

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.

May 14, 2023 Mother's Day.

I Intro.

We're nearly at the end of the school year and eventually summer. It's amazing how fast time flies. You saw the appeal to address some building and financial needs we're having to fix. We hope you are fed and ministered to by NCC, and that you can be an essential part of us moving forward. We have many ways you can plug into life at NCC. You can find all those through our website, app, and social media sites. Our app is the best way to livestream our services, but you can also livestream on FaceBook and YouTube. You can revisit past services, sign up for events and even give. We're encouraged by your presence when you gather with us. New and familiar faces join us every Sunday. If you join us online, we appreciate your presence. We are 100% committed to our virtual attenders. We are your church family, and if there is anything you need, prayer, or anything else, please let us know. This is our weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work through from Sunday's message. Whether you were able to participate in this service or not, this devotion is free-standing. You can use it to help you dig deeper into your own spiritual walk. We hope you find this tool helpful on your spiritual journey.

II Sunday.

WOOT! WOOT! It's Mother's Day. Happy day to all of you. Celebrate ALL the women who have had an influence in your life! And I know this is such a complicated day for so many of you too. I won't go into all of the details in this devotional. But just know I addressed the different ways we all have some kind of feels for today. We want to be sensitive towards those of you that this day carries a lot of heavy emotions and unresolved history.

The stand alone topic for today is a look at Mary, the mother of Jesus, and her influence on the life of her son. We all have had moms, and other women in our lives, who were pivotal in us becoming who we are. Yes, we've all had difficult relationships too, but we want to focus on those relationships that fed and nurtured us. Not just to be who we are, but to also form us into living the way we do. Before we get to the person of Mary, let's think about the women who were huge influences in our lives.

Think about women in your past who made you the person you are today. Who were they?

What did they specifically pour into you that formed who you are now?

How can you see their influence in some of your thoughts and behaviors now?

Our scripture for this message was a song credited to Mary after she found out she was pregnant with the promised Messiah. Before you read this scripture, think about this. God chose Mary to raise Jesus because her heart was filled with the same things that are important to God. Reading this passage will present a side of God that we don't talk about enough. So, read **Luke 1:46-55** and we'll unpack some of the specific things Mary mentioned.

What jumped out to you from this passage?

What did you sense was important to Mary in her song?

How did you see these things that Mary mentioned in the life and ministry of Jesus?

Okay, a few things before we unpack this passage. We do need to be reminded that God intentionally chose Mary to raise Jesus, because she valued the things that are important to God. Which has to imply that a lot of what you see in Jesus, how he lived, and what his ministry was about, was poured

into him by Mary. Yes Jesus is God AND human. But in that he is fully human. We know Mary and Joseph took him to the temple, and that Jesus grew in stature and favor. Which naturally means growth happened. And we have to believe that Joseph until he was out of the picture, and Mary, were significant influences in the life of their son, Jesus.

Here are some specific ways we can learn from Mary and have the same heart.

Here are truths from Mary's song that we can see she poured into Jesus.

1. Be humble, acknowledge your giftedness, and point to God. When we have a real, authentic, personal relationship with God, we will recognize who we are in his light. We each possess abilities, skills, and talents that can be used for primarily our own benefit or for the greater good. We were made to create, be co-creators, and nurture a close growing relationship with God that gives life and power to what we create. Remember breath, spirit, wind?

How are you working to recognize and use what you have to point towards God?

2. Be extravagant. Live generously. The greatest joy and pleasure in life comes from holding onto things loosely and not letting them hold onto you. To use what we have for the benefit of others. When we were young and didn't have much stuff, we could move our stuff in a trailer. Now we get alarms, security cameras, insurance, and an ever increasing number of locks to protect our stuff. Share everything you have. Yourself, time, resources, energy, courage, encouragement, inspiration. All of us can make the lives of others and the world a better place.

How and where can you be more extravagant towards others?

3. Be continually aware of God's mercy. This isn't; *"I'm such a lowly worm"*. That's not mercