

Sonoraville Baptist Church
Sunday, December 4, 2011 – 11:00 AM
Rev. Steve Skates, Pastor

Mary's Christmas - Luke 1:26-38

Introduction: This weekend has been one that for us, has been filled with lots of family fun as my family gathered at our house for our annual Christmas Party. They started coming in on Thursday night, and by Saturday morning, there were 16 Skates' at our house mixed with a few other friends. Needless to say, it was quite a busy and noisy weekend. I guess that is why this morning, as I awaited our Deacon Prayer time before Sunday School, I came in the sanctuary and sat on the front pew and just enjoyed the peace and quiet for a few moments.

But, can you imagine sitting through a period of a little over four hundred years of silence? That was how long the world sat in silence waiting for God to speak. It had been that long since the Holy Spirit of God inspired Malachi to write the last words of prophesy recorded in the Old Testament. Can you imagine the anticipation, or even the lack of it, that the world was enduring in that period of history?

But suddenly, God spoke. By the time the events of the New Testament begin to occur some magnificent proclamations from God were being heard by a few individuals. Suddenly God's ministering angels began to appear to a select few people telling them first about the birth of the forerunner of Christ and then about Christ, the Messiah's birth. Excitement, fear, doubt, and even confusion had to have been going on in the hearts and minds of these servants of the Lord. One of those who was chosen to receive God's message was Mary, and her world was about to be turned upside down.

26 In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee,

27 to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary.

28 The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

29 Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be.

30 But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God.

31 You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus.

32 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,

33 and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."

34 "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

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

36 Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month.

37 For nothing is impossible with God."

*38 "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said." Then the angel left her. **Luke 1:26-38 (NIV)***

From here we fast forward through the next few months, through Mary and Joseph's trip to Bethlehem and the birth of the Christ child in the manger. We move past the angel's announcement of the birth of Jesus to the shepherds and their visit that very night. And throughout all of this, "*Mary treasured up all these things, and pondered them in her heart.*" **Luke 2:19 (NIV).**

This morning we are going to take a look at Mary's Christmas Through the eyes and voice of Mary, may we see and hear her as she ponders this great thing that the Lord has done. Mary's Christmas provides us with some important lessons for our lives today. First, we hear Mary teaching us that:

1. No One Is Useless.

Let's consider a few facts about Mary. First, we know that she was a young girl. She was engaged to be married. At that time, it was customary for girls to be engaged at twelve or thirteen years of age. So it is very possible that Mary could have been that young when Gabriel visited her.

If this underscores anything, it emphasizes that a person does not have to wait until they are older to start serving God. God can use children and teenagers just as much He can use adults. There is not an age requirement to be used of God - just a heart requirement. God is looking for hearts that are sensitive to His calling, and hearts that are willing to be used of Him!

Second, we know that Mary was poor by the world's standards. We know this because in the latter half of Luke 2 we read that Mary and Joseph took baby Jesus to the temple. This was in keeping with the commandments of the law which required parents to bring a lamb for a burnt offering and a dove or a pigeon for a sin offering. But if a lamb was too expensive, the parents could bring a second dove or pigeon instead. This is what Mary and Joseph did, so it tells us that they were poor.

Third, Mary was from Nazareth. The significance of this statement is that from all indications, Nazareth was a town that had a bad reputation. For example, when Nathaniel heard that Jesus came from Nazareth, he was stunned. He wondered aloud, "*Can any good come out of Nazareth?*" (John 1:46 HCSB).

So we see that Mary was young, poor, and from Nazareth - all characteristics that, for people of her day, would make her seem to be unusable by God for any major task. But God chose Mary for one of the most important acts of obedience He has ever demanded of anyone. Mary's story teaches us that no matter who you are, the Lord can use you.

Think about it! Of all the women God could have chosen - queens, princesses, daughters of the wealthy and influential - God chose a poor teenager from a town with a bad reputation to be the mother of Jesus. Why did He choose her? I believe that part of the reason had to do with Mary's character. She had two vital characteristics for which God is looking: humility and faith. And God is still searching for humble people who will simply trust Him by faith.

This morning, you may feel that that God can't use you because you're too young, or you lack certain skills, or you're not experienced or educated enough. But I want you to hear Mary telling you today to not limit what God can do with you. If He could use a poor teenager from the wrong side of the tracks to be the mother of the Savior of the world, He can use you. All you have to do is humbly place yourself in His hands, and trust Him. Secondly, we hear Mary teaching us that:

2. No Situation is Hopeless.

As Gabriel visits Mary she is understandably startled at his presence. (29). You would be too if an angel came up to you! So Gabriel quickly tells her to not be afraid! He announces to her that even though she is a virgin, she is going to conceive and give birth to the Messiah - the One who will save His people from their sins. As startled as she was and as hard to believe as those words were to Mary, you can imagine the reactions this news brought to those around her.

