

Mic. 5:2–5a
Luke 1:46b–55
Heb. 10:5–10
Luke 1:39–45,
(46–55)

Magnificat

Goal for the Session Youth will discover that one young person’s story—Mary’s story or their own—can change the world.

■ PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

Focus on Luke 1:39–45 (46–55)

WHAT is important to know?

— From “Exegetical Perspective,” Stephen A. Cooper

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.

WHERE is God in these words?

— From “Theological Perspective,” Robert Redman

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.

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

— From “Pastoral Perspective,” Michael S. Bennett

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.

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

— From “Homiletical Perspective,” Charles L. Campbell

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.

FOCUS SCRIPTURE

**Luke 1:39–45
(46–55)**

Focus on Your Teaching

In the culture of first-century Israel, there is no scandalous state lower than that of young, unwed, pregnant woman. Yet, it is from her voice that comes a most powerful song. The proud will be scattered; the lowly will be lifted up. Hungry people will eat good things; the rich will go away empty. Promises are remembered and fulfilled. Young people who live under the authority of parents, school administrators, and coaches will resonate with Mary's status. Like Mary, however, young people must understand that with God's help, they can change the world!

Holy God, you have called me to join Mary in singing the Good News to young people. Through my song, may young people find their own voice to continue the song. Amen.

YOU WILL NEED

- blue or purple cloth or placemat
- Advent wreath, 4 blue or purple candles
- battery-powered votive or tea light candles
- paper
- pens
- lighter
- Bibles
- copies of Resource Sheet 1 and 2

For Responding:

- option 1: paper, markers
- option 2: index cards, pens, small basket
- option 3: containers to collect donated items

For Music Connection:

- recording of "Waiting on the World to Change" by John Mayer and music player

LEADING THE SESSION

GATHERING

Before the session, place four purple or blue candles in the holders of an Advent wreath. Place it on a blue or purple cloth or placemat. Use the color that your church uses in worship during Advent. If you do not have an Advent wreath, place the candles in holders in the center of an artificial evergreen wreath or simply arrange them on the cloth.

Give each participant a sheet of paper and a pen. Have participants turn their papers length-wise and draw a horizontal line on the entire length of the middle of the page. Have participants write the date of their birth under the line at the left end of the page. Have participants write today's date under the line at the right end of the page.

Tell the participants that this line is a timeline of their lives. Have participants write or draw symbols for significant events and accomplishments at various points in their lives. When all are finished, give participants an opportunity to show and explain some of the events and accomplishments found on their timelines.

Explain that today's Scripture passage tells the story of a life that changed the world.

Gather the participants around the Advent wreath. Have a participant light all four candles and pray:

Holy God, help us feel your presence as we continue on our Advent journeys and look forward to the birth of Jesus. May your holy Word transform our lives today. Amen.

EXPLORING

Have participants find Luke 1 in their Bibles. Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 1 (Luke 1:1–55). Read together the information on the page about the first fifty-five verses of the first chapter of Luke.

Have two volunteers read aloud Luke 1:39–45 together. Have one volunteer read verse 39 through the first part of 42 as a narrator. Then, have another participant read Elizabeth's words from verses 42–45.

Ask:

- ✠ What kind of greeting did Elizabeth give Mary? What did she recognize about Mary and her yet-to-be-born child?
- ✠ Why might God choose marginalized people like Elizabeth and Mary to bring about God's will?

Read Luke 1:46–55 together. Explain that these verses are known as the Magnificat, a canticle (poem or song of praise) of Christian liturgy used frequently for vespers.

If you have fewer than four participants, do this activity as one group.

Form groups of two or three. Give each group a copy of Resource Sheet 2 (Luke 1:46–55). Have groups set Mary's words of praise as a song or rap. They can use the version of Luke 1:46–55 that appears in their Bibles or one of the versions on the resource sheet. If participants have trouble with creating a tune, suggest that they use the tune of a favorite hymn or pop song. When all are finished, have groups present their song or rap to the rest of the group. Discuss:

- ✠ According to Mary's words of praise, what kind of work is God doing in the world?
- ✠ How are the actions that Mary lists examples of God turning the world upside down?

Tell the participants that, to truly understand this story, it is necessary to look ahead to Jesus' life. Discuss:

- ✠ What effect has Jesus' life and death had on the world?
- ✠ What effect has Jesus' life and death had on you?
- ✠ How is Mary's story an example of how one young person can change the world?

