

Luke 1:46b-55

## Peace, actually

Mary, who has found out she will give birth to the Messiah, is visiting her cousin Elizabeth, who is also unexpectedly pregnant. She breaks out in a song of praise for what God has done in her life and God's faithfulness to his promises.



## Bible notes



This is Mary's song of praise when she arrives at the house of her relative Elizabeth, after travelling south from her home in Galilee to the hills around Jerusalem. Mary's Magnificat resembles Hannah's song (see 1 Samuel 2:1-10), though it is more personal, full of joy and hope because of the salvation she carries in her body. Notice how it pictures the movement of God's grace. It starts by recalling God's favour towards her lowliness (v.48; cf Luke 1:30). As it moves outwards, its message becomes more radical. God will transform the injustices enjoyed by those who are rich and well-fed into blessings for the humble and hungry. So Mary looks forward to a salvation that can be seen, tasted and embodied in the lives of ordinary people. The Magnificat doesn't specifically mention peace; this has to wait until the angels' Gloria when Mary's son is born (Luke 2:14). Yet the hallmarks of peace are evident in; God's readiness to bless the lowly (v.48); the mercy that flows from one generation to another (v.50); and the way divine strength re-orders the world to benefit the humble poor (vv.51-53). In all this God is said to 'look', 'remember' and 'help' – language that suggests the humanity and intimacy of God's dealings with his people. Mary expects salvation to feature in the day-to-day life of ordinary people. But its radical peace doesn't come cost-free, as Mary will discover when she takes her child to the Temple (Luke 2:33-35). Her song of joy will one turn to lamentation, like Jesus' tears for Jerusalem, which cannot be true to its name as 'city of peace' because it misses the moment of God's visitation (Luke 19:41ff).

## First impressions

- What is the message of the Knife Angel?
- What does 'Peace, actually' mean to you?
- What opportunities are there to experience peace this Advent?



Use a nativity scene or small world characters to play out this part of the story of Mary meeting Elizabeth, and singing a song of praise, before you get ready for Christmas itself.



Some churches use the phrase, 'The peace of the Lord be with you' in church to greet each other and share peace. Try finding a place in your week where you can use this phrase (and mean it), at work, at home or when meeting friends.



# LISTEN



Listen to the Prayer of St Francis by Sarah McLachlan.

## Pray

Creator God,  
you made a perfect world, full of good things.  
But it has got broken and messy.  
Yet, we know that you're bigger than the mess.  
You're restoring all that is broken,  
offering your peace to all who accept it.  
Amen.



# REFLECT

Think back to times when your peace was disturbed by what other people did and those times when you got angry, and your behaviour changed with your anger. Prayerfully take time to let God show you what triggers your anger and what disturbs your peace. Be honest with God and pray for an extra growth of the Holy Spirit fruits of peace, patience and self-control.