

Mary: A Model for Moms

5/13/18- Pastor Randy

Luke 1:26-35;38

"In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a village in Galilee, to a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David. Gabriel appeared to her and said,

"Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you!"

Confused and disturbed, Mary tried to think what the angel could mean. "Don't be afraid, Mary," the angel told her, "for you have found favor with God! You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. And he will reign over Israel forever; his Kingdom will never end!" Mary asked the angel, "But how can this happen? I am a virgin."

The angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the baby to be born will be holy, and he will be called the Son of God."

"Mary responded, "I am the Lord's servant. May everything you have said about me come true." And then the angel left her."

1. Mary was humble before God.

The first thing that strikes me about is that she walked humbly with her God. The Old testament prophet Micah communicated a concise and compelling summary statement about how to live as true children of God. He said that God has told us what is good; and what the Lord requires of us is to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with our God?

Humility is not thinking less about oneself but thinking about oneself less. Humility is not weakness. It is the strength to do the right thing resist the powerful pull of pride which can so easily prevent us from doing the right thing. Humility frees us from the prison of public opinion. Mary was willing to accept the Lord's role for her even though it placed her at great risk of public humiliation and shame. Mary recognized that her service to God was more

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valuable than her social status. Being highly favored and blessed by God does not always, or even often, lead to being highly favored and praised by people.

Mary's humility was evidenced by her attitude towards God. She said, "I am your servant". Mary had a strong sense of her identity. She understood her purpose: to serve the will of God.

Mary's humility was also evidenced by her willing submission to God's will. If we only follow Jesus when we want to follow Jesus, then we are not following Jesus, we are asking Jesus to follow us.

Illustration: Volunteer to lead me around the Sanctuary.

We don't know if we are submitted until what God calls and commands us to do conflicts with what is convenient and comfortable for us.

2. Mary trusted God.

Submitting to God's will is not always easy. Humility is the necessary antidote to the pride and selfishness which gets in the way of our obedience to God. Trust or faith is the antidote to the hindrance of fear. From a human perspective, Mary had every reason to be anxious and afraid by the announcement that she was about to become pregnant while still engaged; not yet married. What would Joseph think? What would Joseph's family think? What would their community think? Who is really going to believe that the baby she was carrying was conceived by the Holy Spirit and not by a man she was not married to? Not only did this news give her good reason to fear, it also gave her good reason to feel confused. This was the first of three instances where Mary found herself perplexed by what she heard about her son or from her son. The second instance was when the shepherds came to see Jesus following his birth and told Mary and Joseph what the angels had told them about baby Jesus. The third instance was when they found Jesus in the Temple in Jerusalem after searching for him for three days and Jesus said, "Didn't you know that I must be in my Father's house?"

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Moms, when you are stressed by what you don't understand, take rest in what you do understand. When you are anxious about what you don't know, take refuge in Who you do know!

Mary's trust in God was evidenced by:

A. Her response to the angel; "Let it be as you have said." Her words were another way of saying, "I accept that what you have said to me is true."

B. Mary also demonstrated her trust in God when she burst into joyful praise to God a few days later when she met with her cousin Elizabeth. Her song of praise revealed that she not only believed the message from God was true, but she also trusted the God behind the message was good.

3. Mary was faithful to her God.

Mary was religiously devout. That is something for which she is to be commended, not criticized. I say that because it has become fashionable in the church today to pour contempt on the religiously observant. You often hear Christians and church leaders cast "religious people" in a bad light. The term "religious" has become a derogatory adjective. But the truth is, Jesus was religiously observant. Mary and Joseph were religiously observant. If we define a religious person as a self-righteous person, then being a religious person is not commendable. If we define "religious persons" as those who merely follow religious rituals and practices outwardly, without an inward commitment to God, motivated by a genuine love for God, then we should shun religion. But that is not what it means to be religious. Here is a definition from Merriam-Webster's Dictionary.

"Manifesting faithful devotion to an acknowledged ultimate reality or deity."

The key words in the above definition are "faithful devotion". Faithful devotion to God will necessarily take shape through spiritual disciplines such as participation in corporate worship, personal bible study, prayer and fasting. We can't claim to be "faithfully devoted" unless our lives demonstrate in practical behaviors a love for Jesus and His church which is His body!

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Let's look at Mary's relationship to the religious practices of Judaism in her day.

