

<b>Topic</b>	Christmas Through the Eyes of Mary
<b>Reference</b>	Luke 1:26-38; 2:4-19
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The period of time when the angel first appeared to her with news that would change her life forever, up until the time that she gave birth to the son that the angel had promised and then when the shepherds came, proclaiming the message they heard from the angel that reconfirmed what the angel nine months earlier had told Mary that her new born son is the Messiah, the savior, the Lord.

What an eventful lifechanging faith-filled nine months that have been for Mary. No wonder that after the shepherds left that Mary paused to reflect on all that she had seen, heard and experienced, not only on that day and night but also in the previous nine months. As she meditated and thought on these things, she treasured all these memories. Undoubtedly, as she was thinking about these things, she was wondering what this would mean for her, her husband and her son in the future, in the days, months and years to come.

Luke records that after the shepherds visit that Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. No doubt these past nine months for Mary had truly been an emotional roller-coaster with its ups and downs. She had felt fear when the angel first appeared to her and probably also fear when she was trying to decide how do I tell my parents, how do I tell my fiancé that I am pregnant. She also experienced exuberant joy as she realized how blessed she was that God had chosen her to be the mother of the long-awaited Messiah. That joy is expressed when she pours out a hymn of praise in chapter 1. Where she explains, my soul magnifies the lord and my spirit rejoices in God, my savior. Mary had undoubtedly felt **hurt**, pain, disappointment especially when she was rejected by Joseph, when he first heard the news of her pregnancy. She had also experienced **hope**, a sense of encouragement where Elizabeth will commend her for faith and hope again when Joseph through the inspiration of God decides yes he will continue with the engagement and yes he will marry her. **Uncertainty**, she also would have experienced. How can I possibly be fit to be the mother of the Messiah? These are probably just some of the emotions that Mary undoubtedly felt during those nine months encompassed by the scripture.

Now I realize that the birth of all babies can bring a flood of emotions. I remember the joy and excitement when our two babies were born and also almost a year ago the joy and excitement when our first grandchild was born. All babies are special at least to the parents. Mary's baby truly was special in a different way. I am sure Mary was thinking about that as she was treasuring up and pondering all of these things that recently happened to her. She had to be thinking about the fact that the birth of her son was so vastly different from the birth of any other child. He truly was a miracle baby unlike any other. No earthly father. Mary was still a virgin, yet she was now a mother. Therefore, her son was different from any other child. He truly was special. The angel Gabriel had told her that her son would be great and that he would be called the son of the Most High. Her son was the long-awaited savior, the promised deliverer, the Messiah.

So there was so much for Mary to treasure and so much for her to ponder about, to think about and there were still so much more that she would learn that she would experience as she continued walking with God. Mary's heart and mind were undoubtedly very full that first Christmas night. We can pretty well know some of the things that were in Mary's heart and in her mind, but it would be nice to know a few more things that are not listed in the Bible, and if could talk with Mary what are some of the things we might want to ask and find out. There are probably a lot of unanswered questions such as, how did you break the news to your parents, how did they responded, what did you say to Joseph. Now we know how he responded, but what did he say, what was the look in his eyes, how did you feel, did your faith falter for a brief period of time. Now we cannot interview Mary and the Bible doesn't tell us everything we might like to know just to satisfy our curiosity but we do have in scripture the things that God consider the most important for us to know and we probably also have in scripture the things that Mary herself would have considered to be the most important things to know because more than likely Luke who wrote this gospel, he more than likely had an interview with Mary there in Philistine after the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus when several more years have passed.

So more than likely as we are reading Luke chapter 1 and chapter 2, these are things that Mary herself had recounted to Luke who then under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit recorded them for us to read. So, when we look at our text today there is one thing that really stands out to me and that's the faith that Mary had in God. Her walk has been a truly walk of faith. An adventurous walk with both ups and downs, but undoubtedly as she looked back over and thought of these several months, she could see how her faith had been strengthened. So more than likely on that first Christmas, she remembered that answer of faith she first

gave Gabriel back when he told her that she as a virgin would become the mother of the Messiah.

