

The Song of Mary: Believing God

What a child can teach us about Christmas.

12.8.18

Christmas Series 2018

Luke 1:39–45 (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!"

Luke 1:46–56 (CSB)

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 mercy ⁵⁵ 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. Christmas is a confusing time for adults.

A. At one level, we are simply stressed.

- a. Presents to buy.
 - b. Parties to attend that we don't want to be at.
 - c. Money going out faster than we can make it.
 - d. There is also the loneliness and sadness of family that has passed on, kids that can't make it home, and a reminder that time has marched on yet again.
- B. There is also an excitement.
- a. The anticipation of seeing that one family member you really do like.
 - b. The look of joy on the face of children as they open their presents.
 - c. And, hopefully, time spent eating, celebrating, and relaxing in comfortable clothes.
- C. For most children, there isn't this tension that we feel as adults.
- a. There is no school.
 - b. There is presents, hopefully, under a tree.
 - i. Used to, we would pick up the gifts and shake to see what is in them.
 - ii. Now, kids try to break into mom or dad's Amazon password to see what they ordered.
 - c. For kids, it's a time to celebrate, decorate, and to enjoy life.
- D. Wouldn't it be great if adults could regain some of the wonder and excitement we used to have about Christmas?
- a. I would love to be a little more excited and a lot less cynical.
 - b. I would love to open my eyes to more beauty and less drudgery.
 - c. I want to be more like Mary and less like Scrooge and the Grinch.
- E. The Christmas story focuses around 2 children.
- a. Jesus, of course, is the most important.
 - b. But Mary is also a child in her own right, especially by today's standards.
 - i. Mary is somewhere around 12-14 as it was customary for females to be married as soon as they reached sexual maturity.
 - ii. She is, in a sense, a child herself.

- c. The beauty of Mary being a child herself is that she brings several childlike qualities to this great story of faith.
- d. It is these childlike qualities that I want us to focus on this season.
- e. I want to try to show us how Mary's low and childlike position points us to the greatness and love of God.
- f. If you don't feel "put together" this Christmas Season, I want to show you how God uses what we consider our faults to do great acts of Faith.

2. Mary was faced with an impossible opportunity:

- A. Gabriel, the messenger of God, declares to Mary that she shall become pregnant.
 - a. Not only is she just reaching sexual maturity but she is still a virgin.
 - b. And the baby is no ordinary baby but the Son of God.
 - c. This was the stuff of myth and legends.
 - d. Only a child could believe something like this:
 - i. That a virgin would give birth.
 - ii. That God would choose a poor girl to carry the Son of God.
 - iii. Only a child would be naïve enough to believe that God would do something like this.
- B. It is this childlikeness that God was depending upon.
 - a. God couldn't choose a more mature, married woman.
 - b. God couldn't choose Elizabeth to be the mother of Jesus because, although she didn't have a child until late in life, she had been married (if you catch my drift).
- C. A more "mature" person would have struggled with this belief.
 - a. Children love fairytales.
 - i. Children love a world of imagination and creativity.
 - ii. Although children are inquisitive, they more easily believe what you tell them.
 - b. We adults don't believe anything anymore, unless it is on Facebook.
 - i. We believe all of the wrong things and reject all of the right things.

- ii. We have a saying, “It sounds too good to be true.”
- iii. I don’t know if I have ever heard a child say that.

c. God needed someone who would believe the moment she heard about what God was doing, and that is why He chose a child to be the mother of the Miracle.

- i. Paul-Gordan Chandler writes: As children we lived in a summery green world where everything was possible, where in the end the villain or wicked witch was always slain and the princess rescued from her tower. Like a child, Mary quietly and simply believed. She didn’t fully understand the angel’s message, but she understood who God was, and she remembered the last thing the angel Gabriel said to her: “For nothing is impossible with God.” Her “yes” turned the course of history.¹
- ii. It is not by accident that God chose a girl to be the one who believed on-behalf of unbelievers.
- iii. God made a lowly-girl, without rights, privileges, or status, to be the chosen instrument of His amazing plan.
- iv. It is God who does the miracle, it is we who must believe.
- v. Martin Luther, the fifteenth-century reformer, once said, “There are three miracles of the Nativity. That God became man, that a virgin conceived, and that Mary believed. And the greatest of these was the last.”²

3. For Mary, Believing is not an end to itself.

A. What is the purpose of faith and belief?

- a. For task-oriented people, like myself, the purpose of faith and belief is to do or get something.
- b. I believe SO I can be saved.

