

# Minster Bethel Congregational Church (MBCC)

---

22/11/2020 – Luke 1

## Silver Tree



This week is Minster Bethels Silver Tree Service. This is one of our two annual gift days. This year it is a little different, but if you have collected money in one of the collection pots or want to make a donation please contact Christine on 873392 who will make arrangements for collection.

All lockdown services can be found at: [www.mbccs.co.uk](http://www.mbccs.co.uk)

Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now,  
you believe in him and are **filled with** an inexpressible and glorious **joy**

**1 Peter 1:8**

**Good morning and welcome to our silver tree service.**

Our first hymn is “Mary did you know” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ifCWN5pJGIE>

Mary, did you know that your baby boy would one day walk on water?  
Mary, did you know that your baby boy would save our sons and daughters?  
Did you know that your baby boy has come to make you new?  
This child that you've delivered, will soon deliver you

Mary, did you know that your baby boy will give sight to a blind man?  
Mary, did you know that your baby boy will calm the storm with his hand?  
Did you know that your baby boy has walked where angels trod?  
When you kiss your little baby, you kiss the face of God

Mary, did you know? (Did you know?)  
Mary, did you know?  
Mary, did you know? (Mary, did you know?)  
Mary, did you know? (Mary, did you know?)  
Mary, did you know?

The blind will see, the deaf will hear, the dead will live again  
The lame will leap, the dumb will speak the praises of the lamb!

Mary, did you know that your baby boy is Lord of all creation?  
Mary, did you know that your baby boy would one day rule the nations?  
Did you know that your baby boy is Heaven's perfect Lamb?  
That sleeping child you're holding is the great I am

Mary, did you know? (Mary, did you know?)  
Mary, did you know? (Mary, did you know?)  
Mary, did you know? (Mary, did you know?)



## **Our reading today is Luke 1 26-38 & 46-56:**

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+1&version=NIVUK>

This week as we enter our church we see an empty isolated silver tree, alone at the front looking sparse. Nothing special. Everything plain and simple. That's how it has been for as long as any of us can remember at Bethel.

An empty church and a simple bare silver tree.

Our church in its plain simplicity with the lone empty silver tree comes at a time as we start to think about Christmas.

We know Christmas started right back at the beginning of time but we generally start the Christmas celebrations with Mary. Mary a young girl, we assume. We do not know a lot about Mary at this point in time, but we do know that she was a "lowly servant", "humble" of "low estate" and a "handmaiden", all words she used to describe herself in verse 48. We assume she was alone as the angel appeared to her, there is no mention of anyone else present and we also know she was scared when the angel appeared "*Mary was greatly troubled at his words*".

There she was alone and vulnerable in front of an angel. However, in that moment, she was full of wonder and expectation. Then as the angel informed Mary of her part to play in the most amazing historical event this world would ever see she accepted willingly her role. A scared girl in front of an angel how could she do any thing else? If she had not chosen to accept what would have happened? Luckily Mary said yes.

In our church, with that empty silver tree, in that simplicity there is that feeling of expectation. For us it brings a hope for the future of our church with everyone bringing what they can reminding us of the widow as she gave all she had (Mark 12)

*41 Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. 42 But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few pence.*

*43 Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, 'Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the*

*others. 44 They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything – all she had to live on.'*

Like Mary it is a time when we can say yes to what God is asking. We know this has been a strange year, and who knows next year may be as strange! But we can still have that hope in God, that expectation that he will continue to be with us as we enter into the Christmas season of 2020 and on into the new year.

Once Mary had accepted what was happening, she rejoiced with song. A song now known as the Magnificat

**magnificat**

**M**y soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,  
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior  
for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant.  
From this day all generations will call me blessed:  
the Almighty has done great things for me,  
and holy is his Name.

He has mercy on those who fear him  
in every generation.  
He has shown the strength of his arm,  
he has scattered the proud in their conceit.

He has cast down the mighty from their thrones,  
and has lifted up the lowly.  
He has filled the hungry with good things,  
and the rich he has sent away empty.

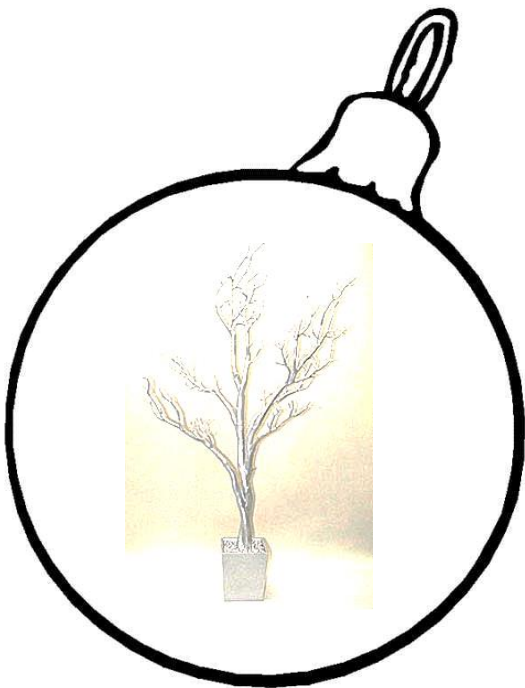
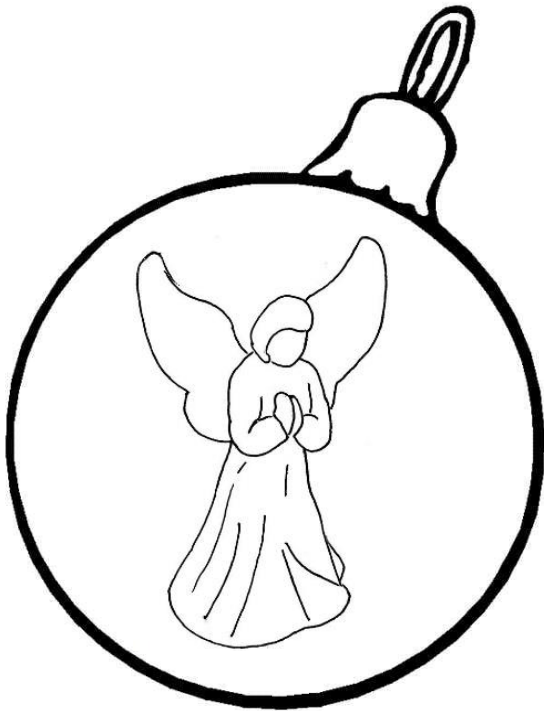
He has come to the help of his servant Israel  
for he remembered his promise of mercy,  
the promise he made to our fathers,  
to Abraham and his children forever.

So as we bring our gifts, whether they are monetary, prayer, giving of time or self, whether they be sharing what we can, joining in where we are needed we ask that you help us to rejoice as we go into this very different Christmas season. If we do that we will see as we do each year our simple, bare tree fill with all our gifts, bringing joy and hope for our future.



### **Let's pray.**

Dear God,  
Thank you for Mary who said yes to your plan.  
Help us to also say yes to your plan for us.  
Thank you and amen.  
**Amen.**



May Gods blessing surround you  
each day  
As you trust Him and walk in His way;  
May His presence within  
Guard and keep you from sin.  
Go in peace, go in joy, go in love!