



# THE SONGS OF CHRISTMAS

**INTRO:** When have you hungered for hope? Can you think of a time when you were overwhelmed by life, by feelings of uncertainty, sorrow or injustice? Two women in the New Testament, Mary and Elizabeth, knew these feelings all too well. They lived in the dark days of Herod the Great whose brutality and oppression was supported by the Roman government. In order to survive, these Jewish women sought comfort in God's promises through Old Testament prophets and the Psalms that "spoke of mercy, hope, fulfilment, reversal, revolution, victory over evil, and of God coming to the rescue at last."<sup>1</sup> Imagine Mary's shock and awe when she's visited by an angel and learns that God's promises are about to become reality--through her no less! So how do you respond when you've just received the greatest news of your life? You jump up and down. You call your friends and family. You sing and you dance! And that's exactly what Mary did. Everything was about to change.

1. Describe a time when you have hungered for hope.

## READ Luke 1:46-56

1. What words or images stand out to you? What questions do they raise for you?
2. In verses 51-53, there's a reversal of circumstances. What does this tell us about God's character?
3. Read the background to Mary's song, Luke 1:26-38, and look at Mary's response in v. 38. How would you react to such wild, life-altering news?

## SERMON QUESTIONS:

1. Why is Mary's response courageous?
2. Think about a time when you: a) responded to unexpected news with faith instead of fear, and b) responded with fear instead of faith. What were the outcomes?
3. Do you believe the angel's promise in v. 37? ("For nothing will be impossible with God.") Why/why not?

**OUTRO:** Mary's story teaches us that hope happens through unexpected people, events and in unlikely places. What does it mean to be on the lookout for good news in your life? Better yet, what does it mean to be hope for someone you cross paths with, whether a family member, co-worker or stranger? No circumstance, relationship, or moment in history can alter God's love for you. Even when the odds seem against you, remember that God's grace is at work right where you are. Placing our faith in God opens our eyes and hearts to this truth.

## PRAY TOGETHER.

(Pray that you might respond with faith instead of fear this week.)

<sup>1</sup> Wright, N.T. *Luke for Everyone*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004. Page 15.