

Worship Christ, the Newborn King  
Preacher: Rev. Lauren Lorincz  
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“Worship Christ, the newborn King” Pilgrim Church UCC Homily Outline, Third Sunday of Advent (Luke 1:46b-55) December 11, 2016

### Mary’s Magnificat

-Mary is a remarkable biblical figure. She was Jewish, young, poor, and from the unremarkable town of Nazareth when she gave birth to her first-born son Jesus.

-We can see Mary as a model disciple, called by God to be the mother of an incredibly special person.

-She responded to that call in Luke’s Gospel with courage: “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.”[1]

-Today in the Magnificat we heard Mary proclaim that God has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; God has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. God is praised for the salvation of the lowly and the oppressed.

-Where do we think Jesus may have first heard that conviction that the first shall be last and the last shall be first in God’s realm? Let’s not underestimate the influence Mary would have had in Jesus’ life! Perhaps he was learning about justice from an early age

-These sentiments are a political manifesto showing deep thought and strong conviction. Jesus’ message aligned with the Prophets—God cares about justice and how we treat those who are particularly vulnerable.

### The Story Behind “Angels, From the Realms of Glory”[2]

-At the heart of this Christmas Carol is Irishman James Montgomery born in 1771. His father was an Irish Moravian missionary and his parents went to work in the West Indies, leaving their young son in Ireland. His parents died a few years later. Montgomery attended seminary, flunked out, and began moving from job to job (unemployed and homeless at times.)

-His one passion? Writing. No publisher was interested in his work, but the radical editor of the Sheffield Register recognized his raw talent and hired him to write stories. While there, Montgomery learned more about the hardships of being Irish under English rule. When the editor was run out of town for his radical politics concerning Irish freedom, young Montgomery became the editor of the Register.

-He began a written war for Ireland’s freedom and became an active leader in the abolitionist movement—imprisoned twice. Montgomery began to study the Bible because he wanted to better understand what led his parents to be missionaries far from home.

-His heart was opening up and on Christmas Eve in 1816 readers of the Sheffield Iris (name change) discovered a poem called “Nativity” that spoke to all—Irish and English, rich and poor, Anglican and Moravian.

-Montgomery’s poem was about the angels proclaiming the birth of Jesus for all people, and it was beautiful, eloquent, and closely followed the Nativity story.

-There was justice present in his poem, there's a verse that got deleted: "Sinners, wrung with true repentance, doomed for guilt to endless pains, justice now revokes the sentence, mercy calls you. Break the chain."

-Ironically for this Irishman who fought against English rule with the power of his pen, it was an Englishman named Henry Smart who put his words to music!

-Smart was one of England's best organists and composers, fighting for congregations to allow new music in worship (not just the simple chants that had been part of the tradition for hundreds of years.)

-Once many Protestant denominations used Smart's harmonies in worship, the Church of England decided to allow it! Some have said Henry Smart is to harmonized church music what Bach is to the German chorale.

-Even though Smart was going blind by 18, he ended up hearing James Montgomery's poem "Nativity" and composed a tune to go with the poem. It was published as "Angels, from the Realms of Glory" and opened the door for a new joyful musical style in hundreds of English churches!

-"Come and worship, come and worship, worship Christ, the newborn King."

[1] Luke 1:38, NRSV.

[2] Ace Collins, "Angels, From the Realms of Glory," Stories Behind the Best-Loved Songs of Christmas, 11-17.