



SERMON RECAP

APRIL 19, 2026

3rd Sunday of Easter

“Called to be brave like Mary”

Luke 1:26-38

This isn't your typical Easter season story. We're used to hearing about Mary in December, not April; but in this moment we can focus more on Mary than on the coming of Christ. Mary was ordinary, but called by God to do something remarkable. She was being put into a precarious position, but at the end of this passage she is able to affirm her trust in God. “Let it be,” she says. She was made remarkable by trusting in what God was calling her to.

Then she went her relative Elizabeth, an elder woman who was also expecting a child. Her pregnancy is almost as miraculous as Mary's, and Elizabeth flips the script.

“You are blessed among God's people!” she declares. Mary had declared her trust in God already, but she must have still been nervous. Her hasty flight to her cousins' home reveals that she was not settled in what was happening to her.

But when Elizabeth shares her joy and excitement with Mary, she is overwhelmed. The resulting response is known as Mary's Song or the Magnificat. It is a bold declaration of joy, faith, and trust in a God of justice and mercy. “With all my heart I glorify the Lord!” Mary declares.

Mary trusted her call when the angel spoke to her. She celebrated her call when a trusted friend affirmed it. This is an important thing to remember. Sometimes we are Mary, called to a difficult and remarkable thing. Sometimes we are Elizabeth a source of encouragement, wisdom, and delight for someone else.

Today I want to be Elizabeth for all of you. You are blessed among God's people! Why do I have this honor of being your pastor? You are a church who is answering a call to birth something new and delightful in the world.

Many years ago I was told by a church leader in an awkward meeting, “If your church ever becomes LGBTQ inclusive, you will lose your African people.” I sat there stunned by his arrogance. Today I stand before a church that is welcoming and inclusive and includes a vibrant and growing immigrant and refugee population. From Burma to Burundi, people are finding a home here among a people who are ordinary, but trusting in God.

We are a church of refugees. Some among us are political refugees — people who can no longer live in their home countries because of danger, war, or persecution. Many in our community have trusted God in ways some of us can hardly imagine. Their courage and their presence among us are a blessing.

We are also a church of spiritual and religious refugees. Some here grew up in faith communities where they were made to feel unsafe, unwelcome, or unworthy. Some were taught to hate or discriminate, and something inside them knew that could not be the way of Jesus. Their journey is different from those who fled violence, and we do not confuse the two — but both groups have found a home here, a place of welcome.

For years we have had immigrant families here in worship, but in the last few months we are making strides to make them a part of who we are. We are doing more with translating sermons and liturgy. African songs are a regular part of our worship, and many immigrants participated in our first Change Makers Team meeting to help us articulate our five core values. More and more, the refugee and immigrant people of our church are becoming an integrated part of our church. We have had some talks about LGBTQ inclusion, and we don't agree on all of the theological details, but we have come to a shared value of “making everyone welcome.”

This is the heart of what it means to be a church of refugees. To be a church of refugees means we choose to trust each other. Like Mary — ordinary, yet remarkable because she trusted — we hear God calling us to create something new together. God is forming us into a community of connection, empathy, service, discipleship, and justice.

This is our calling:

- To honor the stories of those who fled danger.
- To welcome those who fled harmful religion.
- To honor the roots of those whose blood, sweat, and tears built this place for generations.
- To build a community where every person can belong and be safe.
- To trust that God is shaping something remarkable among us.

Mary was called by the Holy Spirit to birth a savior. In his world of polarization and arrogant leaders declaring inclusion will never work, let me be Elizabeth for a moment and remind you all, “You are blessed among God's people and will give birth to something new.”

NEXT WEEK:

Called and equipped like Moses, Exodus 3-4