

SERMON
December 23, 2018
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Everybody is somebody's baby! With Christmas only a few days away it's good to remember that this story of ours, this ancient and yet gloriously modern story—about a mother's love and her hopes and dreams for her child rings true in our ears.

*My soul doth magnify the Lord,
and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior*

There she is—Mary—full of God's love and truth and grace. A servant of God—bearing hope and salvation to a people who had all but lost hope. A child was to be born.

It was only a few years ago that I held my first grandchild in my arms. She was just shy of a year old and I was babysitting. We were alone together. With Christmas music on the radio we danced and swirled around the kitchen in my son's home. It was just the two of us. The dancing and swirling made her smile and giggle. But when I started to sing with the music she became very still.

*What child is this who lay to rest,
on Mary's lap is sleeping.*

First she seemed startled by the sound. Then she listened, intently, with her eyes and her ears. It seemed as if her whole small body became tuned to the sound.

*whom angels greet with anthems sweet,
while shepherd's watch are keeping*

When her eyes met mine, I, too, quieted. The dancing turned to swaying, as the song embraced us both. Repeating the words, the melody, the phrases over and over, it was like sipping hot

chocolate that's just the right temperature. warm and milky and sweet. We remained like this for some time. I don't know how long. Then her eye lids closed and she was fast asleep. I lifted her to my shoulder and held her close, and in my own sweet dreams we continued to sway together.

Mothers, Dads, grandparents, aunts and uncles—in this church family we share—I have watched over the years as members of this congregation have shared their young children with each other taking turns to love them and comfort them. We have all from time immemorial used lullabies as a means of calming a child or helping an infant fall asleep, cradled in loving arms.

Today, we welcome another child—Thomas. How timely and yet how ancient. Like waves crashing on the beach—these children come from someplace very distant, from the depths of creation itself, and yet each is new—each has a piece of that power—that surge of life.

Think of the Magnificat, this great hymn of hope and victory that we recall today, not just as a song that the young Mary sings but as a lullaby that rings through the universe sung by our creator, our mother/father God—rocking and swaying—singing to each of us, his children—words of reassurance and hope!

*For the mighty hath magnified me,
and holy is his name
His mercy is on them that fear him
throughout all generations*

A lullaby is a promise. As we heard in the baptism of Jesus “You are my child, my beloved.”
I will love you and protect you and be here for you as long as I have breath to sing!
Everybody is somebody's baby. Everybody is a child of God.

*He has shown strength with his arm
He has scattered the the proud
He has cast down the mighty
He has filled the hungry*

*He has come to help
He is full of mercy
He keeps his promises.*

So many blessings, an abundance of grace.

So sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace.

A Christmas lullaby is a song of generosity, abundance and love. A song that reaches into the depth of our souls and assures us that we are loved more than we will ever know! And that God wants us to be happy and safe and secure. A Christmas lullaby drives out all doubt and fear and gives us an abiding hope that “all will be well.”

Luke sings for us a lullaby with angels and shepherds and with all the starry host. We embody the music and share it throughout our lives. We know the tune so well, we can recite it in our sleep. Have you noticed that many lullaby have a sort of mournful tone, like a lament? Our song of life is not without pain and the realities of the world. Our lullabys are more like a song a victory *inspite of* the difficulties we know we each encounter, and the sadness that is in the world. Lullabys combined with a lament are called a Lullament. A lullament, like the blues, can be restorative, healing—can give us release and comfort in difficult times. It’s the fluidity of emotional expression that helps to move us along. It’s the vibration—the sound at the very beginning and center of creation! Like the heart beat a child first knows from the very beginning, reverberating and engaging the child’s own soul.

Whew! All that in the song that Mary sings when she visits her cousin Elizabeth to share with her the mystery and delight of her pregnancy!

My soul doth magnify the Lord!

For Luke, the whole Christmas story is a lullaby—a lovely song that embraces us with the assurance of God’s love —swinging with the movement and sound of creation and yet, the most

solid place for us to stand. We each have a part of that sound. So don't worry if you can't hit all the right notes. To every child, your sound means YOU and YOU are the reassurance and love of God. Every culture and every age sings lullabys. Everybody is somebody's baby. And everybody is a child of God.

Amen.