Mary said, *"Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word."* Luke 1:38

What a great expression of faith. So many things she didn't know, no real time to stop and talk about it, didn't go and ask her parents, didn't go and ask her fiancé, just humbly before God said, God do with me as you will. Mary tells us that God can be trusted. I am sure she would encourage each one of us, trust God. Mary had experienced God's faithfulness and she knew firsthand that God could be trusted. Mary could testify that we can trust God because God keeps his promises. Also, because God knows what he is doing. His ways are higher than our ways. Mary could also show us how God provides and Mary would also encourage us to trust God because only God can bring salvation.

#### **GOD KEEPS HIS PROMISES:**

Luke 1:26 ... the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, 27 to a virgin (whose) name was Mary. Luk 1:30 And the angel said to her, .... 31 ... behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.

Now if Mary had been married and if she had already had children, then this promise might not have been quite so mindboggling, not quite so unbelievable but remember Gabriel was speaking to a virgin. The angel came and appeared to the virgin whose name was Mary. So, when this promise was made to Mary, this appears to her to be totally unbelievable. How could an angel of God make such a promise and so Mary responded with a question

Luke 1:34 And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"

Now I don't think that this response of Mary was showing a lack of faith on her part, I think it was an honest question. Mary might have thought about the sexual relationship between a husband and wife which she has not known and she needs to learn but I do know enough to know that girls don't just get pregnant by themselves. So, if Gabriel was talking to her about getting pregnant, she realized there is something unusual, nothing like this has ever taken place in history before. Mary might have known the scriptures that talked about women receiving promises from God to have children, barren woman receiving promises from God but in each of those cases a husband was involved and the child was born through natural method of human conception. Now

earlier in chapter 1 the priest Zechariah was told by the same angel Gabriel that his wife was going to have a baby and he did express it out and he was rebuked by the angel for his lack of faith. There are differences between Zechariah's lack of faith and Mary's honest question. One; Zechariah was older. He was more experienced and he had a wife. He was also a priest and he knew the scriptures and he knew how God had done miracles. In contrast, Mary was young, inexperienced, did not have the theological background or understanding of scripture that Zechariah had and more importantly she was not married. Plus, there is absolutely no precedent in scripture for what was getting ready to take place in Mary's life. So, Mary was asking an honest question and the answer that Gabriel gives her is

Luke 1:35 ... "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God.

What a promise that is. Mary must have thought can such a thing actually happen; will this promise of God really come true. We don't know for sure when Mary found out that she was pregnant but at the latest by the time that she went to visit her cousin Elizabeth, it appears that almost immediately after the angel appeared to Mary that then Mary left to go to visit her relatives with whom she stayed for three months. As she arrived, she was greeted by her cousin Elizabeth with these words

Luke 1:41 ... And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, 42 and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! 43 And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?"

If Mary had not been for sure that she was pregnant yet, now she knew because there is no way in the world that Elizabeth would have known this news unless God had revealed that to her. So now Mary hears this word, another confirmation from God. The promise that God had made, you will conceive in your womb, even though you are a virgin. It was a miracle. It was the one and only time that this thing happened.

1:37 Nothing will be impossible with God.

So, God kept his promise to Mary. Yes, we can trust God, God keeps his promises even though they might be difficult for us to understand and even though they might be hard for us to believe. Now in addition to the promise that Mary experienced being fulfilled by God, there are many other promises in the

scripture text that we read that are being fulfilled. For centuries God had promised that he would send a Messiah who would deliver the people, who would save the people from their sin, of whose kingdom will never end. In the angel's word to Mary we see that Mary's son is this promised Messiah, the descendant of David who would reign forever.

Luke 1:32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. 33 He will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and his kingdom will never end.

