

"Mary Christmas"

Series Introduction

This Christmas we have been looking at the entire story of the Birth of Christ. What it meant for people who hadn't heard from God for 400 years to see that God is faithful even when we are not.....We looked at the challenge of keeping Jesus in the manger and missing the point of the season. Today we are going to look at one of the most incredible steps of faith in all of Scripture. It is such a powerful moment in history and yet it is often overshadowed in the Christmas Story.

Jesus came to earth with a very specific mission. We have studied Christmas and understood that we cannot separate His birth from His life mission.

Every person is born with a God-given purpose. We are uniquely and wonderfully gifted for the purpose that God has for us. There was a moment when God actually decided that the world would not be right until you were born. At one point, you were the next item on God's creation to do list.

He chose the time of your arrival.....your birth parents...where you would grow up....and when He knit you together in the womb,He designed you with a specific purpose....He gifted you for your life mission.

Everything about you was decided. Your life was to be lived to bring glory to God and to advance the mission of God. God has a plan for you even if you don't have plans for Him.

You are not some random collection of DNA and molecules...you are a unique one of a kind creation sent to earth with a unique mission that you were uniquely gifted to accomplish. You are a vessel that God intends to use. you may not like parts of you.....you may wish you had different genes...but you are exactly who God created you to be.

One thing that we have seen clearly is that God is in Sovereign control...He is working out His plan. There are no accidents and no random events...Everything that God holds together is held together for a purpose.

Those who choose to surrender to Jesus will receive the Holy Spirit and will begin to live in their God-given destiny. IF your heart is beating....God is working out His plan through you. Everyone is here for a reason.

We look at people like Abraham, Joseph, Moses, David, Isaiah, The disciples, Paul and people like Mother Theresa, Billy Graham, and we say...wow...God really used them. It is obvious they were born with a purpose in their lives.

But what we miss is that God does that with everyone. You and I were born to be God's vessel to reach others and advance the Gospel.

He gifted me to teach...He may have gifted you in another manner....a way that allows you to best fulfill His purpose in your life.

The challenge for us becomes being ready for the mission that God has called us to. I think many of us have not experienced what God has planned for us because we don't think we important enough for God to use us for great things.

That keeps us right where Satan wants us....Equiped....Empowered.... Victorious...Gifted...and guaranteed success....yet we are too self deflated to believe it. We have bought the lie that God doesn't use people like us.

I know of a girl who was about 13 years old....she was dirt poor...came from the projects....a very small town with a horrible reputation....she sure didn't seem special....no one thought much about her. She was just living her uneventful life...in her too eventful town...not knowing that every human on earth and those not yet here...would know her name and call her blessed.

Luke 1:26–35 (ESV) 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.

Luke 1:36–45 (ESV) 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. 39 In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, 40 and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. 41 And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, 42 and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! 43 And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? 44 For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. 45 And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord."

Mary is a remarkable young girl. We can learn a great deal from her. In fact, by studying Mary we will prepare ourselves.

Who is Mary?

Do you know anything about Nazareth? You've heard Jesus is from there. Yes, that's true. You've heard it's not very nice, probably. Really small, country-esque, and rural. Not many people live there. It's a very rundown town. Gabriel, the same angel that was sent to Zechariah, now is

appearing to Mary from Nazareth, an unlikely place. So unlikely, that even Nathaniel, one of Jesus' disciples in John 1, asks the question "Does anything good come from Nazareth?"

No one really knew or cared about Nazareth. I imagine it a bit like the small towns that dot our interstates. Cars race by, stop for gas and a snack, then keep on going. It was a speck on the map, impoverished and insignificant.

In verse 27, Luke, wants us to know something very specific about Mary—"... to a virgin ..." Is that important? Yeah, there's a reason why he mentions it a couple of times here. You might ask, "What does 'virgin' mean?" It means virgin. The Greek word means virgin. That's what it means. Some people want to say, "Well, does it really mean ...?" Yeah, it means virgin. It's very, very clear.

