

## **ADVENT WEEK THREE**

**December 15, 2019**

### **What a Hymn**

*Matthew 11:2-11; Luke 1:46b-55*

*"My soul proclaims your greatness, O God, and my spirit rejoices in you my Savior."*

*Luke 1:46b-47 (The Inclusive Bible)*

I'm one of those church people who loves the hymns of Christmas but also wants to save them for the candlelight service on Christmas Eve and later (don't get me started about the order of appearance of the figurines in the creche or Christmas trees in the sanctuary).

The hymns of Advent, including the ancient hymn that today's scripture ascribes to Mary, are some of my favorites. A glance through my denomination's hymnal lists plenty of music to keep a congregation's pent-up desire for Christmas hymns at bay until Dec. 24. Phrases from these hymns are full of promise, hope, and desire, unlike the Christmas hymns which can send the message, "Jesus is born. It's over. Nothing to see here. Return to your homes."

With a focus on a baby in manger, joy coming to the world, and a lovely silent night, it's no wonder Christmas music of both the sacred and secular kinds is so popular and hard to avoid from the end of Halloween until Dec. 25. But Christmas music does little to inspire action and instill hope, unlike Advent hymns.

I love these Advent hymn phrases: "born thy people to deliver," "we long for your new world," "the lowly are his choice," "he comes to break oppression, to set the captive free," "all the world, bound and struggling, seeks true liberty," and, "O come, thou Dayspring, come and cheer our spirits by thy justice here." Advent joy is derived from the expectation of justice breaking through in new and unanticipated ways.

Mary's exuberant hymn, to me, is an unexpected and joyful response to her future as an unplanned mother. Her Advent faith foresees a holy future where we are all invited to realize God's surprising breaking through in the least likely ways with the most unexpected people.

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