Now this type of language is Messianic language, vocabulary related to the promised messiah. The truth that Mary's son was indeed the messiah that God had promised for centuries was also reconfirmed by the message that God gave the shepherds

Luke 2:11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

About a 1000 years earlier, God had promised David that there would be a descendant of his that would reign for ever.

2 Samuel 7:8 Now, therefore, thus you shall say to my servant **David**, "Thus says the LORD of hosts,... .. 12 I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. ... .. 16 "And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever."

This messianic prophecy is repeated in many places in the prophets

Isaiah 9:6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 7 Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the **throne of David** and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

So, God kept his promise, God sent a descendant of David to be the Messiah who would reign forever. Mary was a descendant of David as is Joseph. God had promised about 1500 years earlier back in the time of Moses in the book of Numbers that a star would come out of Jacob,

## Numbers 24:17 ... a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel

Scepter pointing to a king. A king would come who would reign over the house of Jacob. We also see another promise of God being fulfilled. The angel told the shepherds that the baby was born in the city of David, the city of Bethlehem which fulfil the prophesy made about 500-600 years earlier that out of Bethlehem would come the one who would be ruler.

Now we don't know how many of these Old Testament scriptures Mary would have known but it was common knowledge among the Jewish people that the Messiah would be a descendant of David. She and Joseph were both descendants of David, she probably was aware that there is at least a possibility that through them the Messiah could come and it does appear that Mary had a pretty good understanding of at least part of the Old Testament scriptures because we see in the song of praise that she expresses in chapter 1.

Mary would definitely say, yes God keeps his promises. He kept his promise to me. He kept his promises to the people of sending the Messiah. That's true today that God keeps his promises. We have the promise of God forgiving us if we confess our sin. We have the promise that if we confess, acknowledge Jesus as Lord and believe in our heart that God had raised him from the dead, we will be saved. We have the promise that when the Holy Spirit comes upon us we will receive power to be his witnesses to all peoples. The promise related to that command to go to all peoples, I am with you always even to the end of the age. We have God's promises that he will fill our hearts with joy, peace, love, that he would give us strength to overcome temptation, that he will use us to make a difference in the world, we have His promise of abundant life today and eternal life tomorrow.

Another God's promise that we can trust is that in all situations God is working with us to bring about good. Romans 8:28 tells us that God is working in all situations, even in the difficult ones, he is working with us to bring about good. We can be assured that God is working even in the difficult times to bring about good.

### **GOD KNOWS WHAT HE IS DOING**

Sometimes people say, God moves in mysterious ways and that's true but I think sometimes we say that God moves in mysterious ways because we don't have a clue of what God is doing. Sometimes we might think, since I don't know what God is doing, maybe he doesn't know what he is doing. What arrogance to think

that? The scripture says, who can fathom who can understand the mind of God. Isaiah reminds us as God is speaking

Isaiah 55:8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. 9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Yes God's ways are different than our ways, but he can still be trusted. God's ways are not our ways. Let's look at them in the story of Mary. Mary was a young girl, she was engaged, possibly her thoughts were preoccupied with the upcoming wedding. If we suppose that the wedding feast was still a few months off, we can imagine that her thoughts might have centered on things that brides would think about everywhere. There is a good possibility that Mary had never been happier in her life and that this was the most exciting time of her life as she was looking forward to marriage but right at that moment God breaks in and interrupts her life and ask her to take part in something that is so shocking that it can't even be believed. What God asks Mary to do is going to change her life forever. So why we might ask would God do this to somebody? Why would he interfere in somebody's life who has got it all planned out? Why burden this young girl with such a tremendous responsibility? We might think that this is too much of God to ask of somebody.

