

## Wicker Park Lutheran Church

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Today's gospel is known as the Magnificat. It's a song of praise sung by Mary, Jesus's mother, but it seems oddly out of place in the narrative. Up to this point, an *angelos*, that is Greek for "messenger" or an angel, came to Mary. This messenger told Mary that she would conceive a son. And, she's shocked, because she's a virgin at that point. Nevertheless, before Mary's shocked face wore off, she learned that her much older post-menopausal relative, Elizabeth, was pregnant. During the conversation, Mary consented to having Jesus and went to see Elizabeth. Upon greeting Elizabeth, the baby in Elizabeth's womb, who is John the Baptist, did a little kick, and Elizabeth called it a "leap for joy" and so she blessed Mary. That all happened before we got to today's musical number. All good?

Now, here's the odd, out of place thing. I'm confused by Mary's joy. After all, she seemed oblivious to her situation. Mary was an unwed, 12/13/14-year-old, Jewish virgin, who would soon be pregnant with a bastard child. Jesus was conceived by a feminine woman and a gender-neutral spirit or, historically speaking, maybe a feminine spirit. Either way, it's not a masculine spirit. And, the spirit and Mary aren't married. (Gosh, it's like reading a trashy queer novel.)

The thing is, Mary doesn't get it. Her life was over, her childhood was done, and her innocence was halted. On top of that, she was living in an occupied territory under the military rule of Rome. Let's be honest, Mary was a

textbook example of what some would call an unwed, welfare mother who will do nothing but drain the system. Amid all of that, in a time when it should have been everyone for themselves, Mary chooses to make space in her world, in her life, and in her very body for something unknown.

And, if you're anything like me, I feel like my life is already jam packed and I don't have any space to give. My schedule feels full to the brim with competing interests like family, friends, self-care, work, hobbies, and my spiritual life. For many of us in this urban environment, where we live has limited space for our growing families, passions, and daily life. Space is limited and not something we easily give for others.

Yet, Mary knew that God makes space. As a Jewish girl she learned of this space-making God – a God who heard the cries of the childless family of Abram and Sarai and made space for them to be blessed with numerous descendants, a God who heard the oppression of the Israelites in Egypt and made space for them to immigrate to a prosperous land, and a God who heard the cries of Hannah and made space to liberate her subjugated people. Mary knew that God makes space for those who are considered deplorable and undesirable. Mary knew that God's action was and is in favor of those at their lowest low. So, sure, Mary's situation was far from great, but she knew that this was the moment where God works best.

So, Mary made a bold, spiritual move. She re-oriented her life to partner with God in the process of making space. Mary became what Byzantine

Christians have called “the container of the uncontainable.”<sup>1</sup> She, literally, made space within herself, in her life, and in her future to allow for God’s justice and peace to fully reign.

Mary’s example reflects God’s essence. She reminds us that we can be space-makers. We are encouraged to realize the space we take and the ways we can share space with all of creation. We are given opportunities to welcome new possibilities.

And, this space making, is more than a “kitchy” call to re-evaluate our daily life. This is a call towards a complete reversal. It’s a push to recognize that our calling as people of faith is to prioritize the lowly, the hungry, the persecuted, and the marginalized. It’s how we offer our full selves, all that we are, all that we have. It is learning to make space to intentionally lose ourselves so that we might become something new, just like when Mary welcomed Jesus. For, when you become a parent, everything you do shifts. It’s not a little tweak, it’s a life-changing movement. So too, God’s work requires more than a tweak, it requires a full shift so that our churches, government, and institutional policies favor the weak and marginalized. It’s a full shift of our lives to make the priority of our existence less about securing wealth, power, and privileges for the few, but rather, that we find a leveling of our distribution.

Friends, that leveling will not be comfortable. As Mary says, it will feel like the rich get nothing because more of their tax dollars go to those in need. It

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<sup>1</sup> <https://liturgy.co.nz/container-of-the-uncontainable>

will feel like we spend a disproportional amount of time talking about black and brown lives, which after decades of white-centric life may feel like white genocide. It will feel like the fellowship hall shrinking as we literally lift up the marginalized with an elevator and dignified bathrooms.

But, the thing is that Mary's song is Hannah song and it is God's song. It's not a tweak, it's an overhaul that will feel like the world is spinning off its rocker, but that, friends, is what God's movement looks like in the world. It's good news for the poor and a challenge for the rich. It's a place where space is opened, and it's never been presented as easy.

So, friends, today, mighty Mary speaks a bold truth about our God. She reminds us that God provides enough for all. At this table we're strengthened to do this ridiculously hard work of transforming our way of thinking and being. It's not a once-and-done thing. It's a life-long pursuit that requires our focus, our commitment, and the gift of God's grace. For, our God has given us the gift of space. A gift that is given to share with others. Amen.