There's general agreement that Mary was between the ages of twelve and fifteen. I know you've seen Christmas pageants or movies where Mary's twenty-five. No, she wasn't. Let's call her thirteen-and-a-half, just for this morning. Imagine Gabriel appearing to a thirteen-and-a-half year old girl and telling her what all of you know is about to come. Just think about this for a second. This is a crazy story. Don't normalize this story too much. It's crazy. This story is so familiar to us we forget how crazy this story is.

Now, she's betrothed to Joseph. That means engaged. Engagement's a little different back then. You would get engaged, and that means you're legally bound to that person. You've already signed the marriage certificate. If you want to break off the engagement, you have to literally get a divorce. But you have not consummated yet, that is you're not living together. That comes later. Sadly, it is essentially backwards of what people do today. They consummate relationships sexually and sometimes later get married.

Now it says, "Mary, you've found favor with God." What did Mary do to find favor with God? We've got to be careful with this. My opinion, a lot of churches devalue Mary, and there's one church in particular that really elevates Mary too high. All the Protestant churches typically they think of Mary too low, and the Roman Catholic Church puts Mary way too high. I'm here to tell you there's a middle ground between the two. Mary was an incredible servant of God with a heart that can teach all of us, but she was not God and on her best day nowhere near the status of Jesus....She is fully human and only human. She doesn't answer prayers....she forgives none of us....and praying to her is no different than praying to any person who served God faithfully.

"O favored one ..." The word favored is the Greek word charis. Some of you have used that word before—grace. "O Mary, you have been given grace by God." So why did God appear to Mary? Because he chose to and because he chose to use a thirteen-and-a-half year old virgin named Mary. Not because she was better than anybody else. She was from Nazareth. She was an unlikely choice. The reason why Gabriel showed up to Mary is because God chose to use Mary for this very important task.

This was Mary's God-given purpose in life. The reason that she was created....She may have felt like she was a nobody girl...from a no good town...but God....God called her Favored One. He spoke into her potential.....He saw who He created her to become. But

she was ready for the moment. The moment as huge as it was....didn't overwhelm her.
God had a plan for her life just like He has a plan for yours.

I never know what to do with Mary. I'm in good company: The archives of history and the echoes of ancient sermons never quite knew what to make of her, either. She has been venerated in shrines, prayed to—worshipped, even. Botticelli, da Vinci, Michelangelo, Raphael, Bellini, Dalí, and thousands of artists have imagined her on canvas. For some traditions, Mary is an afterthought: a means to an end. She is rarely discussed other than to occupy a figure in the set-up of the annual nativity, where she occupies her demure place in Biblical history.

The dominant understanding of Mary is as a young woman who played the noble role of giving birth to Jesus. She's most often represented as poised, quiet, and responsive. She does her duty alongside Joseph and then fades to the background. If we pause the traditional narrative for a moment and sit with the context of her story, we discover that no one in all of human history has had the sort of divine interruption that Mary faced and experienced

To be sure, the pillars of Biblical faith like Abraham and Moses found their lives divinely interrupted. If we walk faithfully through the pages of Scripture, we find story after story of God's work in the lives of people. That work interrupts and startles almost every time. But none held the Son of the living God in the way Mary did.

Mary's Favor

Luke 1 tells us that Mary found favor with God.

Luke 1:28–30 (ESV) 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."

What does it mean to be "favored"? I have favorite snack foods and movies, favorite sweatshirts, favorite sports teams and seasons of the year. But that's not the same as having God's favor. Mary is about to become very "un-favored" in the eyes of her community. A betrothed teenager who was pregnant before her wedding date was not exactly a woman who found great favor in her community: same then as today. Whispers of scandal and disdain ensued. But the angel visits her and says not once, but twice, that she has found favor with God.

