

**Conversations on**

**Luke 1:39–45,  
 (46–55)**

*Discuss this passage in light of the commentary below.*

*Idea!* Listen to “Waiting on the World to Change” by John Mayer. Discuss: How do these lyrics connect with Luke 1:39–55? What problems in the world would you like to change? What would it take to rid the world of those problems?

**WHAT is important to know?**

In the encounter of Mary and Elizabeth, Elizabeth becomes the first human witness to the good news the angel brought Mary in the annunciation (1:26–38). Both women are pregnant with significance, for between them they bear the messenger and the message. Through narrative, speech, and song of praise the characters in this lection prophetically proclaim the gospel: God is working salvation for us in Jesus. The meeting between these two women is about the confirmation of hope, the fulfillment of a promise. The rest of the gospel makes explicit the means and nature of that fulfillment through Jesus’ teachings, parables, healings, death, and resurrection. (*Stephen A. Cooper*)

- ✧ What is the significance of Elizabeth’s being the first human to witness the good news?
- ✧ How do the narrative, speech, and song of Luke 1:39–55 work together to proclaim the gospel?
- ✧ Where is hope found in this Scripture passage?

**WHERE is God in these words?**

The Magnificat rounds off this celebration of God’s goodness by recalling God’s covenant faithfulness to Israel (v. 55). The covenant of God with God’s people is the golden thread that binds together the Old Testament and the New Testament, the old Israel and the new Israel: “I will walk among you, and will be your God, and you shall be my people” (Lev. 26:12). The best hope of the Christian in every age finds its voice in Mary’s song, and it has rested securely on this: God is good, and God keeps promises. (*Robert Redman*)

- ✧ In what ways does this Scripture passage celebrate God’s goodness?
- ✧ What does the covenant help us understand about the nature of God?
- ✧ What words and phrases in Mary’s song teach us about God’s goodness and God’s commitment to keeping promises?

**SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?**

The development of hope within community takes time. How many Marys and Elizabeths (or Zechariahs and Josephs) might there be sitting in the pews, awaiting an opportunity to connect more deeply with the people around them? How many long to connect their small story with the larger stories of God? How might our churches encourage the cycle of recognition and response that widens the reach of the Holy Spirit? Much can be learned from sitting quietly with our brothers and sisters as the world pushes us relentlessly toward a louder, larger, and ever more expensive December 25. (*Michael S. Bennett*)

- ✧ In a community, why does the development of hope take time?
- ✧ How might our churches encourage the cycle of recognition and response that widens the reach of the Holy Spirit?
- ✧ How would your experience of Christ’s birth be different if you celebrated by sitting quietly with others?

**NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?**

Mary’s song, her Magnificat, gives voice to this subversive incarnation that she and Elizabeth embody. Indeed, the fact that Mary sings the Magnificat is itself odd and subversive. This young, unwed, pregnant woman—a thoroughly marginal person in her culture—proclaims one of the most important prophetic words in Scripture. The image is extraordinary, even comical: young, pregnant Mary gives voice to a song for the ages, a song that invites us beyond our realistic expectations and our numb imaginations. She herself seems amazed at what has happened, as her opening words indicate. And the rest of her song announces the larger implications of the upside-down world God has inaugurated. (*Charles L. Campbell*)

- ✧ Who are the people on the margins of your community?
- ✧ What can you and your congregation do to speak up for the marginalized and work to bring about an “upside-down world”?

*God of all people, help us to spread your love as we set our priorities to realize your vision of an upside-down world. Amen.*