

13 September 2020, 11am  
*Christ Church New Southgate*  
& *Friern Barnet*

*Reading: Luke 1.46-55*

*Mary's Song*

46 And Mary said:

“My soul magnifies the Lord

47 and my spirit rejoices in God my  
Saviour,

48 for he has been mindful  
of the humble state of his servant.

From now on all generations will call me  
blessed,

49 for the Mighty One has done great  
things for me—

holy is his name.

50 His mercy extends to those who fear him,  
from generation to generation.

51 He has performed mighty deeds with his  
arm;

he has scattered those who are proud in  
their inmost thoughts.

52 He has brought down rulers from their  
thrones

but has lifted up the humble.

53 He has filled the hungry with good things  
but has sent the rich away empty.

54 He has helped his servant Israel,  
remembering to be merciful

55 to Abraham and his descendants forever,  
just as he promised our ancestors.”

*Sermon*

*Rev Ruth Moriarty*

Key verse: ‘My soul magnifies the Lord, My  
soul rejoices in God my Saviour’. Luke 1.46

Mary has been on my mind this week. Her  
song popped up on the bible reading app that  
I use on Monday, her words appeared in

some prayers I read on Tuesday and I wound  
up listening to a conference called magnify on  
Wednesday. Our reading today is Mary’s song  
which she sings as she meets up with her  
relative Elizabeth and they share their  
pregnancy stories with each other. In normal  
times Luke 1 is reserved for Advent as the  
church prepares for Christmas. But it struck  
me as particularly apt now.

Did you listen to the 10pm news on Tuesday  
night? It said there will be a new briefing on  
Covid 19 and the social distancing restrictions  
on daily life the following day. Several  
questions ran through my mind: What if all  
the planning we’ve done to start church in the  
building again is wasted? What if the schools  
shut down? What if there is a second wave?  
What if? What if? What if? ‘What if’s’ don’t  
help anyone sleep do they?

Mary visited by an angel and told that she is  
favoured by God then suddenly has all  
certainty about her life blown away. She  
thought she was marrying Joseph. She had to  
tell him she was pregnant and God was the  
father. She thought she would have a normal  
family life; she would never have a normal life  
again. She thought her children would be  
average, her first child was not, and her  
responsibility was huge. At a young age, just  
as her life was beginning to dawn into  
adulthood everything she relied on as normal  
and expected was taken away.

In lockdown, everything in life changed. In  
semi-lockdown, somethings changed,  
somethings disappeared, nothing is quite the  
same. Everything seems to be up for grabs –  
everything could change with any  
government briefing. We keep talking about  
getting back to normal, getting back to how  
things were. We yearn for what we had, we  
mourn what we have lost, and as we look out  
to the horizon, we don’t know what will  
happen this Autumn but we have plenty of  
fears and questions about it.

Into every fear and into every question – hear afresh that God is our saviour. For as Christ grew in Mary’s teenage belly, Christ is present with us. For as God has been with us this past year, God will be with us for the end of this year and the next and the next.

Mary looked at a fraught, difficult and possibly dangerous period ahead of her and said yes. She said yes to serving the Lord in a new way, she said yes to serving the Lord in a way that nobody understood, nobody had done before and that was not normal. With presumably angry families on either side, a fiancé who is planning a private divorce and her reputation in tatters – Mary sings. She sings with courage that only comes from God. She sings – my soul magnifies the Lord. Her heart doesn’t have enough space for the glory of God, her life cannot contain the enormity of his love, grace and mercy so she sings. She sings to Elizabeth and she sings to us. She reminds us to be courageous. She reminds us as we face uncertain times ahead to magnify the Lord. Always show God to be bigger, always remember he is stronger – for he has saved us in the past and will save us again.

In fact, she is so confident of God, she sings as if he has already done it. She knows the songs of the psalms and she knows the song of Hannah off-by-heart and so she just makes it her own, for the reality of meeting with that angel brings the promise of scripture alive to her.

God has always been present in the world, and he will continue to be present in a covid-19 world – whatever that may look like. Lockdown was tough, semi-lockdown was tough but we have pulled through it. And now we face ahead another time of uncertainty but it is a time where God calls us to work with him. Just as he called Mary, Elizabeth, Anna to work alongside him for his glory he calls us too to be courageous and

be open to his prompting and leading this year.

Mary’s song celebrates the God who acts, the God who remembers us, who loves us and cares for us. Her words show us a kingdom attitude that we find in Christ – one where he raises the humble and hungry and scatters the rich and proud. Her very voice in scripture breaks across patriarchy and kickstarts a whole new way – a way where all are equal, all given gifts to serve, all welcome and all valued.

As her belly is swelling with the son of God, as she considers her future, she reminds us of God’s promise to save and she reminds us to be joyful too. This isn’t a dirge, she doesn’t mumble the words in a darkened room – she lets rip. Her song is courageous, loud and hopeful. For as we magnify the Lord, he fills us with the joy of heaven.

So, as we consider the next few months ahead, we gather all our fears, worries and concerns and give them to God. Allow each concern to be named in his presence as we pray, let us allow him to sooth our souls as we do. Then as we look ahead – to who knows what may come, may our hearts be filled with the courage of Christ to magnify the Lord. Let God be seen in our lives more and more and more. And as we allow him to shine, may our hearts be filled as Mary’s was with a joy of heaven that gives us hope. Amen.