At first, the phrase creates anxiety. Mary is a devout Jewish woman; she likely knew the weight of the word "favor" and, as anyone humble enough might do, is wondering how in the world she falls into that category. I am sure that Mary did not think she deserved to be called Favored one by God....The very people who deserve it are the least likely to assume it

To have found favor is to have found grace with God. It is to gain approval, acceptance, or blessing. In the New Testament, the word "grace" shares the same root as "favor." Moses, Noah, Joseph, Samuel, and Jesus (at age 12) are said to have received the favor of God. We are told in Genesis that God looked upon Abel's offering with favor (Gen.

4:4). Later in the Gospel of Luke (4:19), when Jesus begins his public ministry, we read that he has come to "proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

God extends his favor to those who have lived generous, humble, God-honoring lives. To receive the favor of God means one is in a posture of worship and a position of humility and grace. It is critical to know that Mary lived in this space. She quietly...humbly...yet purposefully prepared herself to be ready when God calls.

Who is Jesus?

So, this thirteen-and-a-half year old virgin from Nazareth gets the message that she's going to have a child, and not only is she going to have a child but her child's going to be like this.

Luke 1:32–33 (ESV) 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."

I know we all like to think our kids are amazing, and they are, of course. But compare your kid to who this child is going to be. What do we say? A husband and wife they get pregnant, and we say, "Your kid's going to be so cute," because they're both attractive. Or you're trying to be nice to one or the other. Or ladies, you feel the baby kicking and then somebody says, "The baby is going to be a soccer player." So we say stuff like this. Imagine if what somebody told you about your son was he's going to be great. He's going to be the Son of the Most High God. He's going to sit on the throne of David. He's going to reign over the house of Jacob, and his kingdom will have no end. Different level. Right? This is a different kind of Son. This a different kind of child. She gave birth to the Savior of the World and that meant her Savior too.

But this great news came with a lot of challenges. Mary likely thought she would never live long enough to deliver this baby.

Mary's Fear

In Jewish culture at the time, Mary and Joseph were already legally bound. On the wedding day, they would seal the deal sexually—but other than that, they were married. In our culture, an engagement is not legally binding. You can break off an engagement without a legal scuffle. Not so at this time: They were legally connected. Mary was very young—the right age for an engagement at this time would have been 13 to 16 (late middle school to early high school today).

The angel basically says to this young girl from nowhere, "Even though you are not married and still a virgin, you are going to give birth to the savior of the world. The Jewish Messiah that your people are all waiting for? Him. You, an unknown girl from an unknown place, will do this very thing, and it is going to interrupt your life and mess with your plans.

It is going to wreck your peace and your sleep and your friendships, and every inch of your world is going to change but you, Mary. You are the one that is going to do this. His name is going to be Jesus, and one day he will sit on the throne of God and rule forever."

Jerusha Matsen Neal writes, "I know why Mary's afraid. It's not that the angel isn't coming. It's that he's already there...right here in this quiet space...waiting for an answer."

Luke 1:38 (ESV) 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.

Mary's Question

Luke 1:34 (ESV) 34 And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"

If you're a thirteen-and-a-half year old virgin, what's your first question to Gabriel? He just told you that you're going to give birth to a son, and you're so young, you're not married, and you've never had sex. The first question: How is that going to work? It's not going to be, "Should I go natural on the childbirth? Cloth diapers? Disposable diapers?" You're not going to ask those question. It's going to be: How does this work? That's exactly what she says in verse 34.

Notice what she does not do....she does not doubt God. She doesn't doubt that He can do it and she does not limit God into her little box....She asks a question that tells us she is already committed to obeying....How is this going to happen?

She says it very plainly. This doesn't make sense. Just like Zechariah and Elizabeth should not be having a child because they're too old. Just like Abraham and Sarah in Genesis shouldn't have had a child because they're too old. Abraham was a hundred; Sarah was ninety when they had Isaac. Did you ever think about that? When you read the story you lose that.

Here's the point: God does biological miracles. They're not coincidences; they're biological. The virgin is going to give birth. Old Elizabeth is going to give birth. Sarah, who's ninety, gave birth. God does biological miracles. Now this one is unique. This has never happened outside of Mary. So Mary says, "How is it going to happen?" Well, the Holy Spirit's going to come upon you, and you're going to become pregnant. God does biological miracles.

