

## Luke 1:39-55

Take a sample of people in our society and ask them: what is meaning of Christmas? Wonder...

- Supermarket – Disney advent calendar
- Presents
- Being together
- Family arguments, difficult relatives
- Wyevale – a great tree
- Christmas ads – man on the moon, or the Burberry nativity

‘Real meaning’ – birth of Jesus. Begs a bigger question: who is Jesus? Why do Christians get so excited? Question up for grabs, as it always has been:

- A myth
- A great moral teacher, but nothing more
- Religious revolutionary (JC Superstar)

Not according to the bible. Nativity story makes it clear: God breaking into our world. John 1: ‘In the beginning... The word became flesh...’ Luke too, just before this passage – angel Gabriel: ‘Great and Son of Most high... Holy one will be called the Son of God.’

Jesus more than just a good man, more than a prophet, more even than a human leader. *God himself come to earth*. Those great promises God made to his people hundreds of years ago about him coming to shepherd his people personally – this is it. God comes, and everything changes.

Begs a further question: what is God like? This God who comes into the world, what will he grow up to be? What qualities will he exhibit?

Takes us to our passage for today and that glorious song of Mary: known as Magnificat – from opening line ‘soul magnifies the Lord’. As spontaneous songs go, pretty good. Have you ever managed a spontaneous song? Me neither – but this one worth recording.

All about God. What does it tell us about God. 3 simple things today:

**Mindful** – READ v48. God notices things. World in a mess – tempted to wonder if God knows what going on. Maybe your own life has difficult stuff – does God know? Does he notice? Is he mindful? Yes he is. God notices. He knows - he knows all about us.

For Mary, God noticed her humility, her lowly circumstances, and she praised him for it. And make no mistake – God knows your situation too.

Lot of talk about mindfulness – some value in it – not sure what I think about adult colouring books! But if it floats your boat.... (Aside: Christian meditation not emptying your mind, but filling it with God’s truth. So as long as mindful practices draw you close to God’s truth, that’s fine. What isn’t fine is emptying it – void is rarely filled with good things.)

Maybe what matters more is not our mindfulness of things, but God's mindfulness of us. It makes a huge difference to me to know that God *knows*, he is mindful of what I face. Perhaps that's a message you need to hear today.

**Merciful** – READ v50. Even more important than the fact that God knows, is that he cares – he is merciful. Our situations matter to him. He is patient with our foul-ups – as verse says, God can be patient over a long period of time – ‘mercy extends from generation to generation’.

Israel's history one long series of failures. Periods of obedience – much longer periods of disobedience, idolatry, or full-blown godlessness. Has God given up on them completely? No. His mercy extends....

And God hasn't given up on you either. He not only knows your situation, he cares. Baptising Jessica today is a sign that God's mercy passes on from generation to generation. His mercy is for all of us. No human life is beyond repair, is beyond his mercy.

**Mighty** – READ v49. God knows, he cares – but can he do anything about it? YES. Just like the old Snap song goes: he's got the power. Seen it in history: READ v51-53. God is very much at work in this world. Empires get overthrown, the ruthless get their come-uppance. For all the evil, good eventually prevails – again and again.

This is what was promised in Micah. This is what the new ruler would be like – READ Micah 5:4 – for mighty read majesty. God's strength will visit earth!

And how does he do it? In this little baby lying in the manger. All that power crammed into one little soul. Like an atomic bomb – all that power, held in one small thing.

Note theme of reversal too. Who will God exercise this power for? For the weak, for the poor, for the humble. Rome doesn't get the new baby, or Athens or even Jerusalem (more on that tonight) – but Bethlehem. A small market town. The great reversal begins.

And that's good news for us too. You may feel you're vulnerable, at mercy of forces outside your control. God knows, he cares – and he has the power to change things, if only we'll ask him. But a word of caution: he does it for the humble. He won't give us things that will make us proud, or worse forget all about him. God's power is made perfect in weakness. He fills those who are hungry for him with good things, but sends the rich, the self-satisfied, away empty.

So what is God like? He is mindful, merciful and mighty. He knows, he cares, and he can do something about it too. And that same God that blessed Mary longs to bless us today, if only we'll let him. My prayer for Jessica is that she will come to know and love a mindful, merciful and mighty God – a God who knows her, cares about her and empowers her to become all that she can be in Christ. It's my prayer for all of you too.

And how do we respond? Mary – natural response – ‘My soul magnifies the Lord. My spirit rejoices in God my Saviour.’ Let's praise God this Christmas, that he came into our world, that he changed it, and that he is still in the business of changing lives.