

Luke 1: Mary

Just a brief reflection today as we have had a lot of action already with our Intergenerational worship service.

There are many depictions of Mary in art – paintings, etchings, statues – all completely speculative of course, but today I am drawn to not what she looked like but what she sounded like. Mary heard a word and sang a response – we sing it every year around this time and call it the Magnificat.

What do you imagine her voice sounded like

Sweet songbird like Eva Cassidy, raspy soul like Nina Simone or Amy Winehouse, Ella Fitzgeralds, Janis Joplin, Renee Geyer, KD Lang

Mary is a peasant girl suddenly propped into a world she barely knew existed. A world of pregnant girls, angelic ambassadors of the Almighty, crazy visionary stuff - tyrants being thrown down; hungry people getting food and a new order and that is not really surprising for I know of no one who has higher expectations for the future of our planet, who is fiercer in wanting to protect the vulnerable, who is more heroically hopeful about the world, than those who are pregnant. The hearts of parents, says the angel Gabriel, will be turned toward their children. Maybe if there were some pregnant women at COP28 and UN where ceasefires are being negotiated this week we would have had a much better result!

As she embraces God's invitation to be the *theotokos*, God bearer - she finds her prophetic voice. A few months after her encounter with Gabriel, Mary will proclaim her famous Magnificat. Her words of justice, comfort, and challenge echo down the ages and shape us still.

Mary "pondered" all she had heard – takes time to digest it – stunning discomfuting words she has heard. No doubt there was a heady, weighty mixture of wonderment, attraction, fear, awe, confusion all swirling around inside her head and heart.

All heaven held its breath as God's almighty plan for the redemption of the world hung upon the 'yes' or the 'no' of a slip of a girl from Nazareth. That perhaps is the most remarkable thing about the whole episode: that all the divine eggs were put into one highly vulnerable basket. What if she said no, what if in the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus had said no, what if you had said no? And now the almighty Creator has tethered God's good purposes once and for all to the 'yes' or the 'no' of the beautiful but wilful creatures made in God's image and likeness.

She she kept all these things and treasured them

Invited us to ponder – when have we heard a word, sensed a new direction, have we ever lacked the courage to push out into the deep, given birth to something, someone new full of promise and trepidation.

May we be as courageous as Mary in our response to God's call: "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word."