

Message: Faith Like Mary¹

Do you have faith like Mary?

The story of Jesus’ birth is amazing, wonderful and mysterious.

Jesus’ birth is about a particular family. It’s about the birth of a baby and how a family’s life is turned upside-down. It’s about Mary’s whole world changed. The life she thought she was going to have is gone. She’s in shock. She’s a teenager. She’s not married. She didn’t get pregnant the normal way. Can you imagine what her friends are saying?

And yet, in spite of her trials, Mary sings us a joyful song.

She isn’t letting anyone steal her joy. She has courage. She has strength. What’s the source of Mary’s courage and strength? Her faith and joy is from God. She knows she can trust God. That’s faith, pure and simple.

Jesus’ birth is about more than his family. It’s about the whole world turning upside-down. Through the birth of Jesus, God is turning the world around to make it livable for everybody. Through the birth of Jesus, God is changing the world into a place of welcome and nurture not just for some - the privileged - but for all people. Through the birth of Jesus, God is making this world our home.

The entire hope of God’s salvation is contained in Jesus’ story.

In Jesus’ birth, a new order began. The whole world turned around through the birth of Jesus. We moved from darkness toward the light.

We live in a time when everything in our world is telling us to be afraid: afraid of one another, afraid of disagreement, afraid of knowledge, afraid of nature, and afraid for the future of all people on earth. Many young adults aren’t sure they want to have children, because they’re worried about the environment, the sustainability of the planet, and contributing to overpopulation. They’re also worried about their ability to buy a home, settle down, and provide for a family over a long period of time.

This is the reality for young adults today, and we can’t dismiss these legitimate concerns. We, too, have concerns. Mary’s story gives us

¹ Some material drawn from GBOD Coming Home preaching material for Advent week 4

perspective. Mary wasn't ready to have a child. Yet, when she received the shocking news, she did what all of us must do: she reached deep into her soul and found courage that came from a place beyond her own self, beyond her own limitations and fears. She found courage that came from her absolute trust in God.

Can we be as courageous as Mary? In the middle of tough circumstances, Mary was willing to receive Christ, physically, into her womb.

Are we willing to receive Christ into our hearts? We can be willing to live with courage. Praise and joy can be our song, too. We can refuse to give in to the fear the world constantly streams into our lives. We can reject the notion everything is spinning out of control. We can embrace the hope the world is simply about to turn, just as God intends. If so, we can admit there are things about our world that need to be turned upside-down for the sake of others. God is turning the world upside down, transforming it, one heart at a time. And we have a wonderful part to play. We get to build homes and open them to others.

**Welcome home! Our doors are open to all people, everywhere to come and join us as we welcome our Lord and Savior, Jesus.
Come, Lord.**

Let us pray...

Gracious God, we come to you as your children, made in your image. We need your grace and mercy, yet we struggle to get past our own fears. Fill us with a spirit of love. Give us the courage to turn away from the darkness in the world and inside each of us. Help us embrace the new life you give, a life of light, hope and joy. Show us how to truly follow you, no matter what, so that we may love and care for others in Jesus' name. Amen.

Luke 1:46-56 (CEB)

Mary said,

“With all my heart I glorify the Lord!

In the depths of who I am I rejoice in God my savior.

He has looked with favor on the low status of his servant.

Look! From now on, everyone will consider me highly favored
because the mighty one has done great things for me.

Holy is his name.

He shows mercy to everyone,
from one generation to the next,
who honors him as God.

He has shown strength with his arm.

He has scattered those with arrogant thoughts and proud inclinations.

He has pulled the powerful down from their thrones
and lifted up the lowly.

He has filled the hungry with good things
and sent the rich away empty-handed.

He has come to the aid of his servant Israel,
remembering his mercy,

just as he promised to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to Abraham’s descendants forever.”

Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three months, and then returned to her home.