

Luke 1:26-56
Feilding Baptist
RT 2026 Week 1
10.5.26

Call to Worship

Welcome to worship with Feilding Baptist Church!

I asked John Philps what were his favourite bits of the Bible? The stories he said, the ones with some historical background. We could talk about Judges 3 and the beauty of lefthandedness. But it gets a bit gory.

So Naaman's healing in 2 Kings 5. The king of Aram, the land to the north of Israel, had a strong commander of their army. He had brought great victories, the latest one against Israel. And they had taken people for slaves.

But Naaman had a problem, he had leprosy. One of the slave girls suggested that Naaman go and see the prophet Elisha in Israel. The king agreed, and off Naaman went, taking with him considerable wealth to buy the healing, silver, gold, and clothing. And a letter of introduction to the king.

Elisha didn't even come out to see Naaman, just told his servant to tell Naaman to go and wash seven times in the Jordan River. Naaman was furious. I'm not washing in that filthy river. What's wrong with our beautiful Syrian rivers? But a wise servant suggested that if Naaman had been asked to do something difficult, he would have done it. How simple, to go to the Jordan, and wash seven times.

Naaman did, and he was restored.

Thanks to John, Naaman's healing fits our theme of saying yes. Naaman would rather have said no. But said yes, went, and was healed. Obedience brought him life.

Father, thank you for the life that we have in following Jesus. Thank you for the benefits we have already experienced from saying Yes, to Jesus. Thank you for the life that Jesus offers us, fullness of life. Thank you for the benefits to come, in life beyond life in this world.

So Father, we pray that this service would be life giving, that we would sense the Holy Spirit, that we would be encouraged, strengthened, and assured by your presence. Holy Spirit, please bless this time, this space, and each of us this morning. Amen.

Message - "Yes!"

We must not underestimate the value of our "Yes" to God, not in what we do, but in what God can do through us.

Here is a great statement;
'God is renewing the world,
in your neighbourhood, Aotearoa and
to the ends of the earth.'

What do you think? Do you agree or disagree?

What evidence of this do we see - firstly in our neighbourhood, in Aotearoa, to the ends of the earth?

Together, we are invited to build with God.

The passage that weaves through this theme of building for this year's Renew Together is

1 Corinthians 3:9-11 (NIV - UK)

9 For we are fellow workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building.

10 By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care. 11 For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.

How will we say “yes” to this invitation? What is God calling you to say yes to?

So, which characters in the Bible can you think of that said ‘Yes’ to God?

Think of the 12 disciples, the prophets, eg. Jonah, Isaiah. Here’s someone who said yes. She was probably only 12, maybe 13, maybe 14? On this mothers’ day, what a great time to look to Mary, Mary, the mother of Jesus.

Luke 1:26-56 New Living Translation

The Birth of Jesus Foretold

26 In the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a village in Galilee, 27 to a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David. 28 Gabriel appeared to her and said, “Greetings,[a] favored woman! The Lord is with you![b]”

29 Confused and disturbed, Mary tried to think what the angel could mean. 30 “Don’t be afraid, Mary,” the angel told her, “for you have found favor with God! 31 You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. 32 He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. 33 And he will reign over Israel[c] forever; his Kingdom will never end!”

34 Mary asked the angel, “But how can this happen? I am a virgin.”

35 The angel replied, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the baby to be born will be holy, and he will be called the Son of God. 36 What’s more, your relative Elizabeth has become pregnant in her old age! People used to say she was barren, but she has conceived a son and is now in her sixth month. 37 For the word of God will never fail.[d]”

38 Mary responded, “I am the Lord’s servant. May everything you have said about me come true.” And then the angel left her.

Mary Visits Elizabeth

39 A few days later Mary hurried to the hill country of Judea, to the town 40 where Zechariah lived. She entered the house and greeted Elizabeth. 41 At the sound of Mary’s greeting, Elizabeth’s child leaped within her, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.

42 Elizabeth gave a glad cry and exclaimed to Mary, “God has blessed you above all women, and your child is blessed. 43 Why am I so honored, that the mother of my Lord should visit me? 44 When I heard your greeting, the baby in my womb jumped for joy. 45 You are blessed because you believed that the Lord would do what he said.”

The Magnificat: Mary’s Song of Praise

46 Mary responded,

“Oh, how my soul praises the Lord.

47 How my spirit rejoices in God my Savior!

48 For he took notice of his lowly servant girl,
and from now on all generations will call me blessed.

49 For the Mighty One is holy,
and he has done great things for me.

50 He shows mercy from generation to generation
to all who fear him.

51 His mighty arm has done tremendous things!
He has scattered the proud and haughty ones.

52 He has brought down princes from their thrones
and exalted the humble.

53 He has filled the hungry with good things
and sent the rich away with empty hands.
54 He has helped his servant Israel
and remembered to be merciful.
55 For he made this promise to our ancestors,
to Abraham and his children forever.”
56 Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three months and then went back to her own home.

