

Luke 1:26-38
God Saw Mary's Worth, Would We?
WRCoB 12.22.19

One of the really important truths taught in the Bible
Is the truth that God created every person
In God's very own image.

This "made-in-God's-image" quality is what
Gives each and every person inherent value and worth
From the beggar on the corner to the Pope in the Vatican

As we witness in the birth narrative
God sees the worth and value in people
Often in unexpected places.

The question then for us coming from our lesson is this:

*Why did God choose Mary of all the women on earth
In that particular time and place
To play such a significant role in salvation?*

A brief description of Mary . . .
A young, unmarried, Jewish girl
Between 12 and 16 years-of-age
Living in the small town of Nazareth
In Roman-occupied Palestine.

In the eyes of the larger society . . . nobody special.

But here is where we discover that God saw in Mary
What many would not/could not have seen

God saw in her an inherent value and worth
And a simple but tenacious faith.

God saw in her what was needed.
Someone to bear, to love, and to care
For the One he would send as Savior.

~~

Today's Scripture Lesson is known in church jargon
As the Annunciation.

It is the announcement or proclamation,
By the angel Gabriel to Mary
That God had chosen her
For this unique vocation.

Her response is indicative of her simple faith.

**Luke 1:38 (KJV) Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it
unto me according to thy word.**

~~

But really, did she have any idea
What God was asking her to do?

I mean, think about it . . .
How many 14-year-olds
If she was in fact that age

For that matter
How many of us have any idea what God
Is about to do in our own lives?

The angel Gabriel told her, again using the King James

Luke 1:28 Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.

Gabriel calls her favored and blessed.

Yet in ordinary considerations

What sort of favor did Mary receive?

How was she blessed by God?

If Mary could have looked into her future

Would she have so innocently stated

Let it be according to your word?

~~

We know from today's passage

That Mary was betrothed to Joseph.

According to Jewish law

To be pregnant before marriage

Was punishable by death.

But Joseph took her as his wife anyway

Despite the potential humiliation.

~~

Nearing the time of the birth

Mary and Joseph were forced to travel

From Nazareth to Bethlehem

Roughly 60 miles walking or riding on a donkey.

The Roman Empire's census required it.

And when they arrived in Bethlehem
And her time had come to give birth
There was no place to stay.

We glamorize the events surrounding the birth of Jesus.

But really, think about it . . .
To give birth to any child
Let alone THIS child, in a barn?

What kind of favor is this?

~~

Yes, it is true the local shepherds
Went and worshiped Jesus in the stable.

Luke says Mary treasured these things
And pondered them in her heart.

For sure, a special moment for Mary.

On the eighth day
Mary and Joseph took Jesus to Jerusalem
To be circumcised according to Jewish law.

There at the Temple, they met a man named Simeon.

Simeon took the child in his arms
Blessed him and praised God saying

**Luke 2:29-30 (NRSV) “Master, now you are dismissing
your servant in peace, according to your word; ³⁰ for my
eyes have seen your salvation**

Again, Luke says Mary and Joseph marveled at this.

But after Simeon blessed Jesus

He looked into Mary's eyes and said

Luke 2:35 (NRSV) . . . and a sword will pierce your own soul too.

~~

Gabriel comes again and appears to Joseph in a dream

Warning him to take his family and flee.

King Herod had ordered the killing of all newborn boys

Under the age of two

In and around the vicinity of Bethlehem.



Mary and Joseph fled in the middle of the night for Egypt

Where they lived as refugees in Africa.

How old is Mary now?

Is she sixteen yet?

So this, then, is God's blessings?

~~

After hearing the news King Herod died
They returned to live in Nazareth, their hometown.

There, Joseph and Mary lived a simple life
In a small village, hidden in the hills of Galilee.

After the trauma of living as refugees
They hoped to live a quiet and peaceful life
In that small town setting.

But it was not to be so.

~~

According to Luke we find the family 12 years later
Back in Jerusalem for Passover.

And as they left to return home
Along with other families from Nazareth
They discovered Jesus absent.

They returned to Jerusalem to search for him
And found him in the Temple sitting among scholars.

And Mary, after worrying so, made the comment,

Luke 2:48-49 (NRSV) “Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety.”

And Jesus answered ⁴⁹ **“Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?”**

~~

When Jesus was actively engaged in his ministry

His mother, Mary, and his brothers

Came to where Jesus was staying and asked for him.

Someone went in and informed Jesus.

Mark 3:32 (NRSV) “Your mother and your brothers and sisters are outside, asking for you.”

And Jesus answered

Who are my brothers, sisters, and mother?

Mark 3:35 (NRSV) “Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.”

I beg to ask the question

Was not Mary doing the will of God?

~~

We read in each of the gospels,

That as Jesus and the disciples went around

Teaching, preaching, and healing.

Mary and many other women were devoted followers.

Joseph, no longer in the picture
Mary leaves her home
To be with her beloved son.

She gives up the comfort of her home
And treks across the countryside
Supporting Jesus and his ministry.

~~

And then, finally, to witness the injustice of it all . . .
Of Jesus' arrest, conviction,
And the sentence of her son's death

To see her son tortured
Forced to carry his own instrument of death
Through the streets of Jerusalem . . .

Would have been more than most women could endure.

Yet we read Mary stood at the foot of the cross
And watched her son die an excruciating death.

So this, then, was God's favor?

~~

We think of God's blessings
As living a life free from pain and suffering.

If Mary anticipated unbroken happiness
If she sought the quiet life
As a small town resident

If she wanted a "normal" family
A family of well-adjusted, obedient children

Then, this favor of God's would have felt like a curse!

~~

But of course . . . the truth of it all lays deeper.

We think of God's favor in ease, pleasure, and prosperity

These were not blessings God bestowed upon Mary.

If we look at it from a human perspective

And add up all the heartaches of poor Mary

We become disillusioned by it all.

But from a Biblical vantage point we see the larger picture.

Despite a terribly tragic life

Mary lived out her faith and commitments

And fulfilled her part in destiny.

~~

The Catholics have a prayer:

"Hail Mary, full of grace

The Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou among women

And blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus."

If Mary only knew . . . she knew!

**Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me
According to your word.**

~~

Not many mothers regret the pains of childbirth
Nor the incessant demands
Placed upon them by their children.

Nor the vicarious suffering they experience
As they witness the pain and suffering
Their own children go through.

Despite the fear, anxiety, and confusion of the moment
Following the angel's proclamation
Mary sensed the magnitude of the moment.

Knew she was being asked to do something far greater
Than anything she could imagine.

Knowing it would stretch her to the very limit.

Knowing in the end, a sword would pierce her soul.

But . . . how could she NOT do what God asked of her?

~~

God depends on common, regular, everyday folk
Like you and me
To work out his divine purpose.

God chose a young, unmarried, Jewish girl
Living in a dusty little town
In Roman-occupied Palestine
To be the mother of our Savior.

God saw in her an inherent worth and value
Saw her simple but resolute faith
And entrusted her with the role of mother.

She is worthy of our praise and adoration.

Little did she know,
As she sat next to the manger in that stable
How it would all turn out.

It didn't matter . . . the precious little time she would spend
With her son, the Son of God
Will have all been worth it.

God blessed her with a miracle child
And gave her the responsibility to love him.
This, she could do.

So why Mary?

Why not Mary?

God saw the inherent value and dignity in Mary.

Would we?