Plucked from obscurity by an angelic visitation the mother of Jesus is introduced in the first chapter of Luke’s gospel, with a remarkably calm response to a ‘mind-blowing’ announcement. Mary is tasked with the most important job all of human history - giving birth to the son of God himself. As a very young woman in a patriarchal society with little influence or experience, she is not perhaps the archetypal heroine, and yet Mary makes her mark by responding to the angel’s message announcing the supernatural pregnancy with great trust and courage.

*“Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.”  Lk 1 v 37*

A little while later she meets Elizabeth who is pregnant with John the Baptist and as they meet and greet a majestic poem of worship and surrender to God erupts out of Mary. The ‘Magnificat’ ( meaning ‘my soul magnifies the Lord’) reveals Mary’s love for God, her knowledge of jewish scriptures ( she quotes ideas from Psalms, the jewish prophets, Exodus, Samuel ) and most interestingly of all, her instinctive understanding of the Kingdom of God. Before too long, her son Jesus would be echoing her words as he taught about the kingdom where the least person is the greatest and the poor are invited into blessing.

**Luke 1 v 46-56 Mary’s Song**

* 1. **MAGNIFY** GOD :: Luke 1 v 46 -48. Magnify means to ‘make great’. Mary’s response to the angel’s message is to declare how great God is. What is our instinct when faced with an impossible task? What do we ‘make great’? The size of the task, our personal need, how difficult it is going to be? Or how great God is?
	2. REMAIN **HUMBLE ::** v 48-50 Mary sees no contradiction between being humble and recognising that ‘from now on all generations’ would call her blessed. The challenge of remaining humble when brought into a prominent place in God’s plan is a very real one for us humans! What is Mary’s understanding of her place in God’s plan and heart? What would you say is a definition of ‘true humility’? ( See Paul’s description of the humility of Jesus Phil 2 v1-11).
	**Personal question**: How humble are you? What are your challenges in this area? What is the difference between humility and poor self esteem?
	3. LOVE **MERCY ::** v 50 What does it mean for God to ‘have mercy on those that fear him’? What is your experience of the mercy of God in your life? How can we share the mercy of God in the world? Where does it begin? What are the challenges for the church?
	4. **v 51-53:** UNDERSTAND **TRUE STRENGTH.** Mary’s prayer has a radical edge! She sees the toppling of the rich and powerful in favour of the poor and hungry, God using His great strength on the side of the weak. This is a familiar ‘kingdom of God theme**’** how can we cooperate with God’s way of expressing strength? What do you think it means to ‘fill the hungry with good things and send the rich away empty”? See Matthew 5 - Jesus teaching on blessing - do you think Mary’s understanding influenced and shaped Jesus?
	5. **v 55** WELCOME THE **EVERLASTING KINGDOM.** Who are the ‘forever offspring’ of Abraham? How can our attitudes towards life, divine interruptions, and impossible tasks be part of welcoming in the kingdom age that Jesus inaugurated?

What can we learn from Mary ‘God’s servant’ about responding to God when our plans are interrupted or we are faced with an ‘impossible’ challenge? Was Mary picked because she was specially gifted, or specially teachable? Or was there something already in the heart of Mary that prepared her to be used by God? How do we adopt of posture of openness and responsiveness to God and prepare our hearts to receive and activate the call of God on our lives?