They're called miracles because they don't happen every day. Some people discount miracles because they don't happen every day. Hence the word miracle. But this happens to us, too. It happens in our world, too.

Have you ever felt like God was nudging you toward something? A moment you cannot shake, a person you cannot erase from your mind, a situation you cannot skirt? There are stories that seem to haunt our dreams, turmoil and stress we cannot avoid, people we don't seek out who find us. In these moments, God is moving us, opening our eyes and our lives to people and places we never knew. God is trying to get our attention. God is trying to give us our moment.

When God suggests something hard for me, I balk. "Really, you have no idea how complicated this is going to be for me, God. How about we pray this through just a bit more? I need a bit more time to sort this out. Do you need an answer today, God?"

Really, God—do you want me to curb my angry, narcissistic tendencies and truly extend your love and grace to others? Really, God—do you want my family to move from a comfortable, homogenous community to a struggling, diverse one so we can truly start to understand what justice and community mean?

Really, God—do you want me to end my relationships with certain people so I can pursue better, more honest ones with others? I like these folks; they validate my behaviors, and they don't ask hard questions. Really, God—you have no idea how hard it would be to break my addictions. I cannot say "may it be so" to you because you really have no clue what it is like to live without my vices. Really, God—if I say "yes" to your interruptions, my friends will mock me and maybe even cease to be my friends. My life will change, and you just have no idea what that would be like.

Really, God—you want me to speak truth and justice and risk reputation and posture? Really, God—you want me to downsize rather than move up?

Phillip Yancey says that "often a work of God comes with two edges, great joy and great pain, and in that matter-of-fact response Mary embraced both. She was the first person to accept Jesus on his own terms, regardless of the personal cost.

While I am finding excuses and reason why God should not use me....Mary just says....Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word."

Mary said that knowing that her world was about to be rocked. She walked in faith....because God and His mission were on the top of her priority list. He was more important to her than her reputation, her friends, her family, her fiancé, and everyone who would judge her. She loved God more than family...more than self...and more than anything else.

Mary's Emotions

But that doesn't mean it was easy....Mary was probably freaking out....She is human after all. Imagine the fears that a 13 year old would have about pregnancy....Now imagine Mary's emotions. Ladies, I'll just ask you for now. Imagine being twelve to fifteen years old, you're a virgin, you're not married, you're engaged, and now you're going to give birth. Not only give birth, but give birth to God's Son, the One who's going to sit on the throne of David. What's going through your head? What are your emotions at this point? Anxiety? Excitement? Fear?

I mentioned this earlier, but sometimes we romanticize the Christmas story. Have you noticed that? We sentimentalize it. It's about the baby and it's glorious. Mary she's so blessed. She gets to have Jesus, the Messiah. Which is an amazing blessing, but we forget the background of the story

That she's a twelve to fifteen year old virgin who's going to be ridiculed for this...for the rest of her life.... Nobody's going to believe her that she's a virgin. Would you? Have you ever met a virgin that was pregnant? The answer's no. She is in a really, really sticky circumstance. Even her own fiancé, it says in Matthew, didn't believe her. He was going to divorce her quietly

Imagine Mary telling people. "I'm a virgin." They're like, "No, you're not. You're pregnant." This is not an easy time for Mary. Don't romanticize the story. She's excited for a reason, but this isn't making her life easy. This isn't making her life better, not in the temporary at least. This is very difficult. So let's look at what she says.

Mary's Response

Luke 1:38 (ESV) 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.

Mary's "yes" was not muffled consent that led her to a joyful pregnancy, filled with adoring friends and sweet baby showers. Her life instantly became a cascade of gossip and drama—and her very decision to say "yes" was met with the threat of death. A woman pregnant before the wedding was assumed to be an adulteress. If a suspected adulteress maintained her innocence—as Mary would have done—she would be taken to a public place (perhaps the gate to the city), her clothing would be torn, and her hair let down (which was how prostitutes at that time wore their hair). She would be left there to be mocked and open to public humiliation

The cultural expectation was that passersby would mock and humiliate her to make a public example of her. In Deuteronomy 22, the penalty, if she was taken as an adulteress, could be death by stoning. Mary's "yes" to God came with great risk...as a "yes" to God often does.

