

Remnant Life Church
December 11, 2016
Christmas Courage:
The Story of Mary
Luke 1:26-38

READ – Luke 1:26-38

- We said last week that the story of Joseph receives little attention compared with Mary and Jesus
- But what happened to Mary is also a story of great courage
- Mary, perhaps more than any other person in the Bible, is misplaced by churches today
 - The Catholic church has venerated and elevated her to a place of deification and worship
 - The Protestant church has, because they don't want to give the appearance of going too far that way, have relegated her to a side note in the story of Jesus
 - Neither of those is correct
 - But we have not come here today to have a theological shoot-out only to understand what the Bible says about her and the role she played in the birth of Jesus
- Nowhere in the Bible does it say Mary was perfect – she was favored – just like God favors you (**Isa 49:8**)
- Nowhere does it say she should be worshipped or prayed to – that is reserved for God only (**Ex 20:3** *No other Gods before (besides) me*)
 - What it does say is that she was highly favored and the Lord was with her (**1:28**)
- What it does not say, but what we do discover about Mary, is that she was willing to be a servant of God (**1:38**)
- As we heard Tom read earlier she willingly gave herself to become a “servant for life” to God's will over her
- Mary should not be worshipped but she is central to what God accomplished – so where does she fit into the plan of salvation according to the Bible? Who was she?
 - We read that Gabriel, sent by God, appeared to a young woman who was a virgin
 - The word virgin carries with it several meanings
 - It meant a woman who had never had sexual relations with a man
 - A woman of marriable age
 - In that same definition it means a young woman
 - In the culture of Jesus' day families would arrange for their daughter or son to be married when they came of age
 - Mary was most likely somewhere around the age of 14 or 15 as this was a normal custom
 - Joseph's age is less certain
 - Many in the Catholic church put his age as high as 90 in order to account for their belief in her perpetual-virginity
 - Also to account for Jesus' brothers and sisters who would have been Joseph's from a previous marriage
 - Seems to be unlikely given the 2 trips they had to take

- Nazareth to Bethlehem – approx. 90-100 miles (Lk 2:4)
 - Bethlehem to Egypt – almost 420 miles (Matt 2:13-14)
- Given that Joseph would have needed to “pay” a dowry of sorts to Mary’s family and be able to care for her his likely age was probably late 20s to early 30s – but we do not know
 - What is certain is that Joseph is not mentioned again after Jesus in the temple at the age of 12 (Lk 2:48)
 - And when Jesus dies on the cross 21 years later Joseph is not there because Jesus asks John to care for his mother (John 19:26-27)
- What is important about Mary to us today is less about the woman and more about her response to God’s mandate for her life
 - Like Joseph everything for her life was mapped out
 - She would have spent the traditional 1 to 2 years of her betrothal planning her wedding
 - Anticipating being a wife and mother
 - Praising God for the good and wise man that God had given her
 - But, again like Joseph, her world was turned upside down
 - And, like Joseph, she responded in a way that glorified God and the perfection of His plans
- What type of young woman was Mary?
 1. Mary, by her own words, had a **servant’s heart**
 - We use that term freely in church but what does it really mean?
 - A servant and a slave were most often two different things
 - A slave was a servant but a servant was not necessarily a slave
 - Those captured in war were made slaves of the conquering country
 - Aside from being freed by another nation (not likely) or their master setting them free they were slaves for life
 - A servant had the opportunity to leave after a period of 7 years
 - But they could also stay and commit themselves for life
 - In Ex 21:5-7 – a servant who wanted to stay with his/her master would have their ear pierced against the door frame of the house as a mark of their intent
 - That is a true heart of a servant – someone willing to give up their life for another
 - That was Mary’s heart
 - It meant total surrender
 2. Mary also had a **trusting heart**
 - a. We are told that Mary went to visit her relative Elizabeth (1:39)
 - b. Elizabeth and her husband Zechariah had experienced their own heavenly birth announcement (only 4 in the entire Bible – Jesus, JTB, Isaac, Samson)
 - c. Why did Mary make this 80-mile trip?

- i. Was it that she doubted the angel and wanted to confirm or verify it by visiting her pregnant, much older relative?
 - 1. Because these two were related it means that Jesus and JTB would have been cousins and probably grown up together
 - 2. Explains why Joseph and Mary did not see Jesus for nearly 3 days traveling back from Jerusalem but were not worried
- ii. Was she scared and needed to run away to someone who would believe her?
- iii. Or was she going to celebrate with Elizabeth?
- d. Mary had already declared that she was submitting her life to God
- e. Notice Elizabeth's greeting to Mary
 - i. "*Blessed are you among women!*" (1:42)
 - ii. This is a verse used to support the worship of Mary
 - 1. Elizabeth was not proclaiming the righteousness of Mary
 - 2. She was declaring the work of God in Mary as blessed
- f. **Prov 3:5-6** says, *Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight*
 - i. It was only Mary's trust and in God and her full submission that allowed her road to be made straight despite what it appeared to others
 - ii. That is still true today
 - iii. "Lean not..." is the very definition of faith

3. Mary had a **grateful heart**

- a. In Mary's song found in **Luke 1:46-55** we see the condition of her heart toward God and it is filled with gratitude
 - b. **Luke 1:46-47** - "*My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior*"
 - c. This was not everyone's response to God's call on their life
 - i. Moses gave multiple excuses why he was not fit for what God wanted him to do (**Ex 3**)
 - ii. Jonah ran away and tried to escape God's call to go to Ninevah
 - iii. Gideon said he was too weak and small to lead God's army (**Jud 6:15**)
 - iv. Saul hid from Samuel even after he was anointed King (**I Sam 10:22**)
 - v. And Joseph probably didn't feel like singing when Mary broke the news to him about the baby
 - d. God knew that Mary would be grateful for the privilege of bearing the Christ-child (**1:48**)
- How many of us this morning can say we carry within us a heart like Mary?
 - Are you a slave in your relationship with God because of your family, your guilt, or your past?
 - Or have you had your heart pierced by God willingly?
 - Do you trust God fully?
 - That is not possible unless you have fully surrendered your life to Him
 - Are you truly grateful for His presence in your life?