RESPONDING

Choose one or more of the following learning activities:

1. **Personal Reflection** Give each person a sheet of paper and a marker. Have participants write their names at the top of the paper. Gather the participants in a circle. Have participants pass their papers clockwise around the circle. On each person's paper, have participants write a gift, skill, or talent that they see in that person. When the papers make it all the way around the circle, give each participant an opportunity to read the comments on the paper aloud. Then, have the rest of the group name ways in which those gifts, skills, and talents could be used to change (or make a significant impact on) the world.

EASY
PREP

- 2. One Thing at a Time** Give each participant an index card and a pen. Have participants name one action that they can do in the coming week to put their faith into action. Collect the cards in a small basket. Then, have participants take turns selecting a card from the basket. Have participants read the card out loud and then name how that action could change (or have a significant impact on) the world.
- 3. Advent Mission Project** The participants conclude the giving tree project for your congregation. Lead the group in packing up the donations and review the plans for delivering the items to the selected local mission agency.

CLOSING

Gather the group around the Advent wreath. Give each person a battery-powered votive or tea light candle. Have each participant name one way in which he or she can tell others of the mighty works of God in the coming week. After each way is named, have participants light their candles and arrange them around the wreath.

Close with this blessing:

As you leave this place, go knowing that your story is a powerful story that can change the world. Amen.

Extinguish the candles.

■ ENHANCEMENT

MUSIC CONNECTION

Listen together to a recording of “Waiting on the World to Change” by John Mayer. Discuss:

- ✂ How do the lyrics of this song connect with Luke 1:39–55?
- ✂ What problems in the world would you like to change?
- ✂ What would it take to change the world?

Search YouTube for “Waiting on the World to Change” to watch a video of this song.

Luke 1:1–55

Gospel— □

The first four books of the New Testament are the Gospels because they tell the gospel (good news) of Jesus Christ. The good news of Jesus Christ is the central message of the Christian Church to the world, centered on God's salvation of humankind through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Overview

Verses 1–4: Luke explains the purpose of his Gospel.

Verses 5–25: A priest named Zechariah and his wife, Elizabeth, learn from an angel that they are going to have a baby in their old age. The angel tells them to name the baby John.

Verses 6–38: When Elizabeth was six months pregnant, the angel Gabriel visited Mary in Nazareth to tell her that she was going to give birth to the Son of the Most High. He tells her to name her son Jesus.

Verses 39–45: Mary visits Elizabeth. Elizabeth rejoices in Mary's news.

Verses 46–55: Mary praises God.

Elizabeth and Mary

Elizabeth was understood to be barren and too old to be pregnant. Mary was very young, not yet married, and mysteriously pregnant. Both were considered marginalized, perhaps even scandalous, people in their culture.

marginalized □

[mahr-gin-al-li-ahyzd] adj.
Placed in a position of little importance to society.

scandalous □

[skan-di-luhs] adj.
Shameful or disgraceful



December 23, 2018
Magnificat

Youth
Resource Sheet 2

Luke 1:46–55

Common English Bible

Mary said,
“With all my heart I glorify the Lord!
In the depths of who I am I rejoice in God my savior.
He has looked with favor on the low status of his servant.
Look! From now on, everyone will consider me highly favored
because the mighty one has done great things for me.
Holy is his name.
He shows mercy to everyone,
from one generation to the next,
who honors him as God.
He has shown strength with his arm.
He has scattered those with arrogant thoughts and proud inclinations.
He has pulled the powerful down from their thrones
and lifted up the lowly.
He has filled the hungry with good things
and sent the rich away empty-handed.
He has come to the aid of his servant Israel,
remembering his mercy,
just as he promised to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to Abraham’s descendants forever.”

*Scripture taken from Common English Bible. © 2011
by Common English Bible.*

The Message

And Mary said,
I’m bursting with God-news;
I’m dancing the song of my Savior God.
God took one good look at me, and look what happened—
I’m the most fortunate woman on earth!
What God has done for me will never be forgotten,
the God whose very name is holy, set apart from all others.
His mercy flows in wave after wave
on those who are in awe before him.
He bared his arm and showed his strength,
scattered the bluffing braggarts.
He knocked tyrants off their high horses,
pulled victims out of the mud.
The starving poor sat down to a banquet;
the callous rich were left out in the cold.
He embraced his chosen child, Israel;
he remembered and piled on the mercies, piled them high.
It’s exactly what he promised,
beginning with Abraham and right up to now.

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