Joseph backed down from these and other expected legal proceedings of the time. Joseph could have abandoned ship and left Mary poor, unwed, and with a child who (according to Deuteronomy 23) could be mocked and excluded from certain assemblies in their culture. Mary's "yes" forced Joseph to make some hard decisions as well.

What were the odds that her devout Jewish husband would abandon the custom of shaming a suspected adulteress? What were the odds that her community would forgive this? What were the odds that she would get any semblance of life after this? After all, it's not like the angel said to her, "All will be well after this goes down." Or, "Do this, and I will secure you a healthy retirement fund, a safe place to live, and a beach condo in Naples."

There was great power in her "yes." Mary knew the story of her people, God's people, and the way God took care of his people—and in particular, the women who came before her. Women like Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba.

While she knew her situation was dire, she also worshipped a God who cared for his people as they faced dire circumstances. God does not promise relief from trouble, but he promises his presence in times of trouble. Mary worshipped this God and could say "yes" with great confidence in that God.

But I am afraid that her response would not be my response. I would be processing with God... "Are you sure you want to use me? I'm from Nazareth. I'm thirteen years old. Are you sure?" She says, "Let it be according to God's will." Her faith is amazing and incredible. No wonder God chose her. But immediately in the moment....she has to protect herself and the baby.

And Mary needs to get out of Dodge...or in this case Nazareth. Years later the people of Nazareth would have no problem trying to throw Jesus off of a cliff....Not the place a pregnant unmarried woman wants to hang out.

Interesting to me that there is no mention in Scripture of Mary's Mother or Father....we don't know their response....but Mary goes to the person who understands the miraculous.

So at this point she just found out she's pregnant, and not only is she pregnant but she's pregnant with the Messiah. So what's the first thing you would do? At least go tell a close relative. Today, we typically don't get on Facebook right away. That comes later. But you tell your close relatives first.

Mary goes to her relative Elizabeth. Elizabeth's much older than Mary. We don't know how much older, but they are very far apart in age. Mary runs to Elizabeth. So Nazareth is north. Judah is south. It could be anywhere between forty and seventy miles. It would have taken a couple of days. But very quickly, she leaves to go tell Elizabeth what happened. Mary knows Elizabeth is pregnant, because Gabriel told her. So she's real excited. She runs from Nazareth about as fast as she could.

Do you remember Gabriel told Zechariah that John the Baptist would have the Holy Spirit in the womb, in Luke 1:15? So, John the Baptist already has the Holy Spirit in Elizabeth's womb. The Messiah, who's like a day old in the womb, maybe two days, however long it took for Mary to get to Judah, enters the room and John the Baptist jumps. Isn't that crazy? Think about that. John the Baptist is probably the size of a grapefruit in the womb, and Jesus is like a poppy seed-ish in the womb. Jesus enters the room, and the grapefruit-sized child that's unborn jumps up and down because the Messiah just came into the room. That's amazing! That's what the Holy Spirit does. It reveals who God is to us.

These two babies in the womb communicated through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit always point to the presence of Jesus and that is exactly what happens here. You want an argument for life at conception?...this is it.

Don't miss the significance of what is happening here.....John the Baptist was the first person that came to know Jesus because of the revelation of the Holy Spirit....Millions would follow including us. Perhaps that is one of the reasons Jesus said....

Luke 7:28 (ESV) 28 I tell you, among those born of women none is greater than John. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he."

All of you in here who are Christians the reason you're a Christian is because the Holy Spirit revealed who Jesus is to you. How can John the Baptist in the womb—he can't see anything yet, he doesn't understand what's going on yet—know who the Messiah is? Because the Holy Spirit's inside him. Same thing happens to us. If you're a Christian, if you're a believer, you are a believer only because the Holy Spirit made it clear to you who Jesus is.

