

God's ridiculous plan

Notes on the Bible readings

- The emphasis on God's choice of the lowliest in society is one of the most striking aspects of Luke's Gospel. A teenage girl, with no wealth or status, from an out-of-the-way part of the world, stands at the heart of God's plan to transform the world. This transformation is not found in a great show of strength, but rather through the birth of a baby – an everyday and common occurrence.
- Mary's relative Elizabeth is also part of the plan. Elizabeth is vulnerable through being an older, childless woman. But here too is a miracle of birth. God entrusts this whole plan to the bodies of two women, and in this, both God and the women take on a considerable risk.
- Thus, we read of the radical overturning of power, the confident sharing of power and then the chosen risk in God's plan to entrust the Messiah to the vulnerable body of a young woman. How often do we consider God's plan for our own lives to be 'ridiculous'? And how often are we prepared to take a risk, to be part of God's plan?

God of the impossible

Music and images for reflection and prayer. Listen to the song 'Breath of Heaven (Mary's Song)' (by Amy Grant, available on iTunes, Spotify, etc.). At the same time, search the internet for and look at images of the Nativity. Think about how Mary responded to God – an ordinary girl called to do something extraordinary – and consider whether God is calling them to do something that might seem impossible.

Questions for reflection

- ▶ What does this image say to you?
- ▶ A young couple, a pregnant teenager – how might you have reacted?
- ▶ If God was to turn your life upside down, how might that help you think and do things differently?



A prayer of approach

God, you approached the world in the words of an angel asking consent, and bringing life unexpected. Now we approach you, in the joy of welcome knowing that you will never turn us away. We celebrate you as we turn to you, glad that we are gathered for the feast of kindness and courage. Amen.

A prayer for others

We pray that this Advent season might, in the midst of demand, provide soft nights and ease, so that people can return to themselves, knowing you, too, are always in the heart, and always wait for us with kindness.

We remember today all who have not given their consent, but whose lives and bodies and integrity are taken for granted. For them, we pray for justice, reparation and truth.

We remember, O God, that you surprised us by coming among us through the 'Yes' of Mary. Let us always be open to the surprise of finding God in unexpected places.

We ask this, in the name of all that is good. Amen.

A personal prayer

Sometimes I say yes, and sometimes I say maybe, and sometimes I say no, and sometimes I am too distracted to know what I'm being asked. Help me, O God of time, to find and make time for all the demands that come my way, so that I might say yes with joy, when I can. Amen.

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Live your faith

Look for opportunities to be strong, to express strength, or to convey a strong message, through a gentle action/response.