

WHEN GOD “CRASHED” INTO THE WORLD OF MARY

If there is such thing as “the word of the week,” I would nominate the word “legacy” for this past week for a couple of reasons. First, not long after the Green Bay Packers suffered an embarrassing home loss to a bad team on Sunday, the Packers fired Mike McCarthy, their head coach for 13 years. What will his legacy be? Will he be remembered for his successes—or his failures? Will he be remembered for leading his team to—and winning—the Super Bowl once; or will he be remembered for the games they botched that stopped them from going to more Super Bowls? To my oldest son and his family, McCarthy’s legacy is much more personal because they actually met him and spent time with him. To them, he will be remembered as a caring and compassionate man who welcomed them to Lambeau Field when they were there for my grandson Kellan’s “Make a Wish Weekend”—and who visited Kellan on several occasions at American Family Children’s Hospital in Madison after that.

On Wednesday was the nationally televised funeral for George H.W. Bush—the 41st President of the United States. Once again, the word “legacy” was used extensively throughout the day as various individuals recounted what kind of politician he was in office—and what kind of man he was in private. Will he be remembered for being the last President who fought in a World War...or for spear-heading a coalition of nations in Operation Desert Storm to liberate Kuwait from Iraq—or will he be remembered for his graciousness and humility...and for parachuting out of airplanes to celebrate his 75th, 80th, 85th, and 90th birthdays?

The legacy people leave behind is largely dependent upon what kind of relationship we had with them. Our opinion of someone that we know well and have had some kind of relationship with will be significantly different than the opinion of those we have never met. So how do you form an opinion of the legacy of someone you’ve never *met*?

There are really only two ways. One is to listen to—or read—what *others* have written about them. A second is to read what they have written about *themselves*. As we continue on in a Christmas series I’ve entitled “When God Crashed Into the World,” this morning we are going to look at how God “crashed” into the world of Mary—and what God says about the legacy she left behind.

Please turn to Luke 1 and follow along as I read verses 26-33.

1. Who God sent a message to—Mary

So what do we know about Mary?

A. Background (vss 26-32)

- i. Lived in the region of Galilee—about 88 mi N of Jerusalem—in the city of Nazareth (Lk 1:26)
- ii. Was a virgin espoused (engaged) to a man named Joseph (1:27)

How old was Mary? Not given her age in the Bible, but engagements at that time often took place at 12 or 13 years of age for the girl; 15 or 16 for the boy, and lasted about a year.

- iii. From the line of David

Luke 1:32 “...and the Lord God shall give unto Him”—the son she was to have—“the throne of His father David.” In order for the son she would bear to be from the line of David, she herself had to be from the line of David. In Matthew 1 we have **Joseph’s** lineage—through David all the way back to Abraham. In Luke 3 we have what most scholars believe is **Mary’s** lineage—which goes through David all the way back to Adam.

- iv. We also know her and Joseph were poor. In Luke 2:22-24 we see they offered a pair of turtle doves or pigeons because they could not afford a lamb (Lev 12:6-8)

From all outward appearances, Mary was just a poor, unknown Jewish girl from a small, unimportant area of Israel. Although outward appearances matter a lot to *people*, God looks on the heart, doesn't He? And it was the heart of Mary—her behavior and character—that led to God's choice of her for this special task.

B. Behavior/Character

i. Humble

Notice how many times Gabriel mentions to her that she is blessed by God or found favor with God.

Back to Lk 1:28 “thou that art highly favoured” “the Lord is with thee” “blessed art thou among women”

--v 30 “thou hast found favour with God”

God's word to Mary through Gabriel was not just to tell her that God was pleased with her, however—it was also to tell her that she had been chosen by God to give birth to the Son of the Highest—and the King of the Jews!

How did Mary react? Notice v 38: “Behold, the *handmaid* of the Lord...”

“Handmaid” is another word for servant. Her attitude of hearing all this praise and privilege heaped upon her? “I'm just a servant of the Lord.” She calls herself a handmaid again while visiting her csn Elisabeth (48).

