

# Choose to be Courageous

This week's readings offer hope and affirm God's promises for peoples who are experiencing turmoil and unexpected events. Mary sings a song of joy after an angel tells her the surprising news that she will have a child – a child who will become the song of God. Isaiah brings words of hope to a people who had experienced despair and ecological devastation. In a story from the gospel of Matthew, Jesus affirms who he is and points to promises that are still coming. James offers hope that God's justice will come. In all these passages, the people dared to hope and to trust in God's promises that justice and peace will surely come.

## Focus scripture: Luke 1:47–55

In a world filled with inequalities, Mary sings about a world turned upside down – the lowly are lifted up and the hungry are filled. Mary's song also declares that things will not always be unjust. Instead, she proclaims God's preferential option for people who are poor, hungry, and powerless. At the same time, those who have enough, or more than enough – the proud, powerful, and rich – will not be given any more. Mary sings for all the generations who have hoped, and hope even still, for God's vision of justice to come to fullness in their lives.

Although part of her song is future-oriented, as she speaks about generations yet to come, Mary also proclaims some of her song in the past tense. Scholar Fred Craddock suggests that the Greek past tense here expresses what is always, timelessly, eternally true, not limiting God to the future. "So sure is the singer that God will do what is promised that it is proclaimed as accomplished fact" (Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching – Luke).

Mary's praise comes during a visit with her relative, Elizabeth. Elizabeth is also expecting a child; that child will become John the baptizer. This song of Mary is not the only song of joy in the gospel of Luke. Later, the angels will sing at the birth of Mary's son Jesus, and Zechariah, the spouse of Elizabeth, will sing when their son John is born.

Mary describes herself blessed. She will bear a child, and she will become the mother of the much-anticipated child of God. This can be a difficult passage for people who may have struggled with infertility or who have lost a child. It can be helpful to note the expansive ways in which Mary has been blessed. She is blessed with God's promise of a more just world, blessed with the knowledge

of a God who works towards redemption, blessed with a courageous trust in God and with courage, and blessed with hope from a God who promises great things.

**Isaiah 35:1–10** offers a promise. Fear is not the end of the story. The prophet describes a new world order, and the possibility of transformation for all of creation. This passage offers redemption for people.

One challenge with this passage is not to focus on the blind seeing, the deaf hearing, or the lame leaping. Many people who live with disabilities are never healed miraculously, nor would some want to be. Instead, some would consider their disabilities as key parts of their identity.

In **James 5:7–10**, there is another promise. This is future-directed and offers hope that God's justice will come, and that people should wait for it. It is also about how people are together in community, and the treatment of one another's neighbours. It is a reminder to not groan against one another. Instead, people are encouraged to become peacemakers.

**Matthew 11:2–11** also raises questions of identity. John the baptizer asks Jesus "who are you?" Jesus is clear about his identity. He also affirms who John the baptizer is and that "no one has arisen greater." Through affirming his own identity, Jesus also points towards promises yet to come.

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This week's readings encourage people to be strong and courageous as they wait for the fulfilment of God's promises of justice and peace. How might you and your church community find the courage to wait for God? How might you envision justice and peace in your time? How might you work toward it?



**Focus scripture**  
**Luke 1:47–55**

**Additional scriptures**  
**Isaiah 35:1–10**  
**James 5:7–10**  
**Matthew 11:2–11**

**God of justice,  
you invite all to  
join with Mary in  
proclaiming your  
saving works.  
May our hearts  
beat with your  
heartbeat of  
justice. Amen.**

**Lection Connection**  
links current events  
with this week's  
scriptures. Go to [www.seasonsonline.ca](http://www.seasonsonline.ca)  
and click on the link.

