

Gospel Reading: [Luke 1:39-45](#) The 'voice' of an unborn baby.

*Elizabeth*

It's just one good thing after another! First my husband had some kind of vision, then I found I was pregnant - at our time of life! I had thought it would never happen, we'd been together so many years with nothing happening, I'd just got used being barren and childless - then God smiled on me at last. I was so happy. Then my young cousin Mary came to visit, bringing her bump to meet my bump - and my baby just leaped inside of me! I just knew this wasn't the usual baby move: there was a feeling of joy and peace, this was special. Zechariah had said something about our son (he was sure it would be a lad!) was going to be some sort of prophet: I think it's already started! Mary's baby is a special gift of God, my baby is a special gift of God, both have been announced by angels - something very special is going on. We're living in troubled times, but if God is involved, we can have peace, whatever else is going on.

*Pause for thought – whose voice do we need to hear today? What might God be saying through them to us all?*

Prayer

Jesus, your birthday is nearly here

**Be in our singing and our praise**

As our celebrations gain momentum

**Be in our praying and our listening**

As we light candles in church and at home

**Be in our silence and our thinking**

Whatever we do, wherever we are

**Jesus, draw near in your love and understanding**

Hymn StF 213 / H&P 113 **O little town of Bethlehem**

Blessing

**ADVENT WORSHIP AT HOME**

**week 4**

**19 December 2021**



**Hearing the voice of the least significant**

**We gather in the company of our incarnate God...**

Micah 5: 2-5a

But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel (verse 2)

Hymn: StF 187 / H&P 87 **The angel Gabriel from heaven came**

A question for you as we come to worship today:  
Have you ever felt very small...?

Reading: [Luke 1: 46-55](#)

Prayers:

God of grace, we thank you for this time of Advent, set aside for listening, silence, reflection and preparing for the coming of Jesus, both to celebrate again his birth in Bethlehem and be ready for his return. If we have not given it enough of our time and attentiveness, forgive us, and help us to make time in the remaining days. Thank you for its messages of hope and coming and dwelling and of your covenant love which makes everything possible. As we hear again of Mary today, may we be or become ready with our own 'Yes' to your calling and choosing of us to be your eyes and ears and heart of love in this wonderful, tumultuous and damaged world. **Amen**

**The Lord's Prayer**

Hymn StF 186 / H&P 86 **Tell out my soul the greatness of the Lord**

This is a season of hope,  
Advent, the coming of God  
in Jesus – Immanuel, God with us.

Born in a stable,  
laid in a manger.  
In a power-hungry world,  
the manner of God's coming  
is incomprehensible.  
But Jesus was born into such a world,  
in a way that  
overturns the values  
of political and worldly ambition;  
bringing to life  
Isaiah's vision of a Prince of Peace.  
Jesus immersed himself  
in his own land and culture,  
living, healing, preaching  
in full view of the  
authorities who watched him  
with deep suspicion.

The Nobel Peace prize  
this year was awarded to  
two journalists,  
Maria Ressa and Dmitry Muratov.  
Immersed in their own countries,  
the Philippines and Russia,  
unknown to the rest  
of the world,  
they risked their lives to maintain  
freedom of thought and expression  
basic to democracy.

Luke's accounts of

the births of John and of Jesus  
are full of unknown people  
whom God chose and called  
into his work of salvation,  
of changing the world –  
an elderly priestly couple,  
a teenage girl, a carpenter.

From Micah, we learn that  
Bethlehem was one  
of the least significant  
places in the land,  
except for being the birthplace  
of David, least significant  
son of Jesse, yet anointed  
by Samuel as God's chosen king.

In her song of praise,  
Mary voiced her  
deep understanding of  
God's justice and love  
that enable the downtrodden  
to take their rightful place  
in the kingdom.  
The birth of her son took place,  
not to fanfares, but to  
Spirit-inspired praise from  
the central characters.

Our Advent preparation season  
draws towards its climax.  
There is still time to ensure  
we are ready to say with  
Zechariah, Elizabeth and John,  
Mary and Joseph –

Maranatha,  
come, Lord Jesus,  
Peace for all the world.

Pause to pray for those in conflict.

Hymn-Prayer: StF 719 / H&P 413  
**We pray for peace...the peace God's  
love alone can seal**

**Maranatha,  
come Lord Jesus,  
Peace for all the world.**

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Today's readings from Luke emphasise  
the important roles of two women.  
Women's voices were often unheard in  
the public realm, but in God's story all  
voices are important.