

Date: November 28, 2021

Series: *Christmas Through the Eyes...*

Title: *Mary*

Text: Luke 1:26-38

Preacher: Mark Adams

When our first child, Daniel, was born back in 1983, things were changing when it came to where fathers spent their time waiting for the birth of their child. In years past, fathers never entered the delivery room.

Anyone remember those days?

As this old Norman Rockwell print shows, back then a dad's perspective on the birth was from a place called the Father's Waiting Room where men would pace back and forth hour after hour, waiting for news of their child's arrival.

But in '83 more and more dads were actually present in the delivery room witnessing the birth from the beginning of labor until the arrival. Lamaze was becoming popular and thanks to the generous gift of a friend, Sue and I became a part of that trend. We went to those birthing classes. I think there were ten sessions.

- We learned about the stages of labor and what to expect when your son or daughter entered the world.
- We practiced the "hee --- whooo" breathing exercises.

It was a great way of preparing for the arrival of our first born.

I remember doing the music in a revival when Sue was about 7 months along and when the guy doing the preaching learned of my plans, he actually rebuked me and said, *"You have no business being in the delivery room! That's a place for WOMEN---not men!"* I said, *"Well, I'm going! And I look forward to it!"*

I have never regretted that decision and I'm sure you dads out there would agree. I wouldn't want to miss BEING there, seeing my child come into the world, hearing his or her first cry. That firsthand PERSPECTIVE is a precious thing.

The moment I saw Daniel come into the world was when I first understood Psalm 139:14 where it says we are ***"fearfully and wonderfully made"*** because I was both afraid---I mean as I looked at my wet, blue and pink son with cheesy stuff all over him as he emerged with his little misshapen head---I worried, *"Is he supposed to look like that?"* But at the same time, it was a moment of profound wonder---I thought, *"God---this is amazing---You gave him lungs and eyes and five fingers and toes---a heart that beats---YOU are WONDERFUL! THIS is wonderful! Not only do the heavens declare Your glory---a newborn child does as well!"*

This Advent we are going to study the coming of Jesus from the perspective of "Through the EYES of" all those who were there in that cave/stable, the people who were in the "delivery room" the night of our Lord's birth. I want us to look for principles we need to embrace as Christians, principles we can see from the perspective of these people.

And this morning we begin by looking at all that happened that first Christmas night through the eyes of Mary. Take your Bibles and turn to Luke 1. Stand if able and follow along as I read verses 26-38.

Luke 1:26-38

26 - In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee,

27 - to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary.

28 - The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

29 - Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be.

30 - But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God.

31 - You will conceive and give birth to a Son, and you are to call Him Jesus.

32 - 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,

33 - and He will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

34 - "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

35 - The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on 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.

36 - Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month.

37 - For no word from God will ever fail."

38 - "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." Then the angel left her.

There is so much we can learn from Mary's perspective on Jesus' coming into our world. In fact, I'm sure you'll be happy to hear that (with the help of an old sermon preached at Willow Creek by Bill Hybels) I found fifteen points to hang my message on and in the miracle of pastoral alliteration--each point begins with the letter "C." Even if the word doesn't fit, they all start with the same letter. I did it this way because C.C. and Cheryl lit the first candle of Advent today--just kidding!

Okay, as we just read, one day about the "year" 9 months B.C. God sent an angel to Nazareth to visit a young virgin named Mary who was engaged or betrothed to a young man named Joseph. And that's where we SEE our first "C."

1.) CAREFREE

That's what Mary's life was like up until this point. It was uncomplicated. She was young, probably about 14 or 15. She was about to be married and the future was bright.

You women out there can understand that. Do you remember the days leading up to YOUR wedding, your thoughts and dreams of how your life would unfold? You men, you get it too don't you? I do---I remember counting off the days until Sue and I were wed---with not a care in the world.

That's what it was like for Mary. There was no bad on the horizon. Life was good and was about to get better. And then comes our second "C."

2.) CHOSEN

As Mary was going through these carefree days, the mighty angel Gabriel showed up. Most scholars believe it was while Mary was drawing water from the well in Nazareth because the entry to that well was so narrow that only one person could go in at a time. This would be the only time Mary was alone in that culture.

So, while she was there drawing water, probably humming a happy tune as she thought of her coming nuptials---BAM--- Gabriel appears. This mighty angel tells her she has been chosen, called to be the vessel through whom the long-awaited Messiah would come into the world. Of all the living women on the planet, this young teenaged peasant was selected.

Gabriel's appearance and his message had to be a huge shock to this young girl. And that leads to point three where Mary shows she was much more than she appeared to be. For she was:

3.) CONSCIENTIOUS

In spite of the SHOCK, she was receptive to Gabriel's message. She listened. She was attentive to the message God had sent His angel to deliver.

