

DAY 16

MONDAY, DECEMBER 14TH

Our theme for today: Trust and faithfulness.

If you read the story of Zechariah found in Luke 1:5-25 as well as supporting commentaries you'll likely note that this old, godly man with blameless conduct was eager to have his time serving in the Temple – a privilege that only occurred once for a priest. Yet, in the midst of that, like Mary, he receives a message from the angel. As you read that story, you'll recall that because of his disbelief he is struck dumb for three days – an alarming consequence, to be sure! But what of Mary? Once again, let's look at how she responds...

Scripture

³⁵ *The angel said...* ³⁷ *For nothing will be impossible with God.* ³⁸ *Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.*

Luke 1:35,37-38

Thought provokers

- Do you do things according to God's Word? What does that look like for you?
- The phrase, "*the angel departed from her*" is noteworthy. Have you ever sensed God's Word and then experienced that sense of "*the angel departing from you*"?

Reflections

God has favor upon whom He will have favor. In this case it is Mary. Mary is well thought of as a humble person. But the attention of our eyes should be drawn to the fact that her humility is to God – who favored her. To compare Mary to Zechariah is time well spent, but again, it is Mary's response to God that is important. Unlike Zechariah she is young, she isn't seeking the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to serve as priest in the Temple, nobody had yet thought of her as righteous and blameless like her relatives Zechariah and Elizabeth. She was "just" a young girl. She's thoughtful though. She responds *to* God rather than *to* herself. What does she focus on? Her response to Gabriel is the thing that separates her from Zechariah – she has faith. That faith births humility – a humility to God as her Lord.

Tomorrow we shall look at Mary's Song of praise to God – it really is a song of a servant, but before we leave today consider this. As you read through all the New Testament, you'll only happen upon a few instances of episodes that include Mary. It's almost as if this servant stays totally in the background. I enjoyed this one commentary on Mary:

"On one occasion she and her other sons will find themselves standing on the outside seeking to see Jesus, and he seems to refuse their overture (Luke 8:19-21). She will witness Jesus' death on

a cross (John 19:25-27). But never is there a hint of complaint from her lips. Never will she try to escape her calling. She models the kind of faithfulness that all of us will do well to emulate.”

God does speak to us and either we can be like Zechariah or Mary. Receiving the Word of God for our lives is important. And, we should note that at times it might feel like we’ve been given a task only then to find we are alone – for Mary that meant the angel departed from her.

In some sense, we tend to lose sight of Mary after the Nativity passages. Her life is hardly spoken of. True, there is the story of taking the child Jesus to the Temple, the story of the Wedding at Cana, but really not much else, until, of course, we find her weeping at the end of Christ’s life. Mary trusted God at His Word, and she carried out His Word to the end. Hers was a life of *“let it be with me according to your word.”* This was someone who trusted and was faithful.

If we consider her own life with Jesus, we can only imagine how much she trusted Him and was faithful to Him. Perhaps, and this is only conjecture, Mary was a child to Jesus rather than always a mother to Him. Perhaps, she too, had that child-like faith of wanting to be in a close relationship – even with this One who was her Son.

Prayer and Song

Take time to pray and sing this well-known carol, attributed to Martin Luther.

Away in a Manger

*Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
The little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.
The stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay,
The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.*

*The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,
But little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes.*

*I love thee, Lord Jesus! look down from the sky,
And stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.*

*Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask thee to stay
Close by me forever, and love me I pray.
Bless all the dear children in thy tender care,
And take us to heaven to live with thee there*