

Luke 1:51-56 El Magnificat part 2

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When Mary was given the great news that she was going to bear a child, the liberator of her people, she sings, this beautiful praise song, right?

Well, we are not told that she ever expressed her fears, natural and human fears: Picture this: 2000 years ago, you are a teenager girl and a guy comes out of nowhere and tells you that he is an angel and you are going to bear the Messiah who your people had been waiting for centuries to liberate them, and you say “Yes! Of course!” right away, right? Like pastor Tom told us two weeks ago, she could be lapidated. Of course, she was terrified, of course she was not sure. She also knows that is not only about the delivery, but all that implies to be the mother of the messiah, her suffering, his suffering.

Contrary to Joseph, who questions the angel who told him to marry Mary, she is not allowed to show doubt, to argue, to negotiate with God’s will. Or at least, we are not told that part of the story, only that she is submissive, and pure. And of course, that is how we women are supposed to be, right?

But Mary is not submissive and pure only, she is a protest singer, she believes in a liberator God. The Magnificat, is actually a protest song. Praising the Lord, singing his strength, "He has brought down the powerful from their thrones" She is expressing her people's, and her own, hope and faith in the God's promise of freedom. Freedom from the oppression of, in this case, Rome. Of course, it is a protest song, in that particular time and place. In that enslaving situation, IT IS a protest song. God is coming to get rid of the ruling imperialism, the oppressive system, and the redemption of the oppressed "He has lifted up the lowly"

Yes, Mary, "the submissive" is giving us the first and most beautiful protest song. But this is not recognized, especially by church that is one of the institutions that historically has perpetuated -among of other types of oppressions- the role of women as submissive and pure, silent, weak. Always in need of being rescued, in need of a man to validate our existence, our identity, our essence, and being.

And not only inside church, socially, we need to be in some type of relationship with a man to be, TO BE. Like Rosa Parks' history. We know that part that she was in the bus, that she was brave to seat in an area reserved for whites only, etcetera. But we not always know that she was not the first one who did that. It was Claudette Colvin, but the civil rights

movement did not promote her story, because she was a pregnant teenager, and SINGLE! So, here comes the layers, the intersectionality: to be black, and a woman, and single mother. That puts you in a different place.

And this validation by a man, not by merits or our own human basic dignity is still going on. In 2007 when I started working as a rural medical doctor in El Salvador, our main focus was to reduce the maternal mortality, as part of the United Nations millennium goals. So, with I was part of a team who were always after pregnant women to ensure they had prenatal care and hospital delivery, I served a very rural and poor area where those things were almost miraculous. So, I had this patient: Dora Alicia, she was around 40 years old, in her 6th pregnancy, had never had a hospital delivery and her delivery process has just started. I was with the health promotor assigned to that area and it took us some time to convince her to go to the hospital, she said “yes, but only if my husband agrees” So, my coworker and I had to walk about 1 mile to where he was, cellphone signal was bad, so to ask him if he agreed. He was cutting a tree and said “oh, yes, sure”. So, we went back to Dora to tell her he agreed. When I said walking it was not a paved road, dirt road if any, at noon, 80 degrees that felt like 100, but we made it.

Speaking again about layers, it is not the same to be a poor, rural woman in Wisconsin, that a poor rural woman in San Pedro Puxtla, El Salvador, And I am not saying that it is easier here, but there are levels, layers.

Like it is not the same to be a Lutheran woman in the United States compared to being a Lutheran woman in El Salvador, and besides that, poor. Back in the time, in the Salvadorean Lutheran Church, the women group was called “Society of Lutheran Ladies”, fancy and it was very high end. But there was a change when a woman started pushing for an inclusion of women in pastoral leader roles, no matter their educational level and marital status. Because in the middle 80s, the only pastor was the bishop’s wife, who of course was in charge of Sunday school, and of course was a teacher. Now there are more women pastors and deacons, and their role is no longer for cleaning, cooking, or just behind a man. That woman was my mom.

We are celebrating in this series of wise women, their strength, their fight for liberation, their leadership. We commemorate, not only celebrate. Like the women’s day March 8th, that social media tells us to celebrate our femineity, fragility, to celebrate. When we are actually commemorating, honoring the young girls, immigrant poor girls and women, who died in the triangle fire demanding better working conditions. There is nothing to

celebrate there, but a lot to honor and to remember that there is still a lot to do for women's rights.

Back in the time when Mary sings the song that we just read, having faith in God was an act of rebellion, then the Magnificat is actually a radical song of protest, a cry for justice, and an expression of faith in a liberator God. A liberation of a whole nation, but also a liberation of women. And this power of the Magnificat is something that is still not always mentioned.

But, we all -women and men- are called to change that and ask God for strength and the Holy Spirit for guidance

Amen