

Worship Material
Peace, actually
Material from Roots Bible Study
Sunday 22nd December

Begin with an opening prayer

Lord help us, today and always,
to find and understand the peace that you give.
May we become channels of your peace to others.
Amen.

Read Luke 1.46b-55

Bible notes

- This is Mary's song of praise when she arrives at the house of her relative Elizabeth, after travelling south from her home in Galilee to the hills around Jerusalem. Mary's Magnificat resembles Hannah's song (see 1 Samuel 2:1-10), though it is more personal, full of joy and hope because of the salvation she carries in her body. Notice how it pictures the movement of God's grace. It starts by recalling God's favour towards her lowliness (v.48; cf Luke 1:30). As it moves outwards, its message becomes more radical. God will transform the injustices enjoyed by those who are rich and well-fed into blessings for the humble and hungry. So, Mary looks forward to a salvation that can be seen, tasted and embodied in the lives of ordinary people.
- The Magnificat doesn't specifically mention peace; this has to wait until the angels' Gloria when Mary's son is born (Luke 2:14). Yet the hallmarks of peace are evident in God's readiness to bless the lowly (v.48); the mercy that flows from one generation to another (v.50); and the way divine strength re-orders the world to benefit the humble poor (vv.51-53). In all this God is said to 'look', 'remember' and 'help' – language that suggests the humanity and intimacy of God's dealings with his people. Mary expects salvation to feature in the day-to-day life of ordinary people. But its radical peace doesn't come cost-free, as Mary will discover when she takes her child to the Temple (Luke 2:33-35). Her song of joy will one day turn to lamentation, like Jesus' tears for Jerusalem, which cannot be true to its name as 'city of peace' because it misses the moment of God's visitation (Luke 19:41ff).

Prayer

God of wisdom and wonder,
we praise you for your gift of peace:
for its depth when we are most troubled;
for its comfort when we are most afraid;
for its simplicity when we are most pressured;
for its truth when we are most disconcerted;
and for its stillness when we are most swamped by the
noise and busyness of Christmas.
We praise you, in Jesus' name.

Amen.

A prayer to conclude

Lord, help us to go forward in hope, love, joy and peace.
Give us your peace in our lives and in our world.

Amen.