

In this season there are a whole range of songs that speak to us... our great Advent and Christmas Carols and Anthems; seasonal favorites; songs that take us back or carry us away to different times and places.

Today we have a need to listen for and hear the sound of a song and a singer – not Buster, not even Tony Bennett but the song and voice of Mary... Today we have a need to be in tune with Mary's song and seek to join our lives to her melody and harmony.... Today, we have a need to echo her song in our seeking, searching and serving; in our living, learning and loving; in our waiting, watching, wondering.

The song originates and is offered because of the coming of Jesus. In Jesus, the God who stands beyond time enters time, the God who is infinite becomes finite, the God who is all-powerful becomes all-vulnerable, the God who is and continues to be Holy becomes wholly human, the God who is Spirit becomes flesh. God, the very God, whose "womb" birthed the world, is born of Mary's womb to bear the good news of peace on earth. **God becomes small and so Mary sings: "His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation."**

God is faithful, the Word, the Word of God becomes flesh, but not in the ways we might expect. God gets through to us, God connects with us, God inserts God's self into your life and mine by becoming an infant, small and vulnerable, needy and dependent. In a world where rulers are used to getting their own way by decisive means, at the point of a gun, with wads of cash, or an entourage of support personnel, God is determined to reveal God's love to us in the most astonishing, least expected, gentle, caring way. **God becomes small and so Mary sings "God has shown strength with his arm and has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts."**

By becoming just like us, just like how we all started out, small, tender, and vulnerable, God is fully able to show us what it means to be truly human and offers us the opportunity to stop acting or thinking or imagining that we are God. God's arrival in such a manner calls us to realize that we are not the center and the focus of this world, that we are not even to be the focus of our own lives. **God becomes small and so Mary sings: "God has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly."**

Because we cannot work our way up to God, God becomes small for us, a living, breathing, tangible means of grace bundled in a young girl's arms. The King of kings is born with a few lowly shepherds as guests of honor. The gift of Christmas is God's love for the world and the package is flesh and blood and love and faith, the most powerful forces that the world will ever know. **God becomes small and so Mary sings: "he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty".**

The child that comes is truth and grace.

Jesus enters our shadowy world to be our eternal light.

Jesus enters a world overrun by senseless noise to sing the melody of peace, the song of shalom, God's shalom.

Jesus enters the world - a testament to the small and quiet ways in which God goes about redeeming God's creation even though our world is overly-consumed by the big and the popular and the powerful.

Jesus enters the world and Jesus comes to your life and my life as a priceless gift – the only gift that really matters.

God becomes small and so Mary sings: “God 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.”

To receive this child of truth faithfully and fully, requires that all of us reshape our thinking, we are required to undergo a radical attitude adjustment: Turning aside from the big, boisterous, and hard-edged ways in which this world normally operates; focusing on the vulnerable and the tender. God becomes small, so redeeming God's world. The salvation born in Bethlehem's stable cannot be earned but only birthed and received like a young mother astounded by the gift of new life.

Henri Nouwen, Catholic priest and theologian, wrote about the powerlessness of the Christ-child in this way:

“Jesus is God-with-us, Emmanuel. The great mystery of God becoming human is God's desire to be loved by us. By becoming a vulnerable child, completely dependent on human care, God wants to take away all distance between the human and the divine. Who can be afraid of a little child who needs to be fed, to be cared for, to be taught, to be guided? God has become the all-powerless, all-vulnerable God who completely depends on us. How can we be afraid of a God who wants to be “God-with-us” and wants us to become “Us-with-God”?”

God becomes small that we might become God's children, loving and caring in the world. God becomes small but is still God, God in all God's fullness. In the Chapel of the Monastery of the Holy Spirit in Conyers GA there is a stained glass window entitled in Greek, Theotokos. Theotokos is the title Orthodox Christians' use for Mary. Theotokos means “God-bearer”. In this particular window Mary sits with outstretched arms and a womb so large that it contains Jesus standing as a grown man. Yes, God becomes small but even in the Christ Child we meet all God and all of God.

“We are all meant to be mothers of God,” wrote Meister Eckhart, a medieval mystic and theologian. *“What good is it to me,”* he said, *“if this eternal birth of the divine Son takes place*

unceasingly but does not take place within myself? And, what good is it to me if Mary is full of grace and if I am not also full of grace? What good is it to me for the Creator to give birth to his Son if I do not also give birth to him in my time and my culture? This, then is the fullness of time: When the Son of God is begotten in us.”

News, either or good or bad, changes our behavior. If you received news that your house was on fire – you would likely rush there. If we hear that there is to be a huge winter storm or a hurricane – we know we have things to do! If we are to welcome a baby or a grandbaby into our family – we need to make plans!

In the life of a church good news or bad news likewise changes behavior – if you heard today that the elevator had broken down and needed replaced so people could move around the building and come to worship – you would ask and act, “What can I do?”. If I told you the church tower is ready to collapse or had to inform you that the roof had fallen in – you would change their behavior, you would rally round, all of you; you would act and give as needed.

What then will you with the news that I have to give you? The news that this week, this very week.... the Son of God is to be born? Born into this world, into your life, born for all In what essential and vital ways will this news, the news of our Savior’s birth, the entire sum and substance of this Advent and Christmas season, change your behavior? Your thinking? Your serving? Your giving? Your acting? Your being? Your living?

The message we are invited and implored to receive, the Good news that is ours is this: God becomes small. This is Gospel, good news for the entire world and the whole of creation.

The truth of God with which we are asked to wrestle is this: God becomes small.

The experience of God into which we are asked to enter is this: God becomes small.

The life of God, offered for and on behalf of this world is contained in this Advent and Christmas affirmation: God becomes small.

God becomes small and thus we are freed to live, to pray, to give, to serve.

God becomes small and so we live and sing our own version of the song of Mary:

“Glory to God, in the highest heaven, and peace on earth, to those with whom God is pleased.” Amen.