Not only do we see Mary's humility when she calls herself a *servant*, we also see it when she admits she is a *sinner*! Notice v 47 “And my spirit hath rejoiced in God *my* Saviour.” Why do people rejoice in having a Savior? Because they need one—and found 1! Who did Mary say her Savior was? Was she her *own* Savior? No; “**God** my Savior!” She was a sinner that needed a Savior—not a sinless woman who needed no saving!

--v 48 “I am lowly”—but He is holy (v 49)

--v 50 “His mercy is on them that fear Him...” Why do people desire mercy? People desire mercy because they have done wrong and deserve punishment. Where did Mary say mercy came from? God—not her!

I mentioned in my introduction the idea of legacy. Can people be inaccurate or misinformed regarding a person's legacy? They most certainly can—and Mary is a prime example.

The legacy of Mary is not that she was perfect...or sinless...or in any way equal with God or Jesus Christ. It is not that she could save herself or bestow salvation on others. Instead, what Mary tells us about herself is that *she was a sinner* that needed mercy—and a Saviour!

Not only was she humble, she was also...**ii. A woman of the book**

Mary knew—and I believed loved—the OT scriptures.

Why do I say that? In Luke 1:46-55 we have what some refer to as Mary's “Magnificat”—a prayer or poem of praise to God. Ryrie suggests that in these 10 verses, there are 15 recognizable quotations from the OT! Think of that—a 13-year-old girl knowing the OT so well that when she lifted up her heart in praise to God, out came portions of Bible verses! Equally impressive was the fact that the OT Scriptures were not in a book that she could carry around or on an MP3 player that she could listen to all the time with ear buds!

What a challenge to all of us! We have God's Word available to us, I believe more than any other nation in the world! We can carry our Bibles anywhere and everywhere to read whenever and wherever we want. We can listen to the Bible by using a CD player in our homes—or in play it in our vehicle. We can have it on our phones, or tablets, or MP3 player. We can be “old school” and write out verses on 3 x 5 cards and carry them with us to memorize when we have spare moments throughout the day.

But we don't, do we? Why? We are too busy! With what? Most of the time with “stuff” that will have no bearing on eternity. Oh, how we need to start being people of the Book like Mary! And we need to be people of the Book so we *live* like people of the Book! We are reminded to be **doers**—not just hearers—in James 1:22. In Matthew 7:24, Jesus reminds us that a wise man doesn't just *hear* His sayings—the wise man hears and **does** what Jesus says! Again, I ask—are you a person of the Book?

2. What was Mary doing when she received the message

Not told, so we will be skipping this point...

3. What was God's message to Mary?

One of the obvious points of God's message to Mary through Gabriel was the fact that she had been chosen to be the one who would bear the Christ-child. Underneath that, though, are 2 messages that apply to all of us:

A. God keeps His promises

Although God did not promise Mary she would be the mother of the Messiah until Gabriel brought that message to her, God **did** promise the **nation** of Israel hundreds of years earlier that He would be sending a ruler for His people. Some of the more well-known predictions of this coming ruler were made by the prophet Isaiah—some 700 years before the birth of Christ! (See Isaiah 9:6-7)

Notice Gabriel's message to Mary.

--v 31 "...thou shalt bring forth a son, and shalt call His name Jesus." "Jesus" is the Greek form of the Hebrew word "Jeshua" (or Joshua) meaning "the Lord is salvation."

--In v 32, Mary is told that her Son would not just be hers—He would be the Son of the Highest

--In v 33, Mary is told that her Son would rule over the house of Jacob—the people of Israel—for ever and His kingdom would never end

As stated earlier, Mary was familiar with the OT Scriptures. Did she know Isaiah 9:6-7? I don't know, but my guess is that she did. Imagine Mary comparing in her mind these verses with the message she had just heard from Gabriel.

--Isaiah foretold of a child that would be born and a **son being given**. Gabriel just told me I would have a son!

--Isaiah foretold that this Son would have the **government** upon His shoulder; Gabriel just told me the son I will give birth to will "reign over the house of Jacob!"