God ways are not our ways and He knows what he is doing. After that initial interruption and after the awkwardness of telling her parents and telling Joseph and the people in the community finding out, I think Mary was very grateful for this huge interruption in her life, because what an honor it was to be chosen to be the mother of the Messiah. We see Mary's response

Luke 1:46 And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, 47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, 48 for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed;

God ways in Mary's life were an interruption, it changed her plans, they were inconvenient and difficult, but God's ways brought so much joy and blessing to Mary that she broke out in this song of praise. God ways has brought blessing to all people who believe in Mary's son accepting him as the messiah, as the savior, as the Lord. Another way that we can see how God knew what he was doing but Mary might not have, and we might not understand what he did or why he did, question we might have is, why did God send the angel only to Mary. Why not have a conference call? Include the parents and Joseph. If God has told everyone at the same time, it would have been so much easier for Mary. Why did God make it so difficult, I don't know, God's ways are higher than our ways,

but I imagine that as Mary was treasuring in her heart the events of these past nine months including those difficult times in the last nine months, she was probably thinking about how much her faith in God had grown, how much more she had learned that she could trust God and she had seen how she had grown closer to God even through the difficulties in life. No doubt, she might have seen Joseph's faith growing as he came to understand God's plan for his life and for Mary's life and for the son that Mary was bringing into the world.

Another thing in considering God's ways, Mary might have been wondering, we probably also wonder, why did God choose to use the lowly, the poor, the weak. Why use a manger that livestock eat out of for the baby bed? Why did God not choose to have the Messiah born in a nice palace. Why not choose a wealthy family with a socially important significance. Why not have the Messiah born into a family that was powerful politically. God's ways are not our ways, but he does know what he is doing. Maybe God choose the lowly circumstances to give hope to the vast majority of the people on the face of the earth both then and now who are not in the top 1%, not even in the top 10%. Possibly God used the lowly to show that he resists the proud, but he lifts up the humble.

Luke 1:51 He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; 52 he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; 53 he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty.

God was also showing us that the throne that Jesus would reign on eternally is not the throne of an earthly kingdom. The messiah is not coming as a political or military leader as Jesus himself would declare about 33 years later before Pilate, my kingdom is not of this earth. The messiah's kingdom was not to be spread by human might, not by human force, the kingdom of the Messiah is spread by the power of the spirit of God through those who bow before Jesus and then share with other people.

### **Why did God choose the lowly?**

God's ways are not our ways, they are higher than ours and God knows what he is doing. That's true in our world today and in our lives. God uses terrible things sometimes to bring about good. God works in all situations to bring about good. During these difficult times that our faith can grow. We can come closer to God. Times when we can grow in our trust to God, being confident of what he is doing.

Mary knew that God could be trusted because God keeps his promises and because God knows what he is doing, even when we don't understand. As Mary



on that first Christmas was meditating on the things she was treasuring in her heart, I think she may have been reflecting on the reality that she had experienced so often that God provides. Looking over the past nine months of this faith adventure, Mary can show us many examples of how God had met her needs.

She got words of encouragement from God, she received grace from God. Mary got her faith strengthened by the words of Elizabeth. Mary experienced God's provision in the face of a caring husband who would walk with her through this experience. As Mary gave birth, she experienced God's presence, God's peace, his love and his joy in a very powerful way. Mary tells us that God can be trusted, He provides.

### **GOD PROVIDES**

Paul says I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. Sometimes people take it out of context. Paul is saying, God has called me to be faithful to him, God has called me to share the gospel and God is providing all I need, he strengthens me, so I can do everything he asks me to do. That's how God provides for us. He makes it possible for us to be faithful to him, to do what he has asked us to do and we too can experience the provision of God. Sometimes God will do something miraculous but that's not every day. Sometimes God will speak to us through his word like he spoke to Mary through the angel Gabriel. Sometimes God will speak to us and encourage us and help us through the actions of other people, like Elizabeth's word strengthened Mary and like the gifts of the wise men provided for their needs.

