

**Message: “Break into Song”**

**I love birds.** Hummingbirds are my favorite, but I also love blue birds, cardinals, robins, dove, whippoorwills, road runners, peacocks and many others. I love their colorful plumage, the way they fly and the simplicity of their being. Birds remind me life doesn't have to be complicated. Jesus spoke about birds to illustrate how much God loves and cares for all of creation and especially each of us.

**Most of all, I love the singing of birds.** While I may not like the “caw” of crows as much as I appreciate the chirps of hummingbirds and cooing of doves, all of them are enjoyable. The sense of calm, well-being and pleasure I feel is supported by research. “One study found the presence of birdsong has a measurable positive effect on a person’s mood, an effect lasting a few hours after hearing them. Another study found higher life-satisfaction among those who lived near diverse bird habitats. So, when you head outdoors to run errands, take a walk or go for a hike, listen to the birds sharing your space. Perhaps you can be inspired by the Chinese proverb: “Keep a green tree in your heart, and perhaps a singing bird will come.”<sup>1</sup>

**Music, particularly singing, is an integral part of our human nature.** It may be hard to fathom today, but well before mobile phones, TikTok, YouTube, the internet, TV and radio, people enjoyed music. Most of what we call classical music was the social media app of its time. It was a means for people to gather, express themselves and be entertained and informed.

**For example, most of the songs in our hymn books aren't just entertaining, they teach us about God.** They communicate the biblical drama in a way everyone can understand. Yes, there's some creative license taken, but many of us know the words to classic hymns like “Silent Night” or “O Come All Ye Faithful” or “Joy to the World.”

**“Many caregivers can relate to the following experience:** Their loved one with dementia barely speaks and has no clue where they live or what year it is. But then an old song comes on the radio and their loved one is suddenly singing along, word for word. Music evokes a response.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://guideposts.org/positive-living/need-a-happiness-boost-listen-for-the-birds/>

**Dr. Lakelyn Eichenberger, gerontologist and caregiver advocate says this, “Music is powerful.** People can hold on to musical memories for a long time because they are held in a different part of the brain. Listening to music has been shown to reduce anxiety and agitation in people living with dementia.”<sup>2</sup> Musical encounters can be meaningful, no matter what our circumstance.

**Great singers connect us to the passion, emotion and meaning we share in song.** King David was famous as an artist and authored many psalms (songs). He shared joy, sadness, frustration and love in song. The same is true in each generation, no matter whether you’re an amateur or professional singer. Our passion is what matters.

**Earlier we read the words from Mary’s song together.** Decades after she sang her song, the words resonated with people. It’s a message of transcendent hope. Mary’s song expresses her joy and devotion, even in the middle of life-changing, troubling circumstances. After spending time with Elizabeth, Mary knows she’s going to return home and be inundated by questions, scorn and humiliation from her small community.

**What will Joseph, her fiancé, do when he finds out she’s pregnant?** Mary doesn’t know. No one does. But she does know God is doing the impossible. Elizabeth’s greeting, along with John leaping inside her, show God is active and present in their lives. God has a plan for good.

**Mary’s faith is amazing.** There’s a depth, purity and comprehension which goes far beyond her years. Mary’s devotion continues to inspire us, generation after generation. She teaches us what love truly means. We are to give ourselves to God and others, freely, willingly and wholly. This is the way, the path God in Christ calls us to travel. It’s why this journey to the manger is so meaningful, year after year. God reminds us we are loved and God is with us, for we get distracted and forget.

**Love gives us energy for our life journey.** That’s what we learn from Archie, who was played by Burt Lancaster in “Field of Dreams.” One thing I discovered during this study is this was Lancaster’s last movie.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://guideposts.org/positive-living/5-ways-music-can-help-people-living-with-dementia/>

**Burt Lancaster played Archie Graham, years after opportunity seemed to pass him by.** When Archie was a young man, he played in one major league game for the New York Giants, but never got an at bat. Ray and Terry travel to visit Graham and learn he became the town’s doctor, impacting many lives. They also find out he died years earlier. Disappointed and frustrated, Ray takes a walk only to somehow encounter the older Dr. Graham walking on the street. He invites him to come to the farm, but the doctor declines, saying he had a satisfying medical career. So Terry and Ray leave.