--Isaiah foretold that the coming son would sit on the **throne of David**—and Gabriel just said the same thing to me about Jesus!

--Isaiah foretold that this coming son would have a **kingdom that would last forever**—Gabriel said of my son that "of his kingdom there shall be no end!"

Whether Mary was familiar with these verses or not is not the most important thing. What is important is the fact that God keeps His promises! *There is not a promise God has made that He will not keep.* If God has promised a future event that hasn't taken place yet—like Jesus' returning to earth to bring us to heaven—**it is** going to come to pass. God can't forget—and God's plan can't be thwarted—so we must trust and wait.

There are not only **future** promises that God has made that He **will** bring to pass, there are also **current** promises that He has made that He is keeping **right now**.

Hebrews 13:5 "...for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

I Corinthians 10:13 "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

A second lesson to be learned from God's message to Mary is that...

B. Nothing is impossible with God (v 37)

--In v 31, Gabriel tells Mary she will conceive in her womb

--In v 34, Mary innocently asks how any of this could be possible because she has not been intimate with a man.

--Notice Gabriel's response in vss 35-37:

--Think about what Gabriel did **not** say. He did **not** say, 'After you and Joseph are married and become intimate, you will become pregnant and your firstborn will be called the Son of God.'

--What he **did say** was this: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."

In other words, He won't be called the son of Joseph because he was not **conceived** by Joseph. Instead, Jesus will be miraculously conceived by God!

How is this possible? "Because with God nothing is impossible" (v 37).

J.C. Ryle regarding "with God nothing shall be impossible."

--No sin too bad to be pardoned—the blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin

--No heart too hard to be changed—the heart of stone can be made a heart of flesh

--No work too hard for the believer to do—we can do all things through Christ strengthening us

--No trial too hard to bear—the grace of God is sufficient for us

--No promise too great to be fulfilled—what God has promised He is able to perform

No difficulty is too great for the believer to overcome because when God is for us, who can be against us?

4. How did Mary respond to the message she received

A. She believed God's Word

--In v 36, Mary is told the seemingly impossible has happened to Elisabeth—she conceived a child in her old age—so Mary goes to see her. I can't help but think that Elisabeth's first words were—'Mary, I have so much to tell you!' Think of it—Elisabeth has been pregnant for 6 months and has not had much "talking time" because her husband couldn't speak. Why couldn't he speak? Verse 20 tells us it was because he did not believe what Gabriel told him. Do you think she told Mary this? I'm quite certain she did.

--Now look at v 45 "And blessed is she that believed..."

Oh, how we need to be better about taking God at His word!

B. She was submissive to God's plan

Lk 1:38 "be it unto me according to thy word." In other words, 'I am willing to do what God wants me to do.'

Did Mary foresee all the difficulties that lay ahead of her? Probably not—at least not at this moment. But I'm sure it wasn't long before she had thoughts like: 'I have to tell Joseph; what if he doesn't believe me?' 'I have to tell my parents; what will they say and think?' 'People will laugh at me and whisper behind my back...'

Doing what God wants—being willing to accept what God brings our way and do what God bids us to obey is not always easy or glamorous. It is often costly—and difficult—but should not our attitude toward God be "be it unto me according to thy word?"

Too many of us, I fear, are in the habit of thinking—'God, tell me what your plan is. If I like it, I'll submit to it; but if it is going to be too difficult, I'd rather not!' If that isn't bad enough, there are others that don't even **think** about God having a plan for them. They don't want to know God's plan or do God's will—they're only concerned about their plans and their will!

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS:

1. Mary rejoiced in God her Savior. Why? because she knew she was a sinner who needed a Savior and put her trust in God to do that. Have you done that? Has there been a time in your life when you've stopped trying to save yourself—and looked to Jesus and Jesus alone to save you?
2. What is your attitude toward the Bible? Are you a person of the Book like Mary? If not, why not?
3. What is your attitude toward God's plan for your life? Do you want to know what it is—or are you so concerned about your agenda that you hardly give any thought to God's desire and will for your life?