Sometimes, it seems like God is doing nothing, but God was still providing for us in our lives like Mary we can experience God's presence, his love, his peace, his joy. Like Paul in most difficult times we can say, trusting in God that God your grace is sufficient.

### **GOD BRINGS SALVATION**

Now Mary knew she needed a savior. We see that clearly in the song that she sing in chapter 1 as she says, my spirit rejoices in God, my savior. Mary like all of us needed God's grace, His mercy, His forgiveness, because like all of us she sinned. The scripture says, all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. All includes Mary, it also includes each one of us. Mary was undoubtedly an exemplary person, lived a good life, was devoted to the Lord, otherwise God would not have chosen her, but the fact that Mary acknowledged that she too needed a savior shows us that even good people, even people who live

exemplary lives were not perfect, all sin, all need God's forgiveness, all need a savior. We need Jesus. We need the one whom the angel said, He will save his people from their sin and Mary was one of his people who needed to be saved from their sins.

There was a false teaching that circulated in some areas of Christianity that talk about Mary being a co-redemptrix, as if Jesus couldn't handle redemption by himself. Mary never made such claims, she acknowledged her need of a savior. The Bible says absolutely nothing about this, all need a savior and the news of great joy that the angel proclaimed to the shepherds on that first Christmas night was that there is good news for all people because a savior has indeed come into the world. He is the Christ, the Messiah. He is the Lord. So Jesus came to save Mary. He also came to save each one of us.

Mary probably did not have a clear idea at that time of everything this would entail. She probably did not realize that her son would be a suffering servant. Like most of the people, she probably assumed that he would be a strong political leader, but yet she did have some idea that things would be different. He wouldn't be exactly like King David because his birth was totally different than the birth of David. She didn't know exactly what would be involved but more than likely she did not yet realize that her son would suffer and be nailed to a cross in order to make it possible for us to have forgiveness of sin. But that understanding would come with time. This faith journey that Mary had embarked only nine months earlier was still relatively new and she had a lot more to learn, a lot more to experience, but as Mary was treasuring these words in her heart, thinking about all of these things, she would tell us that yes God can be trusted, trust Him.

This morning we try to look at Christmas through the eyes of Mary. There is so much more that we would like to know. We don't know a lot of the details about the Christmas story. We don't know enough to satisfy all of our curiosity but that's not the purpose of the Christmas narrative to satisfy our curiosity. The purpose of the narrative is to help us understand who Jesus is and to place our faith in him and while we do not know all the curious details, we do know enough to be able to make the same commitment of faith that Mary made with such limited knowledge when Mary responded behold I am the servant of the Lord, let it be done to me according to your word. As a matter of fact, we are really in much better position to make such a commitment of faith than Mary was, because we know so much more than Mary did. We have not only the birth narratives, we have rest of the New Testament and we know that Jesus lived a perfect life. We have heard his wonderful teachings that reveal God and God's will. We know about the miracle Jesus performed, showing he had power over

sickness, power over the forces of nature, power over demons and the forces of evil, even power over death and we know that Jesus did pay the penalty for our sins by sacrificing his life for us as he was nailed to the cross. We know of his resurrection from the dead. We know of his ascension to be with God, the father and that he is coming back to judge the world and we know that when we respond to him in repentance and faith we will be saved. Yes we are in an even better position than Mary was when the angel met her, to respond in faith to God, behold I am your servant, take my life, do with me what you will.

We can make such a commitment because we know that God can be trusted. God will keep his promises. We can trust that he knows what he is doing even when we don't understand it. We can commit our lives to God because we know God will provide and we see that through God and him alone salvation can come.

This morning if you have received God's gift of salvation, you can today, come to him in repentance and in faith, offer him your life. As you confess your sin and trust your life into his care, asking him to take control of your life. Those of us who have begun this journey of faith, let's continue walking in faith as Mary did, experiencing God's presence, experiencing God's answers to prayer, answers to his promises, experiencing God's provision in our life.