

The birth of Jesus stands alone as the central majestic event in all of human history – God coming to earth through a virgin’s womb. And while it is a most strategic event; it is also a confounding miracle. Who can fathom God invading time and space to become an earthly life to give eternal life?

In Luke’s Gospel we find Mary’s account of Jesus’ birth. The story opens w/ Mary pledged to be married to Joseph. This meant she had formally agreed to marry him but the *wedding* had not yet taken place. Traditionally, b/w the *pledge* and the *wedding feast*, there was a 6-12 mo. period of time where the couple was considered married and called husband and wife, but they neither lived together nor had the consummated the marriage physically. So following the custom of the day, Mary and Joseph would’ve lived w/ their parents and then after the public *wedding feast*, they would’ve begun living together as husband and wife.

Everything in Luke 1-2 happens against this backdrop.

So on the day the angel Gabriel came to Mary, Mary was roughly 16 and living w/ her parents in Nazareth – a waiting w/ great anticipation the day of her wedding. And I’d imagine she could hardly think of anything else.

Like any bride today, Mary likely was consumed w/ all the details any prospective bride thinks about – the guest list, the decorations, the food, the music, what she'd wear... So we can only imagine how her world changed upon her encounter w/ Gabriel– **and it'd never again be the same.**

Did you know Mary was the only person present at Christ's birth and His crucifixion? She witnessed Jesus enter into the world as her son and exit it as her Savior. WOW!

So often, people lose sight of Mary's calling? No doubt, she is one of the most intriguing and misunderstood persons in history. And while the Bible calls her blessed, it never says we're to worship her; but neither are we to minimize her either. She is much more than a figurine in a nativity scene or a long pass at the end of a football game.

I Mary's CALLING

Mary was an ordinary woman w/ an extraordinary calling of God – and she presented herself usable to Him.

Truth is God could've used anyone or anything. He could've used angels. He could've drop leaflets from heaven. But if you were to check His M.O., you'd see that God prefers to move through people like you and me for His purposes.

The angel went to her and said, “Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is w/ you.” Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor w/ God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.” Luke 1:28-33

Notice her calling – *you will conceive and give birth to a son who will be the son of the Most High God* – **who will save His people from their sin.**

Talk about a shocker – she was just living her life and then one day an angel shows up and dropped a bomb on her.

Do you realize that God’s will could’ve destroyed her life? Joseph could’ve walked. She certainly was open to public shame as an unwed mother – and who would’ve believed her story about her encounter w/ God? What did her parents, and Joseph’s parents think? Only Joseph – after his encounter w/ the angel and Elizabeth (John’s mother) believed her story.

What was her calling? Her calling was to be the earthly mom of God. As incredible it is to fathom such a calling – Mary willingly embraced her calling w/ awe and wonder.

II Mary's RESPONSE

Mary said, "I am the Lord's servant and I am willing to do whatever he wants." Lk. 1:38

I am the Lord's servant. In other words, I accept. I don't know exactly what I'm getting myself into, but b/c God has called – my answer is **YES!**

Now I don't know what you might have said, but I'm afraid I might've said – "**Why me?** Did I draw the short straw?"

Why did God choose Mary? She wasn't educated or wealthy. She wasn't from the right family. God called her b/c she was humble, willing, and hopeful!

A She was Graciously HUMBLE

Humility starts when you recognize (1) who you are – a sinner; (2) what you have – nothing; and (3) where you would be w/out God – nowhere.

Humility is realizing you're not as great as you think you. And remembering that – *God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.* 1 Peter 5:5

I believe Mary's humility gave her the courage to face her fears and to accept by faith God's calling.

B She was Courageously WILLING

When God came to Moses, Moses said – “Ask Aaron.” When he came to Gideon, Gideon suggested they put out a fleece. When He approached Jonah – Jonah ran. It would seem that even the godliest of people are caught off-guard by the Savior’s bidding. Certainly Mary was no exception – and yet she didn’t run, or make excuses – **she accepted.**

Some translations communicate that Mary *enthusiastically* agreed to accept God’s calling.

enthusiastic (*en theos*) meaning – in God. When we’re enthused – we are in God. It is a word of tenacious faith. It means that we are – **ALL IN**. Mary was all in.

I have to wonder just how willing we are when it comes to God’s calling. Are we aware that God desires to accomplish His purposes through ordinary people like you and me?

When we put our trust in God we will never know where it might take us and what it might require of us.

When I surrendered to God for ministry, little did I know He’d take me around the world and introduce me to people and opportunities of which I could never fathom. Truth is God has asked me to do things that didn’t make sense to others (and sometimes to my self).

Out of college He called me to go to Europe and to give up what many considered an opportunity of a lifetime. I chose God's way over a way that might've seemed right to people.

Here's the good news – I'm sure He's not finished w/ me. I know this b/c I'm still breathing/upright. So long as we have life – God has a plan for us. And when we humbly make ourselves available to Him – He'll take our lives and transform them into an amazing adventure for His glory.

I learned long ago to say 'YES' to God even when it didn't make sense to others – I adopted the life strategy that should God call me to go I'd simply say 'yes', and that I'd strive to be faithful wherever He has placed me until further notice.

Why? It is b/c I'd rather be in the center of God's will than in the center of my comfort.

1 She Risked Her **REPUTATION**

She risked what other people would think.

2 She Risked Her **INADEQUACY**

She risked her faults and short-comings. So often we think God can't use us b/c we're not enough...

God always works thru ordinary people in extraordinary ways when ordinary people put their trust in His extraordinary power. Unknown

3 She Risked Her PLANS

This is a toughie! We often have grandiose plans for our own lives – hopes, dreams, and ambitions we long to see come to fruition – but Mary willingly and courageously said – “O God, not my will but Your will be done!”

Can it be that one very young and insignificant woman changed the world by simply agreeing to the mysteries of God? Absolutely! Why? B/c God only needs a little of our agreement to work mighty wonders for His glory.

When the most ordinary of people say, “*Consider me the Lord’s slave...*” churches are born, ministries start, hospital’s rise, Christian universities come to be. Some of the greatest missionaries were born when a timid believer agreed and said YES to God’s calling. *Calvin Miller*

D Mary was Desperately HOPEFUL

After Mary’s visit w/ Elizabeth, she offers what has become known as Mary’s song. This is Mary’s response to the favor of God. It is an expression of her hope and her desire to honor God. It is a snapshot into her heart of worship.

Mary said: “My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, 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 w/ 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 w/ good things but has sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, just as he promised our ancestors.” Luke 1:46-55

I believe this is Mary’s desire to see the God of the possible perform the impossible. This is an expression of hopeful praise to God that His will might be accomplished on earth as it is in heaven – and that it might be accomplished in her and through her life for His glory.

If our greatest need had been information, God would’ve sent us an educator; if our greatest need had been technology, God would’ve sent us a scientist; if our greatest need had been money, God would’ve sent us an economist; if our greatest need had been pleasure, God would’ve sent us an entertainer; but our greatest need was forgiveness, so God sent us a Savior – *and God chose a young, willing, peasant girl to be the earthly mother of the Savior of the world.*