

Luke 1:26-56 Final**12.3.17**

Cast of Christmas - Mary

Sunday Morning

INTRO

Typically, something like **unmarried, teenaged pregnancy** isn't a Sunday morning **preaching** topic. That doesn't mean we would come **alongside** someone in that situation and **love** her and **help** her and **show her Christ**.

It's just that we don't **typically** get up on a Sunday morning and teach about the calling by God of an **unmarried teenager** to have a **baby**.

But this is exactly what we're doing this morning. And as we begin our Christmas series, you may be asking the question: "**Why Mary?** What can I learn **from her?**"

Here's the answer: **God** is always at work doing **something** in and **around each** of us and that means that **God is calling you and I** to something that only you or I are **called to**. In other words:

- **I'm asked** by God to **love Tiffany as my wife, and raise my children in godliness. That's unique to me**, you aren't called to that.
- **I'm** was called by God to **leave my job** and become a **pastor**. Most of you aren't.

But you are called to other things, and our **response** to this calling by **God should** be like Mary's.

And often like us, Mary's calling on her life in that moment was **outside** her **comfort plans** for her life. And her response is worth our time because **she didn't respond** how many of us are tempted to respond:

1. **Silence** and **rejection** simply because we **aren't listening** to him
2. Or **silence** and **rejection** because we don't want to be **inconvenienced**.

But Christian, our response to **God's calling should** be a response of **faith...like Mary's**. If you're a Christian: God **has, is, and will call** you to act in your life for your **good** and his **glory**.

Sometimes it's bigger that takes a lot of prayer and counsel:

- Going on the missions field
- Being a part of a church plant
- A lifestyle change or a move

Oftentimes it's more benign:

- A **sin** to **turn see** and **turn from**

- **Money or time to give**
- Befriending the **neighbors** that just **moved** in down the street
- Family to **sacrifice** for
- etc...

But you **have been, are, and will be asked by** God to act in obedience and the question is: Will you respond with **silence and rejection or with faith like Mary?**

There are three realities from her response that we need to benefit from. That is:

1. Responding in faith to God's calling **is easier the more we know God**
2. Responding in faith to God's calling **is worth the cost,**
3. Responding in faith to God's calling **will always lead to rejoicing.**

And if we can see these things and apply them to our lives, we will be more **prepared to respond in faith** to God's calling on us.

So, we're in **Luke chapter 2** beginning in verse 26. We **have 30 verses this morning**, but we're going to spend the **majority** of our time on **the first 12**. I'm going to **read to verse 38**, then we'll walk **through the text** and **see three** realities from Mary's response that will help us **respond to God's** calling in **full faith** when he calls us.

This is the Word of the Lord to us this morning:

[26] In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, [27] to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. [28] And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" [29] But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. [30] And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. [31] And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. [32] He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, [33] and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

[34] And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"

[35] And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. [36] And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. [37] For nothing will be impossible with

God.” [38] And Mary said, “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her.

PRAY

Now the problem with parts of the Bible like this can be that they’re so familiar that we can forget that Mary was a real live teenaged girl (likely 13-17) who, just like you and me, had mornings where she didn’t want to **get out of bed**. She had **joys, fears, desires, dislikes, and expectations**.

And when she who woke up on this particular morning, she wasn’t expecting anything different from a normal day.

And yet, like the morning of September 11, she receives some unexpected and shocking news that interrupts her day and her life.

Look with me at verse 28:

[28] And he [the angel Gabriel] came to her and said, “Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!”

It’s uncommon for an angel to show up in your room. This alone should be cause for surprise but I want you to notice Mary’s response to this in verse 29:

*[29] But she was greatly troubled **at the saying**, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be.*

She’s not frightened that an angel appeared like Zechariah was earlier in the chapter. Instead, we’re told that she’s **greatly troubled** by what he says to her.

This is clue for us that Mary knew the Scriptures. And she didn’t just kind of know them, she knew them well. You see, greetings like this by an angel of the Lord in the OT weren’t common, but they did happen and they preceded God doing great things through great men like:

- Isaac
- Jacob
- Moses
- Gideon
- Daniel

And it’s clear that Mary knew this and was trying to discern what was about to happen to her or what was about to be asked of her.

