

## **“Lessons from Mary” Luke 1:26-38**

The angels declared to the shepherds that ‘**peace on earth and goodwill towards men**’ is what the coming of Jesus brought. Later Jesus would declare to his disciples “**peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you... do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid**” (John 14:27).

Nonetheless, many people live today without peace. Sadly, there are many who live in lands torn apart by conflict, and no doubt they wish they could experience peace. But far more widespread is the problem of lack of peace within. It is the troubled heart, the guilty conscience, the unsettled mind, the fearful soul. To all those who struggle with this lack of inner peace God would teach us through Mary how we can find it.

Our passage starts with the these words:

**<sup>26</sup> In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, <sup>27</sup> to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin’s name was Mary.**

Imagine young Mary, who could be as young as 16 years of age, doing what most 16 year olds of her day did. She would help her mother around the house, learning how to bake, and cook and care for the home. She would know how to sew and mend clothes. Depending on the family she may have to care for a sheep or a goat. And like most 16 year olds of her day, Mary dreamed of getting married and having a family.

Her life was peaceful and quite ordinary.

Then something happened that threatened to rob her of her peace: an angel showed up!

Last week we noted that there had been silence from God for over 400 years. Suddenly God was once again speaking to His people. He does this through an angel, the angel Gabriel. The last time the angel Gabriel came with a message from God was during the time of Daniel. That was nearly 500 years before Mary was born. Now God was breaking His silence.

We all know what interruptions of our peaceful life feel like. Maybe it is the loss of a job. Maybe it is the call from the doctor to tell you of some medical condition you have. Maybe it is the call that informs you a loved one has died. Maybe it is an announcement that we are now in a pandemic and the world as you knew it has suddenly changed.

Just like Mary, we all know what it is like to have interruptions that threaten to rob us of our peace. However, unlike many people today, Mary refuses to let this interruption take away the peace within her life. How? Hold on – we will get to that.

Scripture makes it clear that Mary came from Nazareth, a small town that was out of the way and boasted a very simple, meager life for her residents. You will not find any rich or famous people in Nazareth. Life has been the same in that little village for hundreds of years and likely

would continue to be the same for hundreds more. It was a sleepy little village – until an angel shows up and disrupts everything.

Mary, we are told, was not only dreaming about marriage but already had a relationship with a man named Joseph. It says they were pledged, or betrothed, to each other. This was like an engagement yet with far more commitment. They must be “betrothed” for a year before the wedding, but they were as good as married – except they were not living together yet. Mary was still at her parent’s house. Joseph was likely at his parents. But the wedding would happen, and they would be husband and wife, and the only thing that would stop the wedding would be the death of either Mary or Joseph. It was comforting to Mary to know that things were working out as they should. Yes, her life was blessed. She was at peace.

And then the angel came...

Her fiancé, Joseph, is a descendent of King David. This is Luke’s way of saying, “He was a good, trustworthy guy.” Matthew’s Gospel gives us more details on the kind of man Joseph is, confirming that he is a good man, God fearing, gentle and kind. He would make a great husband, and someday a great father. When Mary thought about that, it brought her peace.

Then the angel came...

The angel’s words to Mary are interesting. He says, **“Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.”** (v.28)

Anyone who is highly favoured by God usually has been chosen for a specific task. Abraham was highly favoured and was called to leave his home and start a new family, a new nation, in a new land. Moses was highly favoured, and he was called to lead one million people out of Egypt. Jeremiah was highly favoured and he got to tell kings and the people that they were about to be destroyed by a foreign army.

So what would this mean for Mary, to be highly favoured?

Can I remind you that you are also highly favoured by God if you are a born again Christian! We are told in Ephesians 1:6 that God’s grace is **freely bestowed** on those who are in relationship to Jesus. The term for **freely bestowed** is the same word translated **“highly favoured”** in Luke 1:28. Those who are in Christ are highly favoured by God – so God has a plan and a purpose for all of us!

In verse 29 we are told that Mary is greatly troubled by his words and wonders what they might mean. What does God have in store for her?

