

## Luke 1:26-38 & the Song of Mary Luke 1:46-56

---

### Advent 4 - the Magnificat

I don't know if you've seen some of the modern takes on Joseph and Mary? There's one of them travelling to Bethlehem and the Jewish settlement wall blocks their journey. There's another of them flaked out in the stable before the visitors arrive. There's another of a couple in jeans hanging outside the milk bar and cheap motel with 'no vacancy' sign looking at their iPhone with an anxious expression. There's another of a young couple in a VW camper with black rings under their eyes, Joseph hunched over the steering wheel and Mary uncomfortable as she nears her time. We've sanitised it a bit on our Christmas cards and nativity scenes.

An unmarried mother, quite the scandal, in a small town. It would have been a difficult time for Mary from the time the angel delivered the news to the day they fled for Egypt because of Herod's plans to kill the young boys.

And yet with all this and more ahead of her, Mary stands at the door of the first Advent, with joy in her heart and voice. Mary was a simple girl, but she had a strong heart, an openness to God and courage to walk in obedience without many guarantees.

She sings about the blessing she is to receive herself, she celebrates God following through on his promises to Abraham, and his rule of justice and righteousness.

Mary's son, our Lord Jesus, is connected to the promises of old, through the line of David, whose city was Bethlehem. David was not the one people thought would be chosen as king. He was just the young shepherd, his brothers were the likely candidates. And when God directed the prophet to David's house he wasn't even there - he was out on the hills with the sheep. Humble and obedient, just doing his job, not looking for the limelight. He, like Mary, was a person after God's own heart and remembered fondly by his people.

Mary sings bold words about the reversal of fortunes God brings when he rules, when his Saviour comes: he scatters the proud; casts down the mighty; sends the rich away empty; but lifts the lowly; fills the hungry; and remembers his people, showing them mercy. That's why it's a song of joy. That's why she's an inspiring woman.

In her song, we celebrate the fulfilment of God's promises, the mercy and provision of God for those who acknowledge him, the lifting up of the poor and justice against oppressors. We rejoice in the Saviour sent to his people, laying in a manger.

We are grateful for the child who grew to be the man of God endowed with wisdom to teach; power to heal and give life; who wielded God's authority over creation, the spiritual realm, and death; who was crucified and rose again and reigns at the Father's right hand. We rejoice in a Saviour who will keep his promises to return.

The final theme for advent is Peace. Peace in Hebrew terms encompasses the whole of life, not just the absence of war, it includes inner contentment, restfulness, joy and the idea of relationships in good order and the environment in rhythmic season and prosperity.

Like his mother, Jesus is God's obedient servant; like his Heavenly Father, Jesus is the peace maker, who brings God's people home reconciled. Truly Mary was blessed to carry this child who brings peace to creation.

We, in our time, wait in confidence and patience for the Prince of peace to fully realise his kingdom, to establish the new heavens and the new earth for his people, and rule over a reconciled and harmonious creation.

Mary is a nobody, a young peasant girl who receives God at his word. 'Blessed is she, and remembered among women, for she believed there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her by the Lord.' But it is not a private spiritual experience for Mary and her community - God is addressing the pain and politics of the whole world.

The great stories of the Bible that have historical and theological significance take place in un-extraordinary human situations, with specific individuals in the communities of which they are a part. While dramatic scenes are present, like angels announcing the news, normal people are caught up in God's big plans, and have their lives turned upside down as they endeavour to follow the call of a mysterious God.

As followers who celebrate Jesus' birth each year, we can listen Mary's song and put all of our trust in God as she did. For God has done, is doing, and will continue to do great things—with and without our help. We can share her joy of trusting God's abundance. May we be found with such obedience and faith in God's word as we follow Jesus, share his love and peace with those around us, and await his return. Amen.