

# The Gathering

## 1 - Welcome - [OLIVER]

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Welcome to St Mary's Cathedral, Glasgow.

Our patron saint features prominently in today's Gospel. We hear Mary singing her theme tune. It's a song of wrongs being set right, of those who've had a hard time being lifted up. Mary says take courage: God's mercies are overflowing; what seems impossible is happening.

## 3 - Collect for Purity - [CAITLIN]

**Almighty God,  
to whom all hearts are open,  
all desires known,  
and from whom no secrets are hidden:  
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts  
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,  
that we may perfectly love you,  
and worthily magnify your holy name;  
through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.**

## 5 - Confession

[MAGGIE] God is love and we are God's children.  
There is no room for fear in love.  
We love because God loved us first.

Let us confess our sins in penitence and faith.

[Silence]

**God our Father, we confess to you and to our fellow members in the Body of Christ that we have sinned in thought, word and deed, and in what we have failed to do. We are truly sorry. Forgive us our sins, and deliver us from the power of evil, for the sake of your Son who died for us, Jesus Christ, our Lord.**

[OLIVER] God, who is both power and love, forgive you and free you from your sins, heal and strengthen you by the Holy Spirit, and raise you to new life in Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

### **7 - Kyrie- [MORVEN]**

Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy.  
Christ have mercy. Christ have mercy.  
Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy.

### **8 - Collect - [OLIVER]**

Who are we, Lord God, that you should come to us? Yet you have visited your people and redeemed us in your Son. As we prepare to celebrate his birth, make our hearts leap for joy at the sound of your Word, and move us by your Spirit to bless your wonderful works. We ask this through him whose coming is certain, whose day draws near: your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever.

**Amen.**

## **The Ministry of the Word**

### **11 - GOSPEL: Luke 1:39-55 – [CHRIS]**

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke.  
**Glory to Christ our Saviour.**

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leapt in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and

exclaimed with a loud cry, 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leapt for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her by the Lord.'

And Mary said,

'My soul magnifies the Lord,

and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,

for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant.

Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;  
for the Mighty One has done great things for me,  
and holy is his name.

His mercy is for those who fear him  
from generation to generation.

He has shown strength with his arm;

he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,  
and lifted up the lowly;

he has filled the hungry with good things,  
and sent the rich away empty.

He has helped his servant Israel,

in remembrance of his mercy,

according to the promise he made to our ancestors,  
to Abraham and to his descendants for ever.'

Give thanks to the Lord for his glorious gospel

**Praise to Christ our Lord.**

## **12 - Sermon [MAGGIE]**

The Gospel of Luke is part of a triptych – a set of three pictures, hinged together to make one complete work of art. This triptych tells the story of God's loving kindness towards humankind. The Gospel itself is the centrepiece, telling as it does of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. At the end of the Gospel, it is hinged together with the book of Acts, the third picture, which tells the story of those who follow Jesus. Of course that is an unfinished

story, it's one that goes on throughout history, one that we ourselves are part of. And here at the beginning of the Gospel, it is hinged by these opening chapters, the birth stories of Jesus and his cousins to the Old Testament, the scriptures as Luke would have known them, the stories that set the scene for the story of Jesus.

Luke wants us, his readers, to know that his story is not a new story, but is the fulfilment of all that has gone before, all that has been written in the law and the prophets. Luke wants his readers to know that this child Jesus is the one who was promised of old, God's messiah.

In order to do this, Luke shows rather than tells his reader. He does this by writing in a style of Greek that echoes the style of the Old Testament in its Greek translation. Luke also takes words and phrases from the Old Testament and weaves them through his writing, something that Luke does throughout the gospel.

Nowhere is this done as beautifully as it is in these birth stories. Luke knows that many of his readers would remember the stories told about the birth of Isaac, of Samuel and Samson – stories where God came to those who were longing, and promised them a child who would do great things for God. Likewise, Luke tells us, an angel told Zechariah that he and Elizabeth would finally have the child they had longed for for so long – though as we know, Zechariah struggled to believe God. Then Mary was told – well, Mary was told something similar, yet different. Unlike the stories that went before, Mary hadn't been longing for a child. Indeed, Mary wasn't even thinking about a child, she'd only just got engaged. And the child that she was promised was unlike any other – this child would be the Son of God, bringing salvation to all people. Mary's response as we know was quite a contrast to Zechariah's – "let it be with me according to your word" she says.