And it seems like the angel perceives this and he tells her not be afraid because the Lord she had found favor with God, and He was calling her to something unique and great:

- She will be pregnant with Jesus
- and he will be called the Son of the Most High
- and He will reign on David's throne forever

Now wouldn't it be great if this is how God called us to things in our lives? Pretty unmistakable calling! But her response is hilarious and should show us once again that the Bible is true because if you're a writer making this story up as fiction, you would make her initial response more glorious than what it is!

What you wouldn't write is what Luke wrote, look at verse 34:

[34] And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"

This is such a human question to ask.

We already know she's a virgin because Luke the physician has already told us twice. Mary's question here isn't a literary device to help us see this, it's an honest question from a teenager who knows enough about the human body and reproduction to know that what the angel is calling her to is physically impossible. So, she asks a physiological question: **"Um, I'm a virgin?"**

We should love parts of the Bible like this!

And Gabriel responds by saying, "Good question (different from Zechariah earlier)" and he tells her that God will miraculously do this in her just like he miraculously caused her relative Elizabeth to become pregnant even though she wasn't able to have children because as we see in **verse 37**:

Nothing is impossible with God.

It's a gracious and kind response to her question and highlights that God often works to bear fruit and bring hope in barren and impossible situations...which should encourage us.

And in this impossible calling, a virgin having a baby, Mary, in the face potential **rumors, criticism, gossip, slander** and maybe **even divorce**, responds in faith. **verse 38**:

[38] And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word."

Certainly she is beginning to understand the implications, the Messiah will be her son. And she also understands that there's a cost involved, but she knows God enough to know that it's worth it because she trusts him.

And if she didn't know for sure that her son would be the Messiah, she would soon as she leaves town for a while (maybe to get away from the rumors and gossip) visits Elizabeth who is pregnant with John the Baptist and upon hearing Mary's voice John leaps in her womb and Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit and confirms what Mary believed to be true in **verse 43** that Mary's is the Lord's mother.

And Mary's response is what is known as the **Magnificat** (*latin for Magnifies*) and in this song she rejoices and praises God for all that he's done for her and for Israel by caring for her and keeping his promises.

And she does this by once again showing her knowledge of the Scriptures calling forth OT Saints who have been a part of the Messianic storyline:

- **Hannah** is there as **she alludes to Hannah's** song from 1 Samuel regarding the birth of Samuel
- And **David** is there as she references Psalms 30, 34, 71, 138
- **Moses** is there as she discusses Deut 10:21 and 34:11
- **Abraham** is there as she remembers God's covenant with him.

The OT Scriptures are the basis for this song of rejoicing in God who saves.

Church, Mary was called to **something unique to her**, it was unexpected and it altered her life plans. And it's important to remember that before Mary was the Lord's mother, she was God's daughter called by God to something unique and she responds in faith.

And Christian, you should anticipate that since God is always at work in you and around you, He will call you to something unique as well that likely will alter your life plans be it for an hour, a day, a month, or year. And when he does, will you respond like Mary did:

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

Maybe you know even now what that is and it's been gnawing at you for some time. Maybe you don't know what it is, but God will do it.

And there are 3 realities we can learn from Mary's faith-filled response to God's call that will help prepare us to respond with faith like Mary's when God calls:

I. RESPONDING WITH FAITH TO GOD'S CALLING IS EASIER THE MORE WE KNOW GOD

There is a correlation between our understanding and knowledge of the God of our Bibles and our willingness to put our faith into action.

We've seen that Mary knew the Scriptures and she knew her God to the God of Moses,

“The LORD, The LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.”

She knew that if God was calling her, she could trust that it was good and that he wouldn't leave her but work wonders in and around her. And he did.

The question for us is, do we know God well enough to do the same?

Do you know your Bible like this?

Do you know the promises found there?

Do you know your God well enough to trust him with anything he's calling you to do?

Are you like Abraham who was called by God to leave his homeland in Ur, not really knowing where he was going but he did it anyway because he trusted the Lord enough to go?

If not, then when he calls you to go **without knowing what that might mean** or what that might look like, chances are you won't. Or at least you will do it begrudgingly instead of in full faith knowing that God is good.

But if you know God as Mary or Abraham did, seen him work, know his promises and how he is faithful to keep them, know he is good and understands what is best for you: then you'll say as Mary did:

“Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.”

The more we know God, the more like it is that we will respond to his unique calling on us with faith-filled hearts.