Medieval artists often portrayed this CONSCIENTIOUS RECEPTIVITY of Mary by depicting the entry of the impregnating Holy Spirit through her ear--not through her reproductive organs. These ancient artists weren't ignorant when it comes to the anatomy of the human body, it's just that they recognized that for Mary the organ of conception was the organ of reception.

Mary was open to hear what Gabriel would say to her.

We must be like her, we must learn to LISTEN to God's still small voice---we must be conscientious---always ready to hear and welcome His guidance.

I'm sure you've heard the phrase, *"Don't just stand there. Do something."* Well, when God wants to get something done in us, he says, *"Don't just do something. Stand there. LISTEN."*

In George Bernard Shaw's play *Saint Joan*, Joan of Arc is always hearing voices from God, and the king is angered by this. He complains to her, *"Oh, your voices! Your voices! Why don't your voices come to me? I'm the king, not you."* *"They do come,"* she replied. *"But you do not hear them. You've not sat in the field in the evening listening for them. When you hear the Angelus ring, you cross yourself and have done with it. But if you prayed from your heart and listened to the trilling of the bells in the air after they stopped ringing, you would hear the voices as well as I do."*

Mary's perspective, her part in the Christmas story, shows that we must be receptive, attentive, to hear God's call. We must remember that nothing is more important than what God has to say to us.

Do you remember Jesus' warning in Matthew 13? ***"For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise, they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn, and I would heal them---but blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear."*** (Matthew 13:15-16)

Let me ask. How good are your spiritual eyes and ears? Do you spend enough time talking to God and meditating on His Word that you recognize His still, small voice? Do you hear Him even as you walk through this noisy crowded world of ours? Have you learned to LISTEN for Him above the din of the Devil's temptings?

Looking at Christmas through Mary's eyes shows us that she did! She listened to God. But even though Mary was conscientious---she was also understandably:

4.) CONFUSED

Look back at verse 28 and following. Gabriel appears and says, ***"Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."*** ***Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God."***

Do you see Mary's confusion?

"Why am I highly favored? I'm just a peasant girl living in a backwater town—a town with a bad reputation. Everyone thinks nothing good comes from MY town. Why me? Why here?"

Confusion is often part of our walk as Christians. We're cruising along carefree and suddenly God calls us to do something---teach a Grace Group, chair a committee, go on a mission trip, be a deacon, work with our children---something so big you know you can't do it on your own. We're confused and ask, *"Why ME Lord?"*

That leads to our next "C" because her confusion made Mary:

5.) CURIOUS

Mary was curious about how this would all happen. So, she was asked Gabriel, *"How is this going to happen for I am a virgin? Mary was asking about the mechanics and practicalities of this confusing calling. She was saying: "If I'm going to carry and deliver a baby---this Baby---who is going to handle the conception challenge?"* Gabriel says, *"The Holy Spirit is going to come upon you. No human being will be involved. This is going to be a miraculous conception. It's going to be the supernatural work of God. Trust us."*

And Mary does that. She trusts God which leads to our 6th "C." Mary decided to:

6.) COOPERATE

In verse 38 she says, ***“I am the Lord’s servant. May Your word to me be fulfilled.”*** In other words, *“I’m in---I’ll accept Your call God. You are the Potter. I am the clay. You are the Master. I am Your servant.”*

For Mary everything was directed away from herself to what God would do through her and in her. In short---she was humble.

We must remember this part of Mary’s perspective on Jesus’ birth because in His Word God constantly stresses the importance of humility.

Psalm 138:6 reads, ***“Though the Lord is on high, He looks upon the lowly.”***

In Isaiah 57:15 we read, ***“For this is what the high and lofty One says — He Who lives forever, Whose name is holy: ‘I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite, and lowly in spirit.’”***

Our next “C” underscores this principle because Mary was a:

7.) **COMPOSER**

She wrote a song. We studied it last Christmas so you should remember that in it she sings about her humility. Look at verses 46-55 of Luke 1 where she says that God, ***“...has regarded the lowly estate of His maidservant...He has put down the mighty from their thrones and exalted the lowly.”***

In her lyrics, Mary never even hinted at bragging about herself. God is the only one she magnified in her Magnificat. Mary was indeed a humble person.

The truth is, in order for us to be useful in God’s great kingdom, we must humble ourselves and cooperate with Him---we must let HIM lead. We must rely on HIS strength---HIS guidance. We must be like Mary, learning to pray: *“I will do what You asks me to do God. If God You are doing the asking, I will do the obeying. Wherever You lead, I will go.”* Mary’s perspective reminds us that we must each be an: *“I-am-God’s-servant-let-it-be-through-me”* kind of Christ follower.

