

## #2 – FINDING JOY IN UNCERTAIN TIMES (Bill Cahusac)

- Where have you seen God at work in your life this week? (Share any brief examples and encouragements).
- Was there anything from Sunday’s message which you found particularly inspiring or challenging?
- Was there anything else you particularly noticed?

### Luke 1:46-55 [but read all of verses 26-56] (NIVUK)

Mary said:

*‘My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant.*

*From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me – holy is his name.*

*His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation.*

*He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.*

*He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble.*

*He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty.*

*He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants for ever, just as he promised our ancestors.’*

Mary is pregnant, and, living as she does in a culture of shame and blame, it’s complicated. She is ‘betrothed’ to Joseph, but still unmarried. Besides, he is not the father. So, it is complicated for him too. These are stressful, uncertain, and anxious times, where everything is ‘unprecedented’. However, in Mary’s *Magnificat* we uncover keys to finding joy in our own uncertain times.

1. **Keep it Real.** ‘God has noticed my humble state’, says Mary. She’s not trying to pretend anything. ‘To cultivate joy,’ Bill says, ‘start by being real. Stop trying to be who you’re not. We are more than our biggest mistakes or our greatest hits.’
  - *When times are tough, how have you been tempted to ‘fake it’?*
  - *Do you find it easy to be honest with yourself and the people you are close to when you are fearful, anxious, or facing big challenges?*
  - *What stops us being real? How do we stop pretending things are OK when they are not?*
  - *Where have you found joy in being more honest with yourself or other people?*
2. **Practice Gratitude.** Mary begins with a note of thankful praise. She notices the good things more than the problems.
  - *What could we do to better practice gratitude?*
  - *What are you thankful for today? What have you noticed?*
  - *Is there something you have learned to do that helps you to be more thankful?*
  - *What things have you noticed recently that have given you joy?*
3. **Remember who God is and what He has Done.** Mary first give thanks for what God has done for her – and then she looks at the bigger picture. She reminds herself of the great stories from the Bible and from the history of God’s people, where God has worked in the lives of others.
  - *What has God done for you that you are particularly thankful for?*
  - *What stories from the Bible inspire you when you find yourself becoming anxious or fearful?*
  - *Is there anyone in the Bible whose story particularly speaks to you? Perhaps someone whose mistakes and failures echo your own – someone you can identify with? How does their story give you joy?*