

Faith of Mary

Mary's day started out like any other day in the life of a teenage girl in Palestine.

- Helping with the morning meal. Going over a list of household chores with mom.
- Taking a trip to the well with other young women in the neighborhood. The well was the social gathering place for the women of Nazareth. (It was the Snapchat, Facebook of that day, where news, opinions and gossip were exchanged)
- Dad goes about his business; mom heads to the market to gather provisions for the day and leaves a list of jobs to do around the house. This was a day, much like any other day in the life of a teenage girl from Nazareth.
- Until the angel Gabriel appeared.

Luke 1: 26 **In the sixth month (6TH month of Elizabeth's pregnancy) the angel Gabriel (the same angel who visited Zechariah) was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, 27 to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary.**

- We are told that Mary was betrothed.
- Betrothal was a legally binding agreement between families in which a young woman from one family was pledged to be married to a young man of another. The betrothal normally took place one year before a marriage was consummated.
 - According to Roman law a young woman could be betrothed at the age of 12 and a young man at the age of 14. (all I have to say is: *not in my house*)
 - So Mary was most likely 12 -15 years old at this time.
- The betrothal ceremony was a joyous occasion that would take place right in the middle of town and was witnessed by the entire community.
- So everybody in this small town knew what was going on between Mary and Joseph.
- SO binding was the contract of betrothal that it actually required a formal divorce in order to be dissolved and those were extremely rare.

Everything about Mary's day was normal, even predictable right up to the point when the angel Gabriel called out to her with a very unique greeting.

28 (Gabriel) **came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!"** 29 **But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be.**

- The angel's greeting is very simple and yet it is very profound. It begins with a simple "Shalom" and immediately focuses on the grace that God is about to reveal to Mary.
- I draw your attention to the word "Favor" in Vs 28 which is repeated Vs 30. The Greek word for "favor" is derived from the same root as GRACE. (*CHARIS*)

THIS IS IMPORTANT:

- The Holy Spirit makes it abundantly clear that God’s choice of Mary is NOT based upon ANY MERIT of her own but solely upon the sovereign grace of God.
- Take note that the Bible is purposefully SILENT when it comes to Mary’s attributes:
- It does not describe her as holy or righteous or even faithful, it simply states that she was highly favored. (*greatly graced*)

30 *And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31 And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.*

- I can think of no greater grace, no higher expression of favor than to be chosen by God to bring the light of Christ into the darkened world.

32 *He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, 33 and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”*

- There can be no doubt Gabriel is describing the promised Messiah and Mary knows it.

Just because Mary understands the words that are being spoken doesn’t make the experience any easier after all Mary is face to face with a holy messenger from God.

- Simply reading through the Gospel you might think that angelic visitations were common in that day AND people just go around prophesying to one another on a regular basis. Frankly that was not the case.
- We need to remember; Up to the day when the Angel Gabriel confronted Zechariah God WAS SILENT (incommunicado) for 400 years.
 - Let’s put that into perspective, our nation has been in existence for 240 years. (400 is long time)
- There was no prophet in Israel no word from God but NOW it seems that every time you turn the page someone is speaking with an angel. Why is that?
- These dramatic change bears witness to the fact that the messianic age is dawning. God the Son has come to dwell among men.

Remember the words of the Prophet Joel:

Joe 2: 27 *And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the LORD your God, and none else: and my people shall never be ashamed.*

28 *"And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions.*

- God is in the midst of Israel. The eternal Son is present in the womb of the virgin. He will bring salvation to the offspring of Abraham.

NOW, knowing the setting (God has been silent for 400 years) Think about Mary’s predicament.

- She is a teenage girl, from an obscure town who ends up pregnant. She says that an angel visited her and told her that she was chosen to carry the Messiah.
- WHO would believe her?
- Who can she talk to about these things?
- Joseph? All he knows is that He is not the father.

Then Mary remembered that the Angel Gabriel mentioned her relative Elizabeth. Maybe Mary could talk with her. Surely Elizabeth would understand.

- Even though Elizabeth lived 70-80 miles away, Mary was determined to go:

Luke 1: 39 **In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, 40 and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.**

- In this culture it was proper for the younger person to give a greeting of respect to those who were older and Mary being a proper young woman did just that.
- AND look at what happened:

41 **And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit,**

- This was strange, Mary simply said Hello, and Elizabeth immediately gasped her belly, which had just convulsed with unusual movement.
- The Baby within Elizabeth LEAPED at the sound of Mary's greeting.
- At that point Elizabeth spoke with inspired clarity about something she had NO previous knowledge. It was the Holy Spirit who gave insight to Elizabeth.