Now we come to the story we have just heard, the young woman going to visit her older relative. Elizabeth speaks words of blessing over Mary, and Mary proclaims these prophetic words over her child. If the style and the stories here are pointing us

back to the promises of old, then the words that Mary speaks are pointing us forward. They are a key for reading the rest of Luke's gospel, a lens through which to look at the life of Jesus. Luke wants us, his readers, to remember these words as we read the rest of the gospel story. And this morning, I want to pick up on three things that we learn here, things that we will hear again as we read through Luke's gospel in our lectionary this year.

Firstly, we see something of what God is looking for in those who follow God, when we look at Mary and Elizabeth. Elizabeth can hardly believe that she should be so fortunate that the mother of her Lord would come to see her. And Mary describes herself as a lowly servant. Bear these two in mind as we see the disciples arguing among each other about who is the greatest. That's not what God wants from God's followers. Our attitude should be that, as Paul says, of Jesus, whose humility took him to the cross for our sake. Our attitude should be that of Elizabeth, hardly able to believe God has come to us, and yet rejoicing in it. Our attitude should be that of Mary, a lowly servant, trusting in God.

The second thing I want to pick up on is that Jesus has come to turn the world upside down. In God's kingdom it is the poor that will be fed, while the rich wait hungry. The proud and powerful will be cast aside while the lowly will be raised up. We see this already being enacted in the story – the priest is silenced, and God's prophetic words, the first words of prophecy to be spoken for hundreds of years, come from the mouth of a young woman of no standing, barely into adulthood. We will see it enacted in the way that Jesus reaches out to those on the margins of society, while calling those in power to account. These words were considered so radical that they were banned in India under British rule, in case they incited rebellion against the empire. Just imagine if the church today really set out to put these words into practice. That's not to say that the lowly are to be given the chance to lord it over their oppressors. Going back to the prophets of old, we hear some of God's harshest words spoken to God's people Israel, who had themselves been slaves in Egypt, when they became the ones who lorded it over others, and forgot God's ways.

Which brings me to the third thing I want us to notice. God's kingdom is not a kingdom of power and pride, but a kingdom of mercy. This word mercy in English can have an austere feeling, as if it's only about punishment being withheld. But remember, Luke is weaving words from the Old Testament through his writing. The Greek word for mercy, *eleos*, was used to translate the Hebrew word *chesed*, a word with rich connotations of steadfast love, or loving kindness. As God says to Moses, using this word *chesed* or *eleos*, God is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. This is what mercy means, this is how God's kingdom will operate. When we pray week by week that God's kingdom will come, this is what we are praying for. And when we go into the world day by day, we are called to be the answers to our own prayers, living by God's loving kindness, turning the world upside down in God's name, and so bringing God's kingdom on earth.

Amen.

#### **14 - Intercessions [KELVIN]**

Let us pray.

Eternal God, we pray for all the peoples of the world; especially today remembering all those fighting the global pandemic. For scientists, for doctors, for vaccinators, for managers.

That we may know you as the God of healing, we pray to you,

O Lord, **your kingdom come.**

For the communities in which we live; especially for those seeking asylum; that you watch over their going out and their coming in, we pray to you,

O Lord, **your kingdom come.**

For nations, for leaders and governments; that integrity may mark all their dealings, that they may cooperate in the just use of the world's resources; we pray to you,

O Lord, **your kingdom come.**

For all who labour for righteousness; that your presence and help may give them courage, we pray to you,

O Lord, **your kingdom come.**

For communities torn by dissension and strife; that your forgiveness may bring them healing, we pray to you,

O Lord, **your kingdom come.**

For the anxious, the lonely, the bereaved; especially those who live in fear of violence; that consolation and peace may be theirs, we pray to you,

O Lord, **your kingdom come.**

For the Church, your household of faith; The Church of the Province of Central Africa; for our own congregation in Glasgow and spread across the world, for the Cathedral Administrator and all who work in the office at this busy time of year; that God's people may be firm in the confession of their hope, we pray to you,

O Lord, **your kingdom come.**

For Kevin our Bishop, and for the churches of St Ninan's Pollokshields, St Aidan's Clarkeston and St Oswald's, Kings Park, and for all who bear Christ's name; that their lives may proclaim your glory, we pray to you,

O Lord, **your kingdom come.**

Remembering Christopher Hunter on his year's mind, we pray for those who are separated from us by death. For those we mourn and for those whose lives spoke to us of Your love; that theirs may be the kingdom which is unshakeable, we pray to you,

O Lord, **your kingdom come.**

Eternal God hear our prayers, for we pray in the company of our Blessed Lady and all the Saints, in the power of the Spirit and in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## Communion

### 17 - Offertory - [OLIVER]

Elizabeth's response to seeing the amazing work of God was to speak of blessing. That's the response people of faith can make to good things. They celebrate and then give—magnify and pass on.