Can you imagine Joseph's reaction? What would he do? Would he leave her or divorce her? Would he publically humiliate her or stay with her?

Then can you imagine the reaction of Mary's family, or Joseph's family for that matter? What would they say? Would they love her through it or leave her to fend for herself? Would they reject her or would they respond with their love and support?

What about Mary's community and her friends? How would they react? Can you imagine the gossip going on in Nazareth in private and public conversations? The people of Nazareth would have not looked upon a pregnant teenager as lightly as we do today. They would have at the very least shunned her and her family, but at the most, they would have accused her of adultery - a sin that was punishable by death from stoning.

The message from Gabriel totally changed Mary's life. She was getting ready to be married and live a normal life. But suddenly, her life was turned upside down. How could she be calm and courageous as she faced all of the problems that her pregnancy might cause?

I believe the only way Mary could face the days ahead is found in the angel's words to Mary in vs. 28: "*The Lord is with you.*" Mary believed and relied on the Lord's presence in her life. She trusted that He would help her. She depended on the strength and courage He would give to help her face what lay ahead.

One of the most comforting promises of God is His continual presence with His people. In **Psalm 118:6 (NIV)** the Psalmist says, "*The LORD is with me; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?*" The writer of Hebrews records those reassuring words of God who said, "*...Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.*"

Hebrews 13:5 (NIV). And one of the titles given to Jesus at His birth was “*Immanuel,*” which means “*God with us.*”

Mary faced the possibility of rejection from Joseph, her family, her community and even the possibility of being stoned to death, but she knew that the Lord would never abandon her.

What problems are you facing? Whatever they are, would you hear Mary teaching you that no situation you are in is hopeless. It doesn't matter what problems you face - the Lord will be with you, so you can put your faith in Him. Finally, we can learn from Mary's story that:

3. God's Power is Limitless.

There are several miracle babies in Scripture. God promised to send a son to Abraham and Sarah even though Sarah was well beyond normal child-bearing age; and so Isaac was born.

An angel of the Lord told a man named Manoah and his barren wife that they would have a special son. And sure enough, Samson entered the world and for a time delivered the Israelites from the oppression of the Philistines.

The power of God was also demonstrated in the birth of Samuel, the first prophet, and final judge. He was the answer to the faithful prayers of his godly but barren mother, Hannah.

John the Baptist's mother, Elizabeth, was also unable to have children until God graciously intervened and made her the mother of the forerunner of Christ. But none of those special births was as amazing as the birth of Jesus Christ. His birth was a virgin birth.

When we talk about the virgin birth we mean that Jesus was conceived in the womb of His mother Mary by a miraculous work of the Holy Spirit and without a human father.

We read in **Galatians 4:4 (NIV)** “*But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law*” Notice that this verse does not say Jesus was born of a woman and a man. This further proves His virgin birth and His sinless life! Mary's story teaches us that no matter what He has promised, the Lord can do it.

Even though the angel's news was unbelievable, Mary believed it. Jesus' miraculous conception is impossible to understand by human reason alone. But the real issue is whether we believe that nothing is impossible with God. The prophet Jeremiah declared, “*Sovereign LORD, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you.*” **Jeremiah 32:17 (NIV)**

Certainly a miracle such as the virgin birth is not too hard for the God who created the universe and everything in it. Anyone who says that a virgin birth is impossible is putting limits on God and telling you that they don't believe in the God of miracles. That same person doesn't believe in the parting of the Red Sea, the restoring of sight to the blind, or the resurrection of the dead – all miracles of God.

Believing in the virgin birth is important because it shows that salvation must come from the Lord. You see, God promised in Genesis 3:15 that the “*seed*” of the woman would ultimately destroy the serpent. And through His Son's virgin birth, God brought it about by His own power, not through human effort.

So, the virgin birth of Christ is an unmistakable reminder that salvation can never come through human effort, but it must be the work of God Himself. Our salvation only comes about through the supernatural work of God, and that was evident at the very beginning of Jesus' life when He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, not by a man.

Mary knew that a virgin birth would be physically impossible, but she also believed that “*nothing is impossible with God.*” (37) What promise of God do you doubt? Remember that nothing is too difficult for Him because His power is limitless.

Conclusion: In closing, remember these three truths. First, no matter who you are, the Lord can use you. Second, no matter what problems you face, the Lord is with you. And third, no matter what He has promised, the Lord can do it. These truths are important because God wants to do something powerful and miraculous with your life. If you will simply be like Mary and trust Him, He will bring it to pass.