

Luke 1:39-45

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

Luke 1:46-55

Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm, he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly, he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever.

"Turning the Tables"

And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord!"

Luke 1:46



'Sometimes,' wrote Albert Schweitzer, 'our light goes out but is blown again into flame by an encounter with another human being. Each of us owes the deepest thanks to those who have rekindled this inner light. We are those who move in a procession, a march through the darkness. The lights we carry are much alike, though each is individually our own. And when they are blown out in spite of our efforts to protect them from sudden winds, we need each other in order to continue the procession, to see the way ahead. So we move on, our flickering light joining other lights in a communion---in a community---that is indeed awesome and beautiful.'

When Mary went to visit her cousin Elizabeth the two pregnant women greeted each other with compassionate understanding and loving-kindness friendship. For six months they deepened their relationship by talking about what God was doing in the birth of their babies. Elizabeth told Mary what she believed: that her baby was to become a prophet who would prepare the way for the Messiah's coming. Mary told Elizabeth what she believed: that her baby was the Holy One of God who would become the Savior of the world's sin sick souls. Both wondered about why God had chosen them and about how God's favor would be saving them. Her departing song is the one the church still sings about the Holy One's table turning saving Love . . . which scatters the proud in the thoughts of their hearts, brings down the powerful from their thrones, lifts up the lowly, fills the hungry with good things, and sends the rich away empty.

In her poem, 'Magnificat of Friendship' (from *Miryam of Nazareth; Woman of Strength and Wisdom*) Ann Johnson wondered with Mary about God's favors of mind, body, spirit, and soul that eternally graces souls who befriend Jesus and one another in Divine Love.

My soul flowers in the light of your love, my God,
and my spirit sings Alleluia in the reality of your joyful presence,
because you have chosen my kinswoman and me
with the summons of your eyes.

Yes, we are known now and for all time.

We are known as women, blessed.

Holy is your name.

The tenderness of your hand rests on us as we journey in your way.
Your power in my life has led me into the embrace of your loving arms.

You have exposed my lonely pride
that I might turn my head to your nurturing breast.

You have revealed the hollowness of achievements
and have opened in my heart a space filled with simple, loving moments.

My hunger you have satisfied, my excess you have ignored.

You are my help and I remember your tender love for me . . .
for we have touched each other, you and I, and we have made promises.

I remember your tenderness

for all that you have begun in me and in those with whom I walk.

And I respond with all that I am becoming in this hour and in all times come.

And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord!"

Luke 1:46

In her reflection on this scripture, Jennifer Garrison Brownell wrote: 'Lula Mae Hardaway was born in 1930 to a teenage sharecropper mother who abandoned her to a string of abusive relatives. She moved north to find work and married a man thirty years her senior who forced her into prostitution in order to feed their growing family. Lula Mae fled her husband and took her young family to Detroit, where she found work as a maid and took her children to church every week. She was always very protective of her third son, Steveland, who was blind and spent much of his time indoors, teaching himself to play a variety of musical instruments. Steveland performed at church, becoming a neighborhood sensation, and was discovered at age 11 by a Motown executive who gave him an album contract and a new name---Little Stevie Wonder. While Lula Mae is credited with co-writing several of Wonder's best-loved hits, including 'Signed, Sealed, Delivered', 'I'm Yours,' and 'I Was Made to Love Her,' it's impossible to know for sure the full creative impact mother had on son. I wonder if the songs that became Stevie Wonder's hits started off as human and improvisations around Lula Mae's house. Maybe the words "here I am, baby," started as a lullaby, a song of strength and survival in spite of seemingly insurmountable circumstances. It is also impossible to know the full creative impact of Mary's words and music on her son, but the first chapter of Luke gives us a glimpse. Her son, that incredible cry of faith and liberation, burst forth while Mary's child still rode inside her. Hummed in bits and pieces, I imagine the song was not silenced at his birth but was the soundtrack for all of Little Jesus Wonder's childhood. Like mothers in every time and place, she sang for comfort, for hope and for survival. Her song became his song. And his song became the world's.'

Prayer. God our Mother, sing us a lullaby. Not to put us to sleep, but to wake us up to your hope for each of us and for the world. Amen.