlehem with the intent of changing the world, not merely to create a romantic family portrait. If we want to participate in Advent, in Christmas or in life as Christians, we cannot be like spectators observing this music of revolution and transformation. We must become singers in this opera of change. No matter how bad our voices are – even if we lip-sync the piece- we need to join this song as it is sung through the ages.

So which voice part will you sing? Which part of the drama of the nativity will you engage? Will you be a pious shepherd, a gift-bearing king, or a disciple of the one born in the manger – perhaps all three, meaning pious, gift-bearing, and disciplined - choosing to follow his way and his will for our lives?

**Take Mary's words to heart.** Believe and follow the words of this humble working man's wife. See God and respond to God as the one bringing moral, social, economic and love revolution to the world – turning the world upside down (to use the Apostle Paul's words).

**We are five nights away from the eve of Jesus' birth** into this world, how would this world be different if he were king of kings and Lord of Lords for ALL? What would it sound like if we sung this song with Mary as she sings her revolutionary lullaby to Jesus in the dirt and straw of the cave of Bethlehem rather than placing her high up in the crèche where little children can't even see her, let alone feel her powerful presence?

**How would Mary sing today as she looked at our world?**

Come to the Manger with Mary when she hears that women, children and men on our city and our streets have no place to call home, no meal for Christmas, no family, no friends. You know she would be here singing songs of hope

with our sisters and brothers at Bethlehem on Broad Street.  
*What would Mary sing about homelessness and those cast out of their families at Christmas time?*

Stand with Mary when she hears that our children are killing and being killed by too many guns in the hands of too many confused and hate-filled people. Stand with her as she cries out for the mothers who have held their children dying in their arms from gunshot wounds. Stand with her as she cries out for change in laws which make it easier to fire a gun than to drive a car. *What would Mary sing about that gun violence in our society?*

For that matter, what would sing about mental health? What would sing about care of our earth? What would she sing about our infant mortality rates being sky-high in this city and rising every day for African-American baby boys and baby girls?

There is a reason why Christian men and women of faith down through the ages have chosen Mary as their prayer partner and their model of faith. She is fearless, God-filled, protective, and loving. She believes in, worships and gives glory to a God who defends the defenseless; loves the loveless; brings grace to the un-graced; and humbles the proud. She believes in, worships and glorifies a God who lifts the fallen and knocks down the proud and powerful.

She believes in, worships and glorifies the God who is her son's Father.

In the 12<sup>th</sup> Century, St. Bernard's prayer, Memorare was first penned and offered to Mary, our singing mother of Jesus. Bernard knew that no one who came to Mary was left unprotected. He knew that in Mary's song was direct and purposeful word to God on behalf of those who have no words, feel no access and only feel pain. So, Bernard offered us this prayer for all time. Prayer works. But, this prayer offered to Mary, is a prayer for all people, for all time.

St. Bernard wrote:

*Remember, O most Gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help or sought thy intercession, was left unaided. Inspired by thy confidence I fly unto thee, O Virgin of virgins, my Mother. To thee do I come, before thee I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the word incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in thy mercy hear and comfort me. Amen.*

Let us **live** the Song of the Mother of God in our Lives and thus participate in changing of the world. More love will flow from us when we sing Mary's song as if we mean it. Only then will more love enter and change this world. Amen.

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