

The Song of Mary: Receiving Gifts from God

12.16.18

Christmas Series 2018

Luke 1:26–38 (CSB)

²⁶ In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin engaged to a man named Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ And the angel came to her and said, "Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you." ²⁹ But she was deeply troubled by this statement, wondering what kind of greeting this could be. ³⁰ Then the angel told her: "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹ Now listen: You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David. ³³ He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and his kingdom will have no end." ³⁴ Mary asked the angel, "How can this be, since I have not had sexual relations with a man?" ³⁵ The angel replied to her: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore, the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. ³⁶ And consider your relative Elizabeth—even she has conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called childless. ³⁷ For nothing will be impossible with God." ³⁸ "I am the Lord's servant," said Mary. "May it be done to me according to your word." Then the angel left her.

Luke 1:39–56 (CSB)

³⁹ In those days Mary set out and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judah ⁴⁰ where she entered Zechariah's house and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹ When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped inside her, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. ⁴² Then she exclaimed with a loud cry: "Blessed are you among women, and your child will be blessed! ⁴³ How could this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴ For you see, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped for joy inside me. ⁴⁵ Blessed is she who has

believed that the Lord would fulfill what he has spoken to her!”⁴⁶ And Mary said: My soul praises the greatness of the Lord,⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,⁴⁸ because he has looked with favor on the humble condition of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed,⁴⁹ because the Mighty One has done great things for me, and his name is holy.⁵⁰ His mercy is from generation to generation on those who fear him.⁵¹ He has done a mighty deed with his arm; he has scattered the proud because of the thoughts of their hearts;⁵² he has toppled the mighty from their thrones and exalted the lowly.⁵³ He has satisfied the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty.⁵⁴ He has helped his servant Israel, remembering his mercy⁵⁵ to Abraham and his descendants forever, just as he spoke to our ancestors.⁵⁶ And Mary stayed with her about three months; then she returned to her home.

1. There is incredible beauty in the Story and Song of Mary.

A. Here we have a girl who is invited to be the mother of the world’s Savior.

1. Remember, Mary is still a child at this point.
2. Somewhere around 12-14 girls were given in marriage as they became sexually mature.
3. Mary is, in our eyes, a baby having a baby.

B. But it is exactly this childlike condition that we celebrate.

1. Because Mary was a child, she believed without fuss or argument.
2. She asked simple a question (how can this be since I’m a virgin) and received a simple but powerful answer (nothing is impossible with God).
3. A child, like Mary, believed when an adult would have argued.

C. Mary’s childlikeness had another benefit.

1. Children know how to receive gifts.
2. This morning, we are going to talk about receiving gifts.
3. The Christmas and Advent season is all about God giving us an undeserved gift.

a. We didn’t earn God’s love, deserve God’s Grace, or achieve anything.

- b. God sent His Son into the world as a gift.
- c. And one reason why Jesus taught that we must become like little children is because children know how to receive gifts.

2. To be childlike is to know how to receive gifts.

A. Adults aren't good at receiving gifts.

1. Many of us would rather give than receive.
2. If someone blesses us by giving something we argue.
 - a. We try to say it is too much,
 - b. we may secretly wonder if there is a hidden motive.
 - c. Rarely do we ever just say, thank you, and glory in the receiving of the gift.
3. Adults live in the realm of favors and wages.
 - a. Favors mean that what is done for me will be paid back another day in another way.
 - b. Wages is an agreed upon condition where I give of my time or expertise for an agreed upon amount.

B. Kids don't have the same worldview.

1. If it is a good gift, they have no problem taking it.
 - a. It's funny to watch the difference between a kid opening a present and an adult.
 - b. We cut the tape and may even try to save the paper.
 - c. For a child, there is no time and no need to save anything.
 - d. What they want is in that package, and nothing is going to stop them.
 - e. Let's be honest, we love watching kids throw themselves upon the package with joy and excitement.
2. Many kids have no shame in asking for something they want.
 - a. In fact, parents have to teach kids that they can't have everything they want and see.

b. Because if a kid wants something bad enough, they will ask and beg until they get it.