The angel goes on.

**“Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. <sup>31</sup> You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. <sup>32</sup> 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, <sup>33</sup> and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end.”** (vss 30-33)

I can almost imagine Mary shaking her head, sticking a finger in her ear to make sure there was no wax, and leaning closer to the angel to say, “Did I hear you right? I am about to become a mother?”

What the angel says is wrapped up in language taken directly from the Old Testament. This baby Mary was about to have would be the fulfillment of the many scriptures which pointed to the Messiah, God’s deliverer. Mary is starting to get a clear picture of who her son will be.

But there is a problem, at least in Mary’s mind (and the rest of the world’s).

### **Verse 34: How can this be since I am a virgin?**

The angel does not skip a beat. Right away he has the answer.

**“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. <sup>36</sup> 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. <sup>37</sup> For nothing is impossible with God.”** (vs 35-37)

God is going to work a miracle through the power of the Holy Spirit. As proof that God can do this, the angel reveals to Mary that her relative, Elizabeth, the old relative who is long beyond child-bearing years, that relative is pregnant and is in her sixth month!

Then the angel seals the deal with these words: “Nothing is impossible to God!” Another translation says, “No word from God can ever fail.” The message is the same. If this is God’s will it will happen.

This is where Mary could have totally lost her peace. No doubt the enemy of our souls, Satan, was right there to jump on this opportunity to remind Mary how bad this plan is.

Satan likely told Mary that she would lose her fiancé. There is no way Joseph is going to marry a pregnant bride. What a scandal and disgrace to the family. They would be the laughing stock of the community. Joseph knew the law. A woman who cheats on her husband should be stoned to death.

She will lose her friends and even a place in the village. Who would want to be the friend of a woman caught up in such a scandal? Who would believe an angel said this child was from God? She would have to face the teasing and ridicule of the women of the village. She would be an outcast, that is for sure.

Satan also reminded Mary that it was her body. She should be able to do what she wants with her body. For God to simply plant a baby in her womb and expect her to carry it to term is asking a lot. What about freedom and choice?

I am sure Satan had a heyday in the mind of Mary – for about a minute. In that minute there certainly would have been no peace.

But Mary knew the secret to finding peace in her heart (and head). She knew how to silence the enemy and despite the enormous challenges that lay ahead of her – and they were not going away – she could have peace.

What was the secret?

Verse 38 shows us the way; <sup>38</sup> **“I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May it be to me as you have said.”**

Can you hear it? Mary was ready and willing to surrender everything over to God: her body, her relationships, her reputation, her life. She has already learned the lesson the Apostle Paul would present to us in Romans 12:1-2:

**12 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your <sup>1b</sup>reasonable service. <sup>2</sup> And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.**

Mary knew that if she wanted peace in her life then she had to surrender everything over to God. She does not get a roadmap to what lies ahead – which is probably best, for knowing her son was heading for a cross would be very hard to bear. All she knew was that God was giving her the opportunity to be the mother of the Messiah, and she was willing to surrender herself to that task.

I am not sure what keeps you up at night, what robs you of your peace, but can I suggest to you that you surrender that “thing” to God? May you follow the example of Mary and simply say, “I am yours, God. Do what you see is best in my life.”

This morning peace can be yours, not by winning some battle, but by surrendering. Isaiah 26:3 says:

**You will keep *him* in perfect peace,  
Whose mind is stayed on You,  
Because he trusts in You.**

Are you at peace today?

First, do you have peace with God? Have you confessed any sin to him, seeking His forgiveness?

And secondly, have you surrendered all to him? Yes, the interruptions in your life, the situations that have no answer to the “Why is this happening Lord?” question. Are you ready to trust God with everything – like Mary?

Our closing hymn says, “Take my life and let it be, Consecrated, Lord, to Thee.”

Consecrated is surrendered. It is saying you want to surrender all to God, just as Mary did. If you want to come pray at the altar, it is open again as we sing. Do you want peace today? It starts with surrender.