And the more we know God, the more we understand that **Responding with Faith** to His Calling is Worth any cost that might come.

II. RESPONDING WITH FAITH TO GOD'S CALLING IS WORTH THE COST

Mary could have said, “You know, this seems pretty inconvenient. I mean this isn't what my life was supposed to look like and I don't really think people will understand. So, no thanks.”

But she didn't because she realized that following the Lord's call was worth the cost. She trusted that God knew what was best for her. Mary had no clue that was about to happen to her. She had to tell people essentially a “**Dog ate my homework**” story.

We're told in **Matthew's gospel** than until Gabriel came to Joseph and confirmed the story about the virgin birth he was preparing to divorce her. So clearly he didn't believe it. Who would? "God miraculously made me pregnant."

For Mary, obedience to God's calling and responding in faith and trust in him when he called was a no brainer even though it was disruptive to her life in a number of ways.

And **we can assume** that when God calls us it will be life disruptive as well.

When God calls you out of your East Valley comfort zone because the neighbors who aren't like you need friends, it's a cost. It'll cost **time, energy, relational distance, personal space intrusion**. The question is, like Mary do you believe responding to the Lord's calling is worth the cost?

I don't know what God's calling you to, it could be the thing right now that you're thinking about and hoping that's not it because you know the sacrifice it'll mean. That thing is worth the cost you're afraid of.

Obedience to the Lord's unique calling on your life is always worth the cost.

And it's worth the cost when we realize that there is more than a cost, there will be rejoicing as we trust the Lord.

III. RESPONDING WITH FAITH TO GOD'S CALLING WILL ALWAYS LEADS TO REJOICING

Mary responded with rejoicing, first in the Magnificat and we see her praising God because of who He is and all He was doing. And we will experience this as well, rejoicing as we follow the Lord's calling and seeing him at work.

But the trust is that rejoicing in our obedience to the Lord's calling will ebb and flow. There will still be seasons of trials in each year. The cost that we accept of responding to God's call can take a toll as time goes on.

Ask people who have been called to be part of a church plant about this. You rejoice often when it's first planted, but the 73rd Sunday of setting up chairs, sound, drum set, and taking it all down again can do something to that joy.

We know that this was the case for Mary too. You see, we see her **some 30 years** later in Mark's gospel questioning if Jesus was **out of his mind** because of what he was teaching and doing in town. The Magnificat probably seemed a long time ago in that moment.

And I bet that as Mary sat at the foot of the cross, at some point Gabriel's words crossed her mind:

"Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. [31] And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. [32] He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, [33] and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

Really? Here he is on a Roman cross. How is that promise fulfilled here? That wouldn't have felt like a joyful moment.

Has that happened to you? You trusted the Lord and wondered at some point, "This wasn't how it was supposed to be."

And rejoicing is far from your mind.

The ebb and flow of joy as we walk in faith should be anticipated, but also the reality that rejoicing will always be the end.

You see, at the cross Mary wasn't rejoicing. But 3 days later when she heard he was risen from the dead...hope. Joy.

And when Jesus, after rising visited his half-brother James and he believed and became an Apostle. Joy.

And when her other son Jude (of letter of Jude fame) believed. Joy.

And when she saw her firstborn face-to-face in Heaven for the first time: never-ending joy. **When Mary got to heaven, she wasn't saying, "I wish I hadn't responded in faith when God called me to have a baby all those years ago."**

And you and I won't either. We **will rejoice** in the face of Jesus.

Church, we **don't respond** to the Lord's calling on our lives because **Mary** did, she's an example of how to respond and why it's worth it to **respond in faith**.

But **we respond** in faith to the Lord's calling because it's in **Him that we trust**. When Jesus was **born** into this **world**, **lived** a life **without sin**, and said, "**It is finished**" on the **cross**, and **then rose** from the dead 3 days later, he gave us all the reason in the world to **trust Him** and to **follow Him**, and **walk out** His calling on our lives with **faith**.

Church, because this unmarried, teenager responded in faith and gave birth as a virgin, we have a Savior who is Christ the Lord. When he calls you to something unique, will you respond in faith as she did because you **know God**, **you know it's worth the cost**, and you **know that the end you will rejoice?**

Let us be a people who respond to the call of God on our lives with faith-filled hope in Him who calls.

Pray

BENEDICTION: THE MAGNIFICAT