I invite you to consider how you might bless God and share what you have encountered in this place. Perhaps you'll want to make a financial contribution to this Cathedral. Visit [www.thecathedral.org.uk](http://www.thecathedral.org.uk) and click DONATE TO ST MARY'S CATHEDRAL to learn more.

Let us present our offerings to the Lord.

**Yours, Lord, is the greatness, the power, the glory,  
the splendour, and the majesty; for everything in  
heaven and on earth is yours.**

**All things come from you, and of your own we give you.**

### 18 - Eucharistic Prayer

[OLIVER] The Lord be with you.

[MAGGIE] **And also with you.**

[OLIVER] Lift up your hearts.

[MAGGIE] **We lift them to the Lord.**

[OLIVER] Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

[MAGGIE] **It is right to give God thanks and praise.**

Worship and praise belong to you, God our maker.  
Out of nothing, you called all worlds to be,  
and still you draw the universe to its fulfilment.



Dawn and evening celebrate your glory  
till time shall be no more.

In Christ your Son the life of heaven and earth were joined,  
sealing the promise of a new creation, given, yet still to come.

Taught by your Spirit,  
we who bear your threefold likeness look for the City of Peace  
in whose light we are transfigured  
and the earth transformed.

As children of your redeeming purpose  
who await the coming of your Son,  
we offer you our praise, with angels and archangels  
and the whole company of heaven  
singing the hymn of your unending glory:

### **SANCTUS & BENEDICTUS - [MORVEN]**

**Holy, Holy, Holy Lord,  
God of power and might.  
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.  
Hosanna in the highest.  
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.  
Hosanna in the highest.**

Glory and thanksgiving be to you, most loving Father.  
In Jesus you showed us yourself.  
Our hope is built on him, the first, the last, the living one.

Obedient, even to accepting death, He opened the gate of glory  
and calls us now to share the life of heaven.

Before he was given up to suffering and death, alight with the  
vision of a feast that heralded a kingdom yet to come, at supper  
with his disciples he took bread and offered you thanks.

He broke the bread,  
and gave it to them, saying:  
"Take, eat.

This is my Body: it is broken for you.”  
After supper, he took the cup,  
he offered you thanks,  
and gave it to them saying:  
“Drink this, all of you.  
This is my Blood of the new covenant;  
it is poured out for you, and for all,  
that sins may be forgiven.  
Do this in remembrance of me.”

**We now obey your Son's command.  
We recall his blessed passion and death,  
his glorious resurrection and ascension;  
and we look for the coming of his Kingdom.  
Made one with him, we offer you these gifts  
and with them ourselves,  
a single, holy, living sacrifice.**

Hear us, most merciful Father,  
and send your Holy Spirit upon us  
and upon this bread and this wine,  
that, overshadowed by the Spirit's life-giving power,  
they may be the Body and Blood of your Son,  
and we may be kindled with the fire of your love  
and renewed for the service of your Kingdom.

**Help us, who are baptised into the fellowship of Christ's Body  
to live and work to your praise and glory;  
may we grow together in unity and love  
until at last, in your new creation,  
we enter into our heritage  
in the company of the Virgin Mary,  
the apostles, and prophets,  
and of all God's children living and departed.**

Through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
with whom, and in whom,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
all honour and glory be to you,

Lord of all ages,  
world without end.

**Amen.**

### **19 - Breaking of the Bread - [OLIVER]**

The living bread is broken for the life of the world.  
**Lord, unite us in this sign.**

### **20 - Lord's Prayer - [MAGGIE]**

As our Saviour has taught us,  
so we pray:

**Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those  
who sin against us.  
Do not bring us  
to the time of trial  
but deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power  
and the glory are yours,  
now and for ever.  
Amen.**

### **21 - Communion - [OLIVER]**

God is with us wherever we are. As we gaze in adoration we feed  
on God in our hearts and minds that we may in turn feed the world.

O God, even as this broken bread was scattered over the hills, and  
was gathered together and became one, so let Your Church be  
gathered together from the ends of the earth into your kingdom; for

yours is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ for ever.  
**Amen.**

#### **24 - Post Communion Prayer - [JOHN]**

Faithful God, in this sacrament we receive the promise of salvation. May we, like the Virgin Mary, be obedient to your will. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord. **Amen.**

#### **25 - Blessing - [OLIVER]**

Mary was bursting with good news, and she couldn't help but sing. May the joy of this season be like a catchy tune for you—one that resonates inside, gets you humming and sharing it with others.

Christ the Sun of Righteousness shine upon you and scatter the darkness from before your path; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always.

**Amen.**

#### **Voluntary - [STEVEN]**

Concerto in b-minor del Signor Meck (mvmnt I) - J.G. Walther