

## **Stick It to The Man**

*December 20, 2009*

(Advent 4 – Year C)

Luke 1: 39-55

*St. Alban's Episcopal Church, Waco, Texas*

One of my favorite movies from a few years ago is a movie called “School of Rock.”

“School of Rock” came out in 2003, starring the comedian, Jack Black.

In the movie “School of Rock,” Jack Black portrays a burned out, stoned disciple of rock and roll.

Jack Black ends up as a substitute teacher in a prestigious and nerdy private school. Jack Black’s 5th grade students are uptight and unable to loosen up and have a good time.

So, the teacher lives out his dream of forming a rock and roll band by teaching his students to form a rock band.

In teaching his students about the fine art of Rock and Roll, Jack Black teaches his students about the revolutionary and counter-cultural energy in rock music.

Jack Black teaches his students that a central message in rock music is about “sticking it to the Man,” with a capital M.

When his students ask him about who “the Man” is, Jack Black replies:

“The World is run by the Man.

The Man is everywhere.

[The Man is] in the White House,

Down the hall, Mrs. Mullins [the school principal], she’s the Man.

And the Man ruined the ozone, and he's burning down the Amazon...

And there used to be a way to stick it to The Man.

It was called rock ‘n’ roll.”

To Jack Black, the Man represents authority figures who have power over our lives. And to Jack Black, rock music receives its energy because of its counter-cultural message that “sticks it to the Man.”

The Virgin Mary, believe it not, is a lot like Jack Black.

The Virgin Mary believes that counter-cultural music, that a revolutionary song, can stick it to the Man.

In today's Gospel reading from Luke, the newly pregnant Mary goes to visit Elizabeth, who is pregnant with John the Baptist.

Elizabeth greets Mary joyfully.

And then Mary responds to Elizabeth by singing the Magnificat, a counter-cultural song that has been sung for generations.

Mary responds by sticking it to the Man as she sings:

“My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.

[For] he has shown strength with his arm;

He has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

He has brought down the mighty from their thrones,

And lifted up the lowly.

He has filled the hungry with good things,

And the rich he has sent away empty.”<sup>1</sup>

The Virgin Mary knows what it is like to be oppressed by “the Man.”

Mary is from Nazareth, a town that is so tiny that it is never even mentioned in the Old Testament.

So Mary's song sticks it to the Man, telling off the high and mighty in the big cities, Because a white trash girl from a podunk little town has been chosen to bear the Messiah.

Mary is an unwed, pregnant teenager.

So Mary's song sticks it to the Man, telling off the rich and powerful mothers who deliver their babies in plush birthing rooms in a hospital,

While the lowly Mary delivers her baby in a pile of stinking straw.

And Mary is a woman, a woman in a society where women are treated as second-class citizens.

So Mary's song sticks it to the Man, literally, telling off the men who run the synagogues and markets,

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<sup>1</sup> Conflation of NRSV, NIV and BCP translations

Because a woman is just as qualified as a man to be a doctor or a police officer or a priest.

Mary's song is just as counter-cultural and revolutionary as rock music  
Because Mary's song stands in solidarity with the poor, the hungry, the women, the second-class citizens, the oppressed.

A young member of St. Alban's, Ben Atkins, grew up in this church and he is a junior at Southwestern University in Georgetown.  
Ben recently spent a semester abroad in Argentina, returning home just last week.

Last month, Ben wrote an email to his father, Pat, about his work in a factory in Argentina.  
His email was shared with me and I would like to share a portion of that email with you.

Ben writes this from Argentina:

“The factory here is fantastic, really it is a factory under worker control.  
There are a number of militant revolutionaries here, and they really do fight [hard] to protect their jobs.

I am actually marching tomorrow with [the factory workers] to the courthouse...  
[The reason that we are marching] is because, in 2003, during one of the worker marches, one of the compeñeros lost an eye from the violent police repression that [he] suffered.

The factory has sued for reparations and to have these 4 culpable [police] officers fired.

The decision is being read tomorrow [at the courthouse] and we are going to be there in full force.

I can't wait.

Mom, don't worry.

Love y'all bunches.

Benjamin”

I am so proud of Ben Atkins, a college student from St. Alban's, for marching with oppressed factory workers in Argentina.

For in standing with these workers, Mary's message of a God that brings down the powerful and fills the hungry with good things and lifts up the lowly becomes a reality.

I am so proud that a young man from this church has heard the counter-cultural song of Mary and is a peaceful revolutionary, sticking it to the Man.

I would imagine that Jesus' mother sang her defiant song to her son, Jesus, as he was growing up.

It is no wonder then that Jesus continues his mother's rock and roll song of a world upside down in his ministry.

When Jesus is thirty years old, Jesus begins his public ministry by quoting from Isaiah in a synagogue, saying:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, to preach good news to the poor...and to free the oppressed."<sup>2</sup>

Later, in his Sermon on the Plain, Jesus teaches us:

"Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.  
Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled."<sup>3</sup>

And on Good Friday, Jesus continues his mother's song when Jesus comes face to face with the Man, Pontius Pilate.

Pilate asks Jesus:

"Don't you realize that I have the power to crucify you?"

And Jesus sticks it to the Man by replying:

"You have no power over me, unless it had been given you from above."<sup>4</sup>

This morning, I invite you to hear Mary's song and to stick it to the Man, as well. Shout out - that the powers of loneliness and addiction and depression will not define and rule your life.

March - in solidarity with the oppressed, the women, the people of color, the disabled, the uninsured, the folks who have no voice in our society.

Sing - of the dream of God where the hungry are filled and the lowly are lifted up and the rich are sent away empty-handed.

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<sup>2</sup> Luke 4:18-19

<sup>3</sup> Luke 6:20-21

<sup>4</sup> John 19:10-11

At the end of Jesus' life, his mother, Mary, stays with Jesus until the bitter end.  
And even at the Cross, Mary's revolutionary song is acted out.  
For on the Cross, Jesus ultimately sticks it to the Man, as the lowly One is lifted up,  
to show all of us that  
No Roman Empire,  
No nails in his hands,  
No crown of thorns on his head,  
No betrayal, no denial,  
No power on this earth  
Will ever, ever separate us from love.

So in the name of the Blessed Virgin Mary:  
Stick it...to the Man.

AMEN.

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