**This seems to change the second chance dynamic.** When offered a second chance, Dr. Graham refuses, or so it seems. Why? On the way back to Iowa, they pick up a young hitchhiker who, surprise, surprise, turns out to be Archie Graham before his baseball career. He goes with them where they discover two teams playing a game on the field. Shoeless Joe has invited other former players. Archie finally gets his major league at bat, gets a hit and tips his cap to Ray for making his dream come true. The younger Archie got his chance.

**Things seem great until the next day.** Annie’s brother Mark returns to the farm and tells Ray to sell the farm or else his bank will foreclose on them. Ray and Mark argue and scuffle, knocking Karen off the bleachers. She stops breathing. Archie runs off the field and becomes the older Dr. Graham. He quickly determines she’s choking on a hot dog and saves the day. Ray apologizes to Dr. Graham, because he can’t return to the game as his older self. Dr. Graham assures him he has no regrets. Shoeless Joe compliments Archie, who then walks into the cornfield and disappears. All of a sudden, Mark can see the players. He has a change of heart and urges Ray to keep the farm.

**The older, more mature Archie understands there’s something more powerful than wishing for a second chance.** God always offers us another chance. That’s what grace and forgiveness is. Sharing love is a life-saving sacrificial act and God knows all about sacrifice.

**What if God gives us another chance to see what we’ll do with it?** Do we put others ahead of our own desires or just focus on our own needs? Sacrificial love is only possible through God’s great, never-ending love for us. And God wants us to pass it on.

**This is the greatest lesson we can learn in life.** It takes great faith to love the way God invites us to. With great blessings come great responsibilities.

**Mary’s song shows us the amazing depth of love, which knows no boundaries.** Her love of God made what followed possible in the way we know it. Love gives us the energy for our life journey, here and now and for eternity. Burt Lancaster’s character, Archie Graham, teaches us “our lives multiply by giving them away. The fruitfulness of our life, once we recognize it and live it as God’s beloved, is beyond anything we can imagine. One of the greatest acts of faith is to believe the few years we live on this earth are like a little seed planted in very rich soil. For this seed to bear fruit, it must die. We must die to our fear and embrace the power of love, which is the energy of life. We often see or feel only darkness, but the harvest of love will always be abundant.

**How different our life will be when we truly trust to give it away, freely and willingly!** How different our life will be when we believe every little act of faithfulness, every gesture of love, every word of forgiveness, every little bit of joy and peace will multiply and multiply as long as there are people to receive it. And, best of all, there will be leftovers!”<sup>3</sup> God’s love feast is more abundant than we can imagine. There’s enough to feed all of creation. Amen!

**Next week, we conclude with our final chapter, “he will come.”**

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<sup>3</sup> *Henri Nouwen Society, Daily Devotion, November 29, 2022 (modified).*

**Luke 1:46-55 (CEB)**

Mary said,

“With all my heart I glorify the Lord!

In the depths of who I am I rejoice in God my savior.

He has looked with favor on the low status of his servant.

Look! From now on, everyone will consider me highly favored  
because the mighty one has done great things for me.

Holy is his name.

He shows mercy to everyone,  
from one generation to the next,  
who honors him as God.

He has shown strength with his arm.

He has scattered those with arrogant thoughts and proud inclinations.

He has pulled the powerful down from their thrones  
and lifted up the lowly.

He has filled the hungry with good things  
and sent the rich away empty-handed.

He has come to the aid of his servant Israel,  
remembering his mercy,

just as he promised to our ancestors,  
to Abraham and to Abraham’s descendants forever.”