"When the time came for the purification rites required by the Law of Moses, ***Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord...***" - Luke 2:22

"Every year Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem for the Festival of the Passover."

- Luke 2:41

When Jesus began his public ministry, Luke writes that, "He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, ***as was his custom.***" - Luke 4:16

Mary and Joseph taught Jesus the importance of corporate worship and what was their custom became his custom. Church was a priority!

Mary's faithful devotion to God also shows up in her song of praise which has come to be called the Magnificat.

Mary's impromptu song of praise to God for blessing her with the honor of being the mother of the Messiah reveals an extensive and intimate knowledge of the OT. In a mere 100-word song of praise, she quotes from Genesis, Exodus, 1st Samuel, Job, Psalms, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Habakkuk and Malachi. A lot of the word had to be put into her for it to come out of her! But Mary's life does not just demonstrate that she was a student of the Word. We also find her to be devoted to following the word as we have already seen by her response, "Let it be done to me according to your word" and by the fact that they took Jesus to the Temple "as the law required". Mary's spontaneous song of praise in response to the news about Jesus reveals that she had developed a habit of praise and worship.

4. Mary experienced the pain of motherhood.

I'm not speaking about the pain of labor and childbirth although certainly Mary experienced that as well. I am referring to the emotional pain and grief that comes with being a loving parent. Children bring a tremendous amount of love and joy into our lives but they also bring us moments of pain and grief.

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Being a “highly blessed and favored woman did not exempt Mary from the normal anxieties and griefs associated with motherhood.

How many parents have even experienced the anxiety of the “lost child”?

When Jesus was twelve years old, He traveled with His parents from Nazareth to Jerusalem for the Passover festival. After the festival was over Joseph and Mary began to travel home. They traveled with a large number of community members so it would not be surprising if they assumed Jesus was hanging with some other pre-teens from the other families. When they realized Jesus was not with them they quickly returned to Jerusalem to look for him. After three days they finally found Jesus hanging out in the Temple, discussing the law with the religious leaders. When they saw him, Mary was indignant with him. She said, “Son, do you know what you have put us through. Your dad and I have been in a panic searching for you!”

When Jesus was consecrated to the Lord in the Temple, Simeon took Jesus in his arms and shared with Mary a prophecy concerning Jesus in which he said to Mary, “A sword will pierce your soul.” Simeon was predicting that the conflict that would result from Jesus ministry and the hatred that would be directed at him, culminating in his death, would cause her to experience intense grief like a sword piercing her soul.

When a woman chooses to become a mother, her choice results in one of the greatest experiences of love known to humankind – the loving bond between a mother and the child born to her. This great love is marked by the great sacrifice which motherhood entails. At the same time, along with this experience of great love that a woman enjoys, comes a vulnerability to great pain and grief. When you choose to love, you choose to make yourself vulnerable to being hurt. But don’t ever forget that the choice to love is worth the pain. Jesus understood this better than anyone. Thank you Jesus for choosing to love us, even though that choice would result in great suffering. Thank you to our moms for loving us enough to endure suffering for our benefit. A mother’s labor of love is second only to Jesus’ labor of love.

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5. Mary cherished the presence of Jesus. Mom will always be mom! Mom's want/need to be close to their children!

Mary was with Jesus even in his adult years. She is a key figure in the account of Jesus' first miracle. She asserts herself too much into Jesus' affairs, but she is a mom! That's what moms do! We need to give them grace!

Mary was with Jesus when he was born and when he died. After Jesus ascended we find Mary among the other disciples, following Jesus' instructions to wait in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit to fill them with power so they could be witnesses of the good news of Jesus.

That brings me to my last point:

6. Mary was a recipient of God's grace. There is nothing about her that made her worthy of the honor of bearing the messiah; the divine-human Savior of the world and Lord of all creation. Mary is a model for us but she's not our God. Mary should be honored but not worshipped.

Mom is your guide, not your God! Our moms are not perfect and they need God's grace and they need grace from us. It is not fair to expect our parents to be perfect. We certainly are not perfect! She is not your ultimate source of provision, protection and wisdom. Moms have delegated authority over us and delegated responsibility for us FROM God FOR a season. Seasons change and when we become adults, and our moms become elderly, we have a responsibility to take care of them. That is exactly what Jesus did for Mary!