But that requires something---which leads to our 8th “C.”

8.) **COURAGE**

I mean, God doesn’t call the humble “Mary’s” of the world to an easy life. No—God calls us to challenging lives, lives that can sometimes be difficult. So courage is required.

Mary experienced the fear of God’s overwhelming call—which is why the angel told her not to be afraid. By the way, do you know how many times the Bible says *“Fear not!”* or *“Do not be afraid?”* If you’ve seen the old movie, *Facing the Giants*, you know. 365 times---one for every day of the year. That’s no coincidence, because being used by God means repeatedly facing fearful situations—it means doing things that you can’t do on your own.

Mary reminds us that to follow God in obedience we have to have COURAGE. We have to learn to rely on His strength in order to face our fears:

- The fear of embarrassment.
- The fear of being talked about.
- The fear of being criticized.
- The fear of being mocked.
- The fear of missing out.
- The fear of being hurt.
- The fear of being poor.
- The fear of being rejected.
- The fear of being a failure.
- The fear of opposition.

- The fear of persecution.

I could go on and on and could probably name 365 fears, because people who aspire to use their lives to join God in His great work face every type of fear you can name. That's why God begins so many conversations with His people by saying: **"Do not be afraid. Fear not."**

Now, if you wonder how to NOT be afraid to follow God like Mary did then remember, fear is an emotion—but courage is a choice. Courage is acting, in spite of our fear. You can be courageous no matter how you feel, because courage is defined by what you do.

We SEE this "C" in Mary because when the angel told her that she would have a child before she and Joseph were legally married, she certainly felt afraid.

- Afraid of what people would say.
- Afraid of what Joseph would assume.
- Afraid of the reputation her Child would have.
- Afraid of the shame she would bring on her family.
- Afraid of being stoned to death.
- Afraid of not being able to provide for the Child.

She could have easily given in to all these things and done nothing—but she didn't. The first thing Mary did when God called her was to choose courage. And understand, the kind of courage I'm talking about does not come from confidence in self—but rather from confidence in God. It's a by-product of humility—the realization that we can't be a "Mary" without God's help.

And Mary had this kind of courage. She believed that God would enable her to do this great and wonderful thing.

After Jesus was born, we SEE another "C" in Mary for she was:

9.) CREATIVE

That night Mary didn't have all the things a mom would have for the baby. Remember, they were travelling, they had just arrived in Bethlehem, the only "suitable" place for her to deliver was that stable/cave. So, Mary tears up strips of cloth to form a makeshift pair of PJ's. She cleans out a feeding trough for Jesus' first cradle.

We often have to be CREATIVE in doing God's will. I'm remembering Doug Davis' funeral where they showed a video of Doug teaching his grandsons about Jesus as he used the flower of a dogwood tree as an object lesson.

The next "C" Mary's perspective supplies us is seen in the way she was:

10.) CONTEMPLATIVE

As Luke 2:19 says, Mary treasured up all of these things that were going on in and around her and she **"pondered them in her heart."** I can imagine Mary when she had finished feeding Jesus, she would think, *"I'm holding the Savior of the world in my arms."* She might think something like, *"It's mind-boggling---that God would be at work in and through my life for His purposes."*

It would be good for us to be more like Mary in this. We should spend more time dwelling on the miracle of God Himself speaking to us and through us---using our lives to further His eternal kingdom.

We have to skip ahead a little over a decade for our 11th "C" and I'm referring to a time when we see that Mary was:

11.) CONCERNED

In Luke 2:41, we read about the time when Jesus was about 12 and He and His family had travelled from Nazareth to Jerusalem for the Passover. After it was over and the family was on their way home, about a day into their journey, they couldn't find Jesus. Mary assumed Jesus was with His brothers or sister or His friends. She thought He was in the procession heading back home. But He wasn't.

So, she and Joseph gathered their family and headed back.

Jesus was missing three days--sort of a first century version of *"Home Alone...in Jerusalem."* They found Him in the temple. He was holding a question-and-answer time with the top theologians of the day.

Well, like all moms, Mary was torn between relief and anger. In Luke 2:48 she said to Jesus: ***"Son, why have You treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for You."*** These are the words of a CONCERNED mother--- a SCARED mother.

Think about it. It's bad enough to lose track of a normal kid, but think of having to tell God, *"I lost Your SON!* Of course, at this point Jesus reminded her of His purpose. Do you remember what He said?

"Why were you searching for Me? Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" (Luke 2:49 In other words, Jesus said, *"You should not have worried. I was in with My REAL Dad in His house---doing the work He brought Me here to do."* Our 12th "C" word comes 18 years later.