So Mary is happy for Elizabeth. She's got to be. Elizabeth and Zechariah have been praying for this for years. But her situation is not romantic. It's not glamorous at all. This is going to be really tough. Surely her response will be a deep heart felt prayer asking God to protect her....to keep her safe from those who are judging her...

to guarantee her that Joseph will understand...to surround her with a hedge of protection from the evil one. Her next words to God are surely all about her....Well actually they are.....With everything in her world upside down....Mary breaks out in worship.

Mary's Song

After all this, after her fear and her "yes," she breaks into song. I'd be running for cover, calling my people, trying to prepare for the onslaught of life after a moment like this— but Mary? Mary breaks into song.

Luke 1:46–56 (ESV) 46 And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, 47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, 48 for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; 49 for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. 50 And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. 51 He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; 52 he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; 53 he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. 54 He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, 55 as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever." 56 And Mary remained with her about three months and returned to her home.

When most of us would be freaking out about what others are going to think about us...Mary excitedly bust out in worship....she is an incredible person. She is actually excited about what is going to happen to her....Why?

We know why Elizabeth is excited. She's old. She never had a kid. We know why Mary is excited for Elizabeth. But why is Mary excited for herself? This complicates life. How many of you if you were thirteen years old and a virgin would be happy if you became pregnant? Your circumstances would be hard. Nobody's going to believe you. So why is Mary so happy? Why does she say she's so blessed? It's a very simple answer, and you know the answer. I just want to reiterate it for you during this Christmas season. Because that baby isn't just a baby. This baby is the Messiah.

Mary knew....she knew the prophets...she knew the promises...She knew the scriptures...She was going to birth the Messiah....This baby is not just any baby...this baby will not stay in the cradle..this baby has a mission....Her baby will be the greatest person every born. Suppost you knew your child would one day be President of the US...now multiply that by a million....Mary is excited.

The Magnificat is a song of revolution and of power. It is a song of strength in the face of injustice. As if Mary was not in enough trouble, she bursts into a revolutionary cry. Mary bursts into song because not only has God interrupted her life, but God plans to interrupt darkness, injustice, and poverty. God plans to redeem all the broken shards of life that are

scattered across this dark world. This God whose favor rests upon her, this God whose love empowers her, this God who chose to use her: This God is going to turn the entire planet upside down and shake it to his glory.

Anyone listening to her song at this time would have known her words were aimed at Herod. Herod, the ruler of that day, later hears that a baby king has been born and orders the slaughter of children under two years of age. At the mere whiff of a challenge to his authority, he responds with mass murder. What would he have done after hearing the words to Mary's song?

In a culture where freedom of speech was not welcome, and death was the penalty for disagreeing with leadership, Mary's song was jarring. In Mary's world, the Magnificat was what "We Shall Overcome" was to the African-American community in the '60s and '70s here in the United States.

Notice how Mary is so confident of God's promises to right the broken world she lived in that she put all the verbs in this song in past tense. God's interruption in Mary's life took her fear, favor, and her "yes." Through her, God brought his Son into this world. Through God's interruption, Mary brought God's change to the world. What about us? What about you and I? How is God interrupting our lives?

Cradle to Cross

So we cant learn a great deal from her....Particularly when it comes to God's Interruptions

God interrupted Mary's very life and her physical body. God interrupted evil through Mary's song. God interrupted the very world though Jesus.

Interruptions are frustrating, to say the least. We bristle when people interrupt our thoughts or our words. Parents shush children who interrupt them while they're on the phone. We struggle with the uninvited stranger who becomes a guest. We pace when our Internet, power, water, or cable service is interrupted. We can barely handle an interruption in our daily routines—so how, then, can we manage to say "yes" to a life of interruptions from God?

Whenever and however God is interrupting you, it helps to look at the example of Mary to find the strength to respond.