Footnotes

1:28a Or Rejoice.
1:28b Some manuscripts add Blessed are you among women.
1:33 Greek over the house of Jacob.
1:37 Some manuscripts read For nothing is impossible with God.

The key verse is

Luke 1:38

“...I am the Lord’s servant,”
Mary answered. “May your
word to me be fulfilled...”

“...Anō rā ko Meri, Na, ko te
pononga a te Ariki; kia pērātia
ano ahau me tāu i kōrero ai...”

That’s in the NIV. Looking at other translations is revealing.

NRSV

Then Mary said, ‘Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.’ Then the angel departed from her.

That is said with a lot more feeling. And the words ‘Here am I’ are significant. Who else said ‘Here am I’? Isaiah, in Isaiah 6. And in fact it is the same word used in Isaiah 6, more obvious here in the NASB

The NASB translates v38

NASB

And Mary said, “Behold, the Lord’s bond-servant; may it be done to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her.

‘Behold’ - is an interesting word, and indeed a much stronger translation. Behold in Greek is - Note! (with an exclamation mark) Pay attention! (with an exclamation mark) Look! (with an exclamation mark) Here am I is right, but it’s with enthusiasm, confidence even, certainly not reluctance.

Here in Luke, we find Mary as no reluctant young woman. This is a young woman with strength and character. This is someone who is right up there with Isaiah, a guy who is so highly regarded. Mary, like Isaiah, is saying Yes! I am up for this! Yes, send me!

This opening phrase of Mary’s response to the angel, is full of faith and trust. Here is maturity well beyond her years.

Yet, she doesn’t get ahead of herself, in the second phrase, she regards herself as ‘the servant of the Lord’, Mary is not trying to be the Mother of the King. She is humbly remaining as the servant of the Lord. For who knows what is ahead?

Note this, unlike some of the Old Testament characters, Mary doesn’t ask for a sign that this is all true. But the angel offers her one anyway. Mary would have heard of Elizabeth’s miraculous pregnancy. Here was a sign that God was doing some remarkable things, beyond human limits.

Mary calmly and humbly submits to the will of God.

What about us?

We must not underestimate the value of our “Yes” to God, not in what we do, but in what God can do through us. How would the world be different if followers of Jesus just said Yes, instead of cowering in fear, finding reasons not to, or waiting for a sign before they did something!

It’s not what we do. It’s what God can do through us.

Mary did not know where her response would lead. But her faithfulness to the work of the Holy Spirit bore life and transformation for her, her neighbours and to the ends of the world. We should be grateful for her yes, her willingness.

Mary’s understanding of the Old Testament, of the history of Israel, might surprise us for someone so young. Her hymn, from v46, her poem, as she is welcomed into Elizabeth’s house recalls the beginning of Israel and the promise to Abraham (Gen 22.16). Mary understand her present circumstances, and future, in the light of God’s past faithfulness and mercy.

Mary has faith in God’s promise because she has read the signs of the past correctly. We should be able to write a similar song of our own. We could write or sing about Jesus, about God’s faithfulness and mercy to us through Jesus. And it is this that should give us assurance, and confidence as we stand, wondering about the next step, in saying Yes.

As we finish, we also should note, that at no point does Mary change her mind. She continues to ponder the events she treasured in her heart for three decades. She models persistent faith in God, a trust that agrees to what is not yet understood. Simply because her confidence lies in the character of the one who revealed these things to her.

Mary’s “yes” was a life-long response. It propelled her to visit Elizabeth, to give birth in Bethlehem, to become a refugee in Egypt, to return to Nazareth and raise her son, to go to the Canaan wedding, to the wilderness, and then on to Jerusalem where she stood at the foot of the cross.

Let’s remember, that Mary’s “Yes”, small and unnoticed, far from the centres of power and decision, grew like a seed and spread throughout the entire world. It shook cities, troubled the powerful, overthrew oppression and destroyed the power of sin.

It is through the Mary’s son Jesus, that we as the children of God are given life, complete access to the Father, and full participation in the family of God, the church. We should be grateful for Mary’s “Yes”. We should not underestimate the value of our saying Yes to God.

Let’s remember, that as God stretches out His mighty hand to Mary, so also to us, to us who stand humbly before Him.

Week 1 Prayer

God,
You, who first spoke Yes,
are the One who breathed life into being.
You, who drew close,
spoke to Mary,
calling her to bear your hope into the world.

Teach us to listen to the movement of your Spirit,
And to walk humbly in your ways,
So that we too may say Yes,
echoing the love and openness that Mary showed.

Weave our response into the fabric of your
Kingdom work:
To notice the faithfulness of others,

To nurture the seeds of courage,
And to invite others to say Yes.

May our Yes be to the work of justice and
renewal:
To stand with those at the margins,
And to go to the places you call,
from here to the ends of the world.

Like Mary,
may we carry your hope.
May our Yes join with your work,
so that your Kingdom of justice and peace
may take root in our world.
Amen.