Luke 1: 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? 44 For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. 45 And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord."**

Remember that Gabriel told Zechariah that John would **"be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb."** (Luke 1:15) and in the womb, John LEAPED at the sound of Mary's voice, he jumped for joy in the presence of the Messiah.

I am SURE that Elizabeth's Words provide comfort and confirmation for Mary. No doubt these Words of encouragement would be a source of great strength for the difficult days ahead.

- Elizabeth confirms the word of God that came through the angel Gabriel.
- She affirmed Mary's faith. (***"Blessed is she who believed"***)
- She acknowledged that the child in Mary's womb was in fact the Lord, Immanuel.
- And Mary responds in worship.

There are three things that I want you to remember about Mary's Worship: (3 m's)

1. Merciful – Mary worships the Lord because he is merciful.
2. Mighty - Mary celebrates God's power declaring that He is MIGHTY
3. Mindful - Mary praises God because he has been MINDFUL of his people.

Mary Worships the Lord because He is Merciful:

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; 49 for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. 50 And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.**

- From the very core of her being Mary bursts forth in joyful worship, magnifying the Lord who she now calls her Savior. (*He will deliver Israel from oppression*)
- Like Moses whose eyes were opened to see the glory of God Mary sees with new eyes the sweet mercy of God who has looked with favor on her humble estate.

When God revealed his glory to Moses, Mercy was the first attribute to be declared:

Exodus 34:6 **The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness,**

- If we were to be honest with ourselves we would recognize our great need for mercy. Deep within our hearts we know if God was to give us what our sins deserve we would all be in deep trouble. WE need a God who is merciful!

MERCY – is an attribute of God's goodness that is expressed toward those who, like Mary, have come to see the misery of their humble, sinful estate.

- The Greek word ELEOS – mercy: expresses the kindness or goodness of God that is directed toward those who are afflicted.

In the book of 2 Corinthians the apostle Paul opens up his heart, and describes all of his sufferings, his beatings, imprisonments, his stoning and his letter beautifully begins with these words:

2 Corinthians 1: 3 **Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort,**

- Paul's calls God, The Father of Mercies.

The whole cannon of scripture reveals that: God's mercy is an overflowing, an everlasting or infinite mercy.

- In Psalm 86:5 God is "Plenteous in Mercy."
- Ephesians 2:4, He is "Rich in mercy."
- Psalm 51:1 David speaks of God's "Abundant mercy."
- Lamentations 3:32 speaks of the multitude of his mercies that are new every morning.

- The words “His mercy endures forever” are repeated 26 times in Psalm 136.

Pilgrim Thomas Watson (Body of Divinity)

“The vial of God’s wrath drops, but the fountain of His mercy runs. The sun is not so full of light as the God is full of mercy. The souls of the blessed shall be ever bathing themselves in the sweet and pleasant ocean of God’s mercy. God’s anger to his children may last but a while, but his mercy lasts forever. As long as He is God he will be showing mercy. As His mercy is overflowing, so it is ever-flowing.”

The revelation of Jesus Christ brings the good news of God’s abundant mercy. He has declared in his word that ALL men everywhere are given over to unbelief BUT through the coming of Jesus Christ the mercy of God is revealed to men from every tribe and nation.

Romans 11: 32 **For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all.**

- Mary’s song exalts the manifold perfections of God and she moves from mercy to might.

2. Mary sings of the power of God that secures justice for the poor.

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 empty away.**

- When Mary speaks of the “Arm of the Lord” she alludes to His great power. That power he has demonstrated so clearly in the History of the People Israel
- When Moses speaks of “**The Outstretched Arm of the Lord**” in Exodus and Deuteronomy as He is describing the power with which God delivered Israel out of Egypt.

Isaiah speaks of the coming of the Lord as a revelation of his power:

Isaiah 40:10 **Behold, the Lord GOD comes with might, and his arm rules for him;**

Isaiah 52:10 **The LORD has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.**

Once again I want you to see that Mary’s song of praise expresses a clear knowledge of God’s Word and of the History of Israel.

- Her references to *scattering the proud* and *bringing down the mighty* from their thrones could refer to God’s destruction of the mighty Pharaoh of Egypt, The great King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, or Sennacherib of Assyria.
- BUT all of God’s mighty works of deliverance in the history of Israel POINT to the coming Messiah who would Crush the head of the serpent.

