

*Christ Church New
Southgate & Friern Barnet*

19 December 2021

Welcome

Reading : Luke 1.39-56 by Diana

³⁹ At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, ⁴⁰ where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹ When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. ⁴² In a loud voice she exclaimed: 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! ⁴³ But why am I so favoured, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴ As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵ Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfil his promises to her!'

Mary's song

⁴⁶ And Mary said:

'My soul glorifies 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 for ever,

just as he promised our ancestors.'

⁵⁶ Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months and then returned home.

Advent Candle

Song: Go tell it on the mountain

Go, tell it on the mountain
Over the hills and everywhere
Go, tell it on the mountain
That Jesus Christ is born

While shepherds kept their watching
O'er silent flocks by night
Behold throughout the heavens
There shone a Holy light

The shepherds feared and trembled
When, lo! Above the Earth
Rang out the angel chorus
That hailed our Savior's birth

Down in a lowly manger
Our humble Christ was born
And brought us all salvation
That blessed Christmas morn

Lord's prayer

Song: When out of poverty is born

Christian Aid Scotland Scratch Choir

A short film of Christian Aid Scotland Scratch Choir recorded signing the hymn Originally recorded in 2019 and rebranded as a resource for churches during Christmas

2020. Lyrics by Kathy Galloway Tune:

Kingsfold

1 When out of poverty is born a dream that
will not die,
and landless, weary folk find strength to
stand with heads held high,
it's then we learn from those who wait to
greet the promised day,
'The Lord is coming; don't lose heart. Be
blest: prepare the way!'

2 When people wander far from God, forget
to share their bread,
they find their wealth an empty thing, their
spirits are not fed.
For only just and tender love the hungry
soul will stay.
And so God's prophets echo still 'Be blest:
prepare the way!'

3 When God took flesh and came to earth,
the world turned upside down,
and in the strength of woman's faith the
Word of Life was born.
She knew that God would raise the low, it
pleased her to obey.
Rejoice with Mary in the call, 'Be blest:
prepare the way!'

Sermon : Believe in the God who
remembers us

At least 400 women ministers in the UK have
all bought one festive jumper. M&S came up
trumps this year with a jumper sporting the
word 'believe' in a colourful vintage style that
has become an internet bandwagon called
#teambelieve. There's a lovely picture of 400
of us in the Church Times, the story made it
to the Guardian newspaper last week and
apparently the Sunday Express are running it
today.

As you may expect not everyone likes the
jumper. It's OK not to like a jumper, it's just
a jumper. Some have said that festive fashion
is frivolous and just ends up in landfill – yes,

we must all be mindful of the clothes that we
buy and use them well. But some have
complained that the jumper only comes in
women's sizes. There is no equivalent for
men ministers to sport on Christmas Day.
#TeamBelieve began as a thread on a
discussion page for women ministers – its
called Clergy Mummies. This group is a good,
supportive and encouraging place for women
in ministry who are also mothers. Each
woman in the group has overcome prejudice
and discrimination in and outside the church
to become a minister. We are a close
sisterhood because we share what is to know
liberation. Liberation on becoming a
Christian and liberation in becoming a
minister. All that freedom brings mostly joy!

I put it to you that if Mary had had a M&S
token this year, she would have bought a
believe jumper. For her song is one of
liberation – he has brought down rules from
their thrones v52, her song is one of joy – my
soul magnifies the lord, my spirit rejoices v47!
There is a time to be joyful in the lord and
Mary knows this is it.

Like a crazy musical, Luke's gospel is
peppered with songs from key actors in his
cast that tell the story of Jesus Christ. Mary's
is first, then Zechariah (1.68-79), the Angels
(2.14) and Simeon in 2.29-32). These songs all
talk about the same two images of God that
Mary centres on : 1/God is our warrior and
2/ he is merciful. He is our warrior because
he does great things, he is strong, he scatters
the rich and powerful and endures for his
people. He is merciful in his favour of the
lowly, he helps those in need, feeds the
hungry and lifts the lowly.

This musical style is biblical, there are songs
that enter scripture at key moments from
Moses, Miriam, Deborah, Asaph, and
particularly Hannah in 1 Samuel 2. In Hannah
we see a strong parallel between Mary and her
song of joy at expecting a child. But there is

an important difference between Mary and Hannah's song, and we see it in the change of gear of v50. Mary shows us her heart of devotion and worship first, my soul glorifies the Lord. May we each do the same. Now look to v50, his mercy extends to those who fear him. Now she's not talking about her relationship with God, but about God's relationship with the entire world.

Some grumpy biblical scholars have said that these words couldn't have come from Mary, this song was added by the early church to beef up Luke's book. Some grumpy male scholars have said that Mary singing the song isn't important that the birth narratives are just the opening act. Let us consider that Mary did sing this song to her relative Elizabeth. Mary has just been told by the angel Gabriel that she will birth the saviour of the world, the sign to her is that Elizabeth her older relative will have a child. Two women sharing the good news with each other that God has not forgotten them or the world. Let us consider what it is that Mary is singing about – about a God who remembers. What does he remember? His promise to them, the promise of God to love his people, to guide, lead, help and be merciful to.

Two women have been told for decades that God is kind, loving, compassionate, gracious, merciful. Two women who have learnt every day the psalms speaking of God's mighty power, the strength in his arm, and his overriding concern for the weak, fatherless, and oppressed. Mary sings her song as a song of liberation, for she now knows that she didn't dream that angelic visit, she has proof that God is at work, that he has not forgotten her or her oppressed people and he is coming to do something about it. He is coming to be the saviour of the world.

The same God who remembered Mary, remembers us. He remembers us when we are joyful and when we are sad, when we are

near or far from him, he remembers us. God has not forgotten us for we are his children whom he loves with the greatest devotion. As we live in the world, we face many exasperating situations. We live with a constant stream of news of the powerful exploiting the weak, of the rich squandering wealth instead of the poor being fed. The promise of God throughout scripture, to Mary and to us now is that God wants the world to be different and one day it will be. God will liberate all who are lowly, humble, and hungry. God will act for us, will turn the tables on the rich and proud when his kingdom comes. The promise of God is that he remembers us, he remembers to be merciful while we live in this in-between time. In-between knowing the beauty and power of Christ and of the Holy Spirit and living now before God restores the earth and all that he has made.

In Advent, we look again to Mary to lead us in believing in the God of liberation. The God who looks for partners in our world like Mary to believe in the promise of God, to believe that he remembers us, to believe that he is merciful and to believe that the saviour of the world is come. Come and join #teambelieve – jumper or not, and believe in the promise of God, the God who remembers us.

Song: Heaven has come to us
Unto us from on high
Reaching down into the deepest night
To the world hope has come
In the dark the Light of Life has dawned

*What a myst'ry, oh what love
Oh how can it be that heaven has come to us*

Unto us meek and mild
God eternal born a helpless child
Set aside heaven's throne
Veiled in weakness came unto His own

Unto us grace has come
Here to seek and bring the sinner home
Lived to die, rose to reign
Son of Man the Lamb for sinners slain

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Communion

We glorify the Lord
We rejoice in God the Saviour of the world.
We declare you are Mighty God
holy is your name.

We remember your mighty deeds
of creation,
guiding your people
and speaking to us
We declare you are Mighty God
holy is your name.

We seek your kingdom here
As you lift the humble,
Fill the hungry
And reject the rich and powerful
We declare you are Mighty God
holy is your name.

We glorify the Lord
We rejoice in God the Saviour of the world.
We declare you are Mighty God
holy is your name.

As we remember the promise of God's
mercy to Mary and to the people of God, we
remember God's gift of mercy to those who
seek him now.

Lord for the moments where we have
forgotten your mercy, forgive us.

Lord for times when we have not been
merciful, forgive us.
Thank you Lord that you always remember
us and are merciful to us.

Today we remember Jesus' birth,
life and death.
We proclaim his resurrection
and we look for his return.
As a baby Jesus enter our world, light
breaking into darkness.
As a man Jesus showed us
how to live and seek your kingdom
As Jesus died on the cross he showed us the
fullness of your promise to remember us.
By your power and promise, Christ is raised
from the dead, granting salvation to us all.
We declare you are Mighty God
holy is your name.

Just like Jesus, we thank you God for this
meal,
For your generosity and grace to us.
In bread and wine, we recall Jesus'
command to remember his body and the
promise of old that God will never leave us
but God is with us.

May this meal fill us with the joy of Mary,
the courage of Christ and the hope of glory.
Holy Spirit help us to glorify God, as we
remember Christ servant and saviour of all.
Empower us to declare your mercy and
kingdom from generation to generation.

Share bread and wine

Intercession

In anticipation of You,
a girl raised her voice,
in courage and praise,
in joy and expectation,
in resistance and struggle.

In anticipation of You, put flesh on our faith
to put words into action, to call for equality,
to work for justice.

In anticipation of You,
may the lowly be raised, the crushed be
restored, the bruised be resilient, the
powerful be restrained.

In anticipation of You,
may we be filled with hope,
to say yes to your will,
to share our gifts and resources,
to work together for a world reborn. In your
name we pray, Amen.

Song:

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord!
Unnumbered blessings give my spirit voice;
Tender to me the promise of His Word;
In God my Savior shall my heart rejoice.

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of His name!
Make known His might,
the deeds His arm has done;
His mercy sure, from age to age the same;
His holy Name, the Lord, the mighty One.

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of His might!
Powers and dominions lay their glory by;
Proud hearts and stubborn wills
are put to flight;
The hungry fed, the humble lifted high.

Tell out, my soul, the glories of His Word!
Firm is His promise, and His mercy sure.
Tell out my soul, the greatness of the Lord
To children's children and forevermore!