¹ Paul-Gordan Chandler, [*Songs in Waiting: Spiritual Reflections on Christ’s Birth*](#) (Harrisburg, PA; New York; Denver: Morehouse Publishing, 2009), 27.

² Paul-Gordan Chandler, [*Songs in Waiting: Spiritual Reflections on Christ’s Birth*](#) (Harrisburg, PA; New York; Denver: Morehouse Publishing, 2009), 26–27.

- c. I have faith SO I can be healed.
- d. The list goes on.
- e. It seems like I only exercise faith and belief when I want something.
- f. But this is not what Mary did.

B. Upon her belief, Mary worshipped.

- a. The opening line of Mary's song in verse 46 says that Mary "praised the Lord".
 - i. In Latin and the early English, it says "Mary Magnified the Lord".
 - ii. It is from this word "Magnify" that this song receives its name. (Guess?)
 - iii. It is called the "Magnificat" and it is one of the most sang and prayed songs in Church history.
- b. I draw your attention that Mary's response to the angel Gabriel, the visitation with Elizabeth, and the leaping of the unborn John was to magnify the Lord.
- c. In other words, she worshipped and thanked God.
 - i. She thanked God for the miracle.
 - ii. She thanked God for choosing her.
 - iii. She thanked God for the opportunity.
- d. In Mary's song, "God is the subject of almost every verb."
 - i. She is praising God, not the Gift.
 - ii. When we praise the gift, we rob the Giver of the thanks He deserves.
 - 1. I know some parents teach their children to believe in Santa Clause.
 - 2. If you do, that is up to you.
 - 3. But does it ever bother you when your kid thanks Santa for the gifts and presents when you know it was because of your work and effort that the gift got there?
 - iii. As adults, we can be tempted to give our praise and thanks in the wrong direction.

1. Or we become so focused on the gift, the job, the car, the result that we forget to magnify in the One who gave us the gift, the job, the car or the result.
2. Mary didn't praise the gift, she praised the God who chose her and helped her to believe.

4. Many of us today need this childlike faith.

A. When you were first a believer, everything was possible for God.

- i. You prayed and saw miracles.
- ii. You believed and expected in a way that now seems foolish or childish.
- iii. The struggle many adults face is that we become jaded over time and we lose the childlike sensitivity that we once had.

B. Yet God wants us to model some childish characteristics.

- i. And one of those is childlike faith.
- ii. To believe what God says and to act upon it.
- iii. To believe in miracles and pray for God to do what he promised.

C. In a few moments we are going to do 2 things that require a childlike faith:

- i. First, we are going to have a time of prayer.
 - a. During this time, if you need prayer you need to come up.
 - b. Some of you have husbands who need to be saved, and even though it may look impossible, no one wants him saved more than God.
 - c. Others need a financial miracle, a healing miracle, or a relationship miracle.
 - d. Here in just a moment, if that is you, I want you to come and pray.
 - e. You may feel nervous, scared, or embarrassed but those are part of the struggle between the adult in you and the child in you.
 - f. Don't let that voice that tells you this is stupid or not real rob you of the miracle God has for you.
- ii. After prayer, we are going to receive Communion.

- a. Communion is a time when we, as a group of people, participate in the suffering and the promises of Jesus.
- b. Not only did Mary give birth to a baby, she gave birth to a Savior.
- c. And through Jesus' death and resurrection, we experience a new life and a fresh start.
- d. When we receive Communion together, we are participating in the promises of God.
- e. It requires faith to see that.

Let us pray.