C. The child in Mary knew how to receive a gift.

1. An adult would have argued.
2. An adult would have fussed over a gift and honor this huge.
3. Not a child.
4. Because children know how to receive gifts.

3. Mary's lowly position put her in a place where all she could do was receive.

A. First, Mary's position as a woman in the Middle-Eastern society placed her at the lowest level.

1. "In his morning prayers a Jewish man would thank God he was not made "a gentile, slave, or woman." ¹

a. Even today, women have minimal value in many Middle-Eastern cultures.

b. During the Battle of Fallujah, American soldiers encountered enemy combatants using little girls as human shields knowing Americans would hesitate in firing.

2. I say this so we may see that Mary was not in a position to repay God, offer favors, or anything of the like.

3. All she could do was receive and to give thanks.

B. Not only was Mary a poor girl but she was from a poor town.

1. We often think of Nazareth as some grand place because that is Jesus' hometown.

2. But Nazareth had a negative reputation and was entirely unimportant.

¹ Paul-Gordon Chandler, [*Songs in Waiting: Spiritual Reflections on Christ's Birth*](#) (Harrisburg, PA; New York; Denver: Morehouse Publishing, 2009), 30.

C. And God chose a small-town girl, with nothing to offer but herself, to be the bringer of a miracle.

1. From this low position Mary received, Jesus was born, and we were blessed.

2. Neither **Your beginnings nor your current conditions are detriments to God's plan.**

3. In fact, God often uses those from the lowliest of positions and backgrounds because then we can't take any of the credit.

D. When you have nothing, all you can do is receive.

1. Although we often like to boast about how hard we have worked and the wisdom of our decisions and choices, the truth is we are all indebted to God for His gifts towards us.

2. It was because of His love for us that He sent his Son.

3. It was because of His compassion that He provided for our healing.

4. **While we were in our low position, made that way be the weight and power of sin, God came down to give us the gift of redemption and salvation.**

4. Today, I remind you that Gifts of God are received not earned.

A. Notice that Mary's response to the Gift of God was thanks:

"My soul praises the greatness of the Lord, ⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, ⁴⁸ because he has looked with favor on the humble condition of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed, ⁴⁹ because the Mighty One has done great things for me, and his name is holy. ⁵⁰ His mercy is from generation to generation on those who fear him. ⁵¹ He has done a mighty deed with his arm; he has scattered the proud because of the thoughts of their hearts; ⁵² he has toppled the mighty from their thrones and exalted the lowly. ⁵³ He has satisfied the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty. ⁵⁴ He has helped his servant Israel, remembering his mercy ⁵⁵ to Abraham and his descendants forever, just as he spoke to our ancestors.

1. All Mary did was praise.

2. God looked upon her childlike and lowly position and said, "I choose you if you will have me".

3. Mary had to be willing to receive the gift and opportunity.

a. God was not forcing himself upon Mary.

b. By believing the word of the Lord, she was willingly receiving the gift.

B. Today, there are people here in this sanctuary that God has gifts for.

1. But you haven't willing to receive.

a. You have been bartering with God, negotiating with God, and trying to find a way to earn the gift.

b. But **God's gifts do not come with strings attached.**

2. I want to encourage you today to accept the gifts of God for your life.

a. Stop trying to be the adult in this situation and embrace God's gifts with the reckless abandon that kids have.

b. He wants to save you from your sins, which is a gift.

c. He wants to fill you with the Holy Spirit, which is a gift.

d. He wants to heal you, restore you, save you, and set you free and these are all gifts.

e. These are not things to be earned but received.

C. This morning, if you have a need, God has a gift for you.

1. If you are hurting, there is healing in relationship with Jesus.

2. If you are lost, there is safety and identity in Jesus.

3. You don't have to earn it or work for it: You must simply receive it.

D. That is what the time around the front is all about:

1. It is a time where we make the physical act of faith by coming to others to receive prayer.

2. The oil we often use is a symbol of God's presence, that all good things come from His hands not ours.

3. Here in just a moment, I want to give everyone opportunity to receive the good gifts of God.