Jesus has just started His earthly ministry. He attends a wedding with His mom. Joseph isn't mentioned. As I said this week in my devotional, most people think he had died by this time. Anyway, Mary and Jesus and some of His disciples came to this wedding in Cana and at the reception something horrible happened---a cultural faux pas---a definite NO-NO. They ran out of wine.

In John 2:3, we learn that Mary turned to Jesus and said---and this is my paraphrase, *"Son, I remember when You told me You had to be about Your Father's business. Remember---that day in Jerusalem? Well, now is as good a time as any. Help them."* She even pulled the servants aside and confidently said, ***"Do whatever He says to do."***

And that's our next "C"---Mary's:

12.) **CONFIDENCE**

I'm sure you remember how things unfolded. Jesus turned the water in six huge water jars into some very fine wine and in so doing He saved the wedding reception. The parents of the bride were greatly relieved. John tells us that from that day on, people marveled at Jesus wonder-working power.

Mary was confident, she had FAITH in her Son---her Savior---OUR Savior.

We should all be more CONFIDENT in the power of our Lord. We can confidently do ALL things through Him Who strengthens us!

Not too long after that Jesus was teaching in a public square. Our Lord's insight and wisdom was blowing the minds of His listeners. In my mind, someone saw Jesus' mother, Mary, in the crowd---standing there listening with the rest of the people. This guy got all excited such that he looked at her and said, ***"Blessed is the mother who gave You birth and nursed You."*** (Luke 11:27). How did Jesus respond? I mean, this onlooker basically said, *"Take a bow Mary! Everyone give her a standing ovation!"* But Jesus said, ***"No---blessed rather are those who hear the Word of God and obey it."*** (Luke 11:28)

Understand, Jesus was not devaluing His mother in a public way---no---He was making the point that in the kingdom He came to establish, respect flows to those who humble themselves before God, LIKE Mary, people do God's will---not

people who carry certain titles or people who have connections. In other words, there's no partiality in His kingdom. There's not inside track---not even for His mother.

How did she respond?

Well, she could have said, *"Jesus! After all I've done for You! The diapers---the middle of the night feedings---the cookies after Synagogue school. Couldn't You just give me a LITTLE credit here?"* And that leads to our next "C" because this is a moment when we see Mary's

13.) **CHARACTER**

Mary doesn't rebuke her Son. She doesn't respond negatively to what He just said. In my mind, she just affirms the centrality of humility and obedience in the kingdom and she stands there as if to say, *"What He's saying is true."* It took a lot of character for Mary to respond that way.

Do you have that attitude? Does YOUR character show you to be the kind of person who knows there is no "inside track" in the Kingdom of God?

In a few years Mary once again shows her courage on the day of Jesus' crucifixion. Jesus' followers fled when He was arrested. But John 19:25 says that ***"Near the cross of Jesus Christ stood His mother."*** Mary didn't run. She never slid into the shadows, never denied her faith like Peter and the others. She stood there through the whole thing.

Can you imagine how that made Jesus feel, to have His courageous mom with Him? He feels the same way when WE exhibit that kind of God-empowered courage.

That leads to our next "C." Mary was:

14.) **CRUSHED**

When Jesus said His last three words, ***"It is finished!"*** --- she must have felt that way. Any mom who sees her son die would feel like that.

I remember one of the opening scenes from *Saving Private Ryan*, when this midwestern mom gets the news that three of her sons are dead and one is missing. She just crumples to the floor sobbing uncontrollably. I think as Mary heard Jesus utter His final words from the cross she crumpled as she remembered what Simeon had told her the day Jesus was dedicated in the temple: ***"A sword will pierce your soul as well."*** (Luke 2:35)

As Jesus said, in this world, we ALL have trouble--we all go through CRUSHING times. In these times we must remember Jesus has overcome this troubling world---AND---this troubling world is not permanent. It is passing---some day if we have put our faith in Jesus we will enter the REAL world, a place where there are no CRUSHING moments.

Our final "C" is found in the last time we hear from Mary. Jesus had risen and ascended to Heaven and Mary is with the disciples in the upper room in Jerusalem waiting for the gift of the Holy Spirit. Acts 1:14 says that ***"There were constantly praying"*** for this to happen. ***"And Mary, the mother of Jesus was with them."***

Our last "C" is:

15.) **CHURCH**

For, on Pentecost Sunday the Holy Spirit came and the church began. Think of it. Mary had a front row seat to it all! She saw the whole deal---every part of Jesus' life---from the first visit of the angel---to His death, burial, resurrection and ascension. She's even there when God's Spirit explodes on the scene and the CHURCH is born. What RIDE this young woman had! What a legacy of faith she left behind.

Let's Pray.