The wonderful thing about God's mighty power is that His power is always expressed in perfect righteousness.

Mary's song speaks of a power that is implemented with justice and equity. Thrones are brought low and the humble are lifted up, **The rich are sent away empty and the hungry are filled with good things.**

- WE are all too familiar with the abuse of power. We have all experienced authority that is exercised in Unrighteousness.

I think that one of the greatest evidences that man was created in the image of God is his innate desire for true justice. The cry of the heart for righteousness even though none of us has the ability to actually bring it about.

- No one possesses perfect righteousness and perfect justice will never be achieved by sinful men. BUT that doesn't remove the desire from our hearts.

Friends that is why Advent is so appealing to me. It brings the hope of Christ's return to light. Only when Jesus rules and reigns will we finally experience perfect power and righteousness, justice and equity.

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 Counselor, 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.**

3 Mary praises God because he has been MINDFUL of his people.

Luke 2:54 **He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, 55 as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever."**

While all of the statements contained in Mary's praise remind us of God's faithful dealings with Israel, Mary's last statement brings the Mercy and the Might of God's historic faithfulness into Mary's present day experience.

- Actually, ALL of God's mighty works pointed to THIS DAY when the promises he made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob would finally be fulfilled in the coming of Messiah.

Mary said: "***He has helped his servant Israel.***"

The word "Helped" contains an elegant metaphor of a hand that is outstretched to lift one up who has fallen.

- The picture that Mary paints is that of a fallen and broken people, corrupted beyond recovery. BUT GOD who is merciful, with an outstretched arm lifts them up fulfilling all of the promises that he made to their Fathers.

- The sending of Jesus Christ is God's ultimate act of MERCY and His greatest display of Power.

LISTEN again to the incredible insight that comes from this teenage girl
 Luke 1:54 *He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, 55 as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever."*

Mary recognizes that the favor that God has lavished upon HER has FAR REACHING affects for all of God's people.

- This mercy that Mary has received from God, will (LIFT) God's people from their fallen condition.
- God's faithful dealings, now made manifest through Mary will have a significant impact on ALL of Abraham's offspring. Mary sang:
"He has remembered to be merciful to Abraham and his offspring forever!"

WHO is Mary describing when she says "Abraham's offspring?" Is she speaking of Israel, the physical descendants of Abraham?

- The Apostle Paul tells us that THOSE who BELIEVE, those who are of the faith of Abraham are the children of Abraham.

Galatians 3:6 *just as Abraham "believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"?* 7 *Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham.*
 8 *And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed."*
 9 *So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.*

The MERCY and the MIGHT and the MINDFULNESS of God are readily available to all those who put their faith in Mary's beloved son the Lord Jesus.

In mercy He lifts those who are fallen,

- He has great pity on those who are broken, he is gentle with those who are wounded,

By His great MIGHT he overcomes death, giving eternal life to all who believe.

APPLICATION:

FINALLY I want speak to those of you who have young children at home and those of us who are able to influence the lives of our grand children.

I would like you to take a second look at this young girl Mary.

- The content of her song is filled with references to the Psalms.
 - Psalm 18, 34, 103, 110, 138, 71, 113,
 - Hold up the pages of scripture references.

Obviously Mary is filled with the Holy Spirit as she SINGS the Scriptures in praise to Her Lord.

- BUT there had to be a time in her young life when she committed these verses to memory.
- The Holy Spirit is bringing up that which Mary has stored up in her heart.

HOW wonderful it is when parents raise their children in the fear and admonition of the Lord teaching them the Word of God... Helping them to store it up in their hearts.

- CHILDREN are great at memorizing things.

Remember a few years back when the movie Frozen came out. EVERYWHERE you turned there was a young girl singing “Let it Go” What were they memorizing?

Don't let them in, don't let them see
Be the good girl you always have to be
Conceal, don't feel, don't let them know
Well now they know Let it go, let it go
Can't hold it back anymore Let it go, let it go
Turn away and slam the door
I don't care what they're going to say
Let the storm rage on.
The cold never bothered me anyway

DON'T get me wrong, I am not some legalist who thinks every Disney movie is straight out of the pit of hell.

What I am saying is that Your children are singing something! They are remembering the words to songs and those words are having an impact on their lives.

What are they storing up in their hearts?