1. Find God's Favor

Live your life in such a way that God actually chooses to use you to interrupt the brokenness of this world. Are you living a life of faith, humility, wisdom, and grace? Are you known for your patience and perseverance and love toward others? If not, put yourself in the presence of God. Study God's Word. Pray. Be a person who dwells with God and who knows God in such an intimate way that God will choose to do divine work through you. Live your life in a way that you find God's favor.

We are to live our lives ready to serve...ready to be interrupted...looking forward to being used by God....Anything...Anywhere...Anytime...Any Cost....Like Isaiah our lives should shout...Here I am Lord send me.

2. Admit and Process Your Fear

God rarely calls us to things that we can accomplish on our own...He stretches us...He challenges us...He forces us into that zone where He has to show up and we have to depend upon Him. Whatever He calls us to do it will require faith in Him to accomplish it....in spite of us.

Mary admitted her fear—there is no shame in admitting fear. Our dominant culture teaches us to shirk and avoid fear. We may have been taught that fear is a sign of weakness. But fear is honest. Fear is real. And fear needs to be admitted and dealt with and faced. Mary faced her fears and took stock of what was at risk when she said "yes" to the angel and later when she sang the Magnificat.

She also had a place to process her fear. First in prayer...God is always ready to help us process...particularly in trials and when He is doing something through us.

But we can also process with other mature believers. . In her enduring friendship with Elizabeth (Luke 1:56), she had a place to process her fear and face it. Find a community that can pray for you, process with you, and stand with you. Admit that the things of God are scary, because they mess with our routine, they mess with our lives, and they ask us to change—and change is scary. Admit and process your fear.

3. The answer is yes. No matter what the question is....No matter what God wants you to do...Just Say Yes

Ultimately, we have a decision to make. Do we say "yes" to what God is asking us to do with our lives, or do we ignore his interruptions and invitations? Christians stand in a long line of tradition in which people have said "yes" to God. The saints and the martyrs throughout history and the legacy of biblical characters give us tremendous confidence that our "yes" will not be wasted. Our "yes" will not be easy, and for some, it will lead to places of pain and challenge we never imagined existed. But we go there with God, and his peace and presence go before and after us. So let us say "yes."

4. Replace your anxiety and fear with Worship....Sing the Song

Do you know that it is impossible for humans to process gratitude and worry at the same time?

Our brains literally cannot do it. You cannot shout praises of gratitude and mope in worry at the same time. That is why God tells us that the antidote to worry is prayer with thanksgiving. When you are truly spending your time counting your blessings...you will not spend that time worrying.

When God chooses you.....Sing your song. This means we must tell the story of our fear and our "yes." As Christians, we have the great blessing of telling the story of our lives and God's work in our lives. So when the hard moments come sing your song to others...Witness to them....Testify as to what God is doing in your life....Tell them that Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior to all.

One very real day in human history, God invited Mary to join Him in a God-sized mission....A mission that she was created for and a mission that He would accomplish through her. She had incredible faith....but she was no more special than you or me. She was simply doing what God put her here on earth to do.

God interrupted her life and invited her on an incredible life journey.....An experience that would complete her and draw her closest to God. When the interruption came...Mary was ready....She had prepared her faith. You and I have the same purpose....God put you here so He could use you....It is in the interruptions that we discover who God created us to be.

We are still here because God has us on mission. There is something still left that He wants to accomplish through us. The story of Christmas is that every life is full of potential. Jesus came to save all.

You know God is going to do the same thing to you...right? God is going to interrupt your plans and call you on the journey that you were created for....It is literally the invitation of your lifetime.

You will face the fear, the culture, the onlookers, the naysayers, but deep down you know that you were created for this....Your heart will be screaming yes....but your mind will be freaking out....Decide today...that when God calls with the desires of your heart that you will have the faith and courage to go all in. He created you for His purpose....

Find God's Favor....Admit your Fear...Say yes....and Sing Your Song like your life depended on it.....Let's Pray.