



Advent  
Bible  
Study

## 2

## EMBODYING GOD'S LOVE FOR OTHERS



In Advent we read of Mary's encounter with God. Look at the features of the painting entitled "The Annunciation" by Henry Osawa Tanner.

What do you notice as an adolescent Mary faces Gabriel?

Read Luke 1: 26 -56

In Mary's story and song, we see both God's incredible power, which saves people through all time, and Mary's obedience in response to God's power. God's 'breaking in' to Mary's life forever changes her life. Yet, we see that Mary is not a passive but an active recipient.

How do we see both God's actions and Mary's actions in Mary's story and song?

In her song (vs 46-55), what is the evidence of God's saving power, and what is the evidence of her willing obedience?

Has God ever broken into your life in a surprising way, forever changing your life?

What was your experience, and response?

"Mary's obedience and faithfulness serve as a model . . . . This fierce and bold obedience must have come from her relationship with God, her trust in God, who leads and takes care of God's people as God promised."

In what ways was Mary's obedience 'fierce' and 'bold'?

Read aloud Luke 11: 27-28. How does Jesus' response to the woman in the crowd show us that Mary was blessed by her obedience and relationship with God rather than by the biological birth of Jesus?

How does this encourage us?

### THE MAGNIFICAT

The song of Mary, the Magnificat, offers a prophetic vision of the mercy of God that would break barriers and spread God's justice and liberation for all people. This is not just a dream or wishful thinking, but something that would be fulfilled with Jesus coming into the world.

Read Luke 6:20 and Matthew 5:3. How do these verses relate to the Magnificat?

How is Mary's vision of mercy evident today?

John Wesley tells us in his 'Explanatory Notes' that "*Mary said under a prophetic impulse, several things, which perhaps she herself did not fully understand.*" In other words, it is likely that Mary did not understand the full scope of God's vision – which was for all people, not just her people.

Read Luke 2:10. According to the angel, for whom did Jesus come?

Have you ever allowed your limitations to discourage you from answering God's call and doing God's work?

When have you seen God's vision from your own perspective in relation to other people?

How can we overcome our limitations to understand God's vision?

In his sermon “The Scripture Way of Salvation”, John Wesley described the ‘works of mercy’ or ‘practices of mercy’ necessary to live a true Christian life.

*All works of mercy; whether they relate to the bodies or souls of men; such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, entertaining the stranger, visiting those that are in prison, or sick, or variously afflicted; such as the endeavouring to instruct the ignorant, to awaken the stupid sinner, to quicken the lukewarm, to confirm the wavering, to comfort the feeble-minded, to succour the tempted, or contribute in any manner to the saving of souls from death. This is the repentance, and these the ‘fruits meet for repentance’ which are necessary to full sanctification. This is the way wherein God hath appointed His children to wait for complete salvation.*

How would you ‘translate’ these works of mercy for our day and time?

Where have you seen individuals and groups living out the vision of the Magnificat and Wesley’s ‘works of mercy’ in our church, community and world?

### **ADVENT LONGING**

As we wait for the birth of Christ in Advent, hopes and fears are intertwined. The message of God’s power through even our small obedience brings God’s greatest gifts for the world. As Jung Choi states,

*We encounter God in the midst of our hope and fear, just as Mary did, and just as the disciples did. Through our encounter with God, God takes care of our fear and nourishes our hope, and gives us the message in our lips and hearts so that we may cry out God’s message to the world that Jesus, who is always with us, is born.*

How can you say ‘yes’ to God despite your fears and limitations?

How has God nourished your hope in the past?