

THE MAGNIFICAT DECEMBER 22nd 2024

Mary's song, the Magnificat, captures the powerful message of hope, faith and promises that echoes across generations. As we continue to pass through this time of preparation and waiting, we're called to reflect on the words of this beautiful hymn written so long ago, not only are called to reflect on it, but we are also encouraged by the themes that are within it. We remind ourselves and those who we share this time with the absolute good things that continue to happen in God's world. Mary's song is inspirational for us as all we need do is look for and affirm the goodness we witness existing around us!

Like any great and memorable letter, poem or song it begins with something very positive – the greatness of God and God's faithfulness throughout history – up to her era. We can get really excited because God's greatness and faithfulness is still here with us and will be with those who will follow in our footsteps. Mary's song encourages us to look to the past beginning with the stories of the Exodus, into the lives of the faithful along the lineages that followed so we enable ourselves to recognise it's the same God who fulfilled the promises made to the ancient people who is still at work today. This faithfulness prompts us to trust that God is actively involved in our lives, in God's church and community, always inspiring hope for the good things that can emerge even in the days and times that challenge us.

One of the remarkable elements of the Magnificat is its focus on God lifting up the humble and its emphasis on justice. Mary signs of how God "He has scattered those with arrogant thoughts and proud inclinations." And "He has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty-handed. This affirmation of divine justice reminds us that God hasn't finished working towards bringing balance in the world, God is uplifting those who are oppressed or marginalised. When we look at the daily news we

are seeing glimpses of change. Today I'm thinking of the changes that are taking place in Syria right now. The oppressive Assad government and leadership is being replaced by new leaders who from the Syrian people's point of view is offering them a freedom they haven't known for 50 years. The prisoners have been freed – the marginalised are finding their voices. By participating in acts of justice and compassion, we can become positive change makers, witnessing and embodying God's goodness firsthand.

Mary's song is more than a personal proclamation; it's rooted in the context of her community and the hopes of her people. As we've gathered during our four weeks of Advent, we've all been invited to share in the collective joy of what God is doing in the world. By nurturing a sense of community through celebrations, volunteer work, serving God, sharing fellowship with each other, sharing worship, praise, prayer, we can and have uplifted one another as we in the United Body of Christ focus on the good things that God is accomplishing among us. This sense of togetherness cultivates an atmosphere of hope, aspiration, and inspiration with love and conviction in the mix.

Like it or not, we live in an era where we have become very familiar with the art of words, and pictures, to illustrate what is behind what we're trying to communicate. This is what we find in the Magnificat, it beautifully illustrates the dynamic nature of God's involvement in our lives. Mary recognises that God's work doesn't have an end date nor a use by date – God's work is ongoing and the wonderful thing about that is good things are always beginning. When we look around us from this perspective we're encouraged and might like to celebrate the small miracles that happen daily – a kind neighbour, a kind word from an unexpected person, quiet adoption of a different attitude towards those whom you've seen as 'different' in some way, little acts of kindness, or unexpected grace. By being mindful of these

moments, we train our hearts to recognise and acknowledge God's handiwork in the world, inspiring others to do likewise. We enable ourselves to become the change maker.

I've mentioned a few times the importance of trust in God. Sitting in the heart of Mary's song is an invitation to trust God – God is trustworthy! Mary goes so far as to tell everyone "My soul magnifies the Lord." This is a message of affirmation to us all that her inner assurance comes from her deep and trusting faith in God. As we face uncertainties in our own lives, especially during the times of the year that we may find a challenge, holding fast onto that invitation to trust makes it easier to share hope with others who are struggling. We are enabled to encourage others to also turn to God in their struggles, reminding them that hope is just as real as despair and that good things can be placed in the 'good things' basket.

Over the past few weeks I've talked a bit about the future, and today I'm briefly going to mention it again – because today is yesterday's future. We are descendants of those who walked the warm and dusty earth thousands of years ago. Mary is writing for us as much as she wrote for her contemporaries – even if she didn't realise it at the time. Through her song Mary the chosen mother of Jesus, encourages us to embrace a future filled with God's promises. As we gather together to celebrate Christmas, we can't forget or forgo we are celebrating the birth of Jesus the living Christ, the cornerstone – the ultimate act of hope and love. This anticipation is critical to living out our faith not passively, but proactively, as it directs our gaze toward the future without being fearful of the changes that it will bring, but with encouragement in our necessary participation in bringing about God's goodness. By sharing that message with our community, we instill a sense of hope that good things are on the horizon, not buried in the sand.

The Magnificat provides us with a sense of hope regardless of the challenges we're facing, it has a narrative of hope woven throughout

the fabric of our very existence. By grounding ourselves in Mary's song, we find inspiration not only to recognise the good things God is doing but also to be active participants in creating spaces and places for love, justice, and kindness in our world. As we carry this message well through Advent and into Christmas celebrations and beyond, we have the capacity to uplift and inspire those around us to trust and have hope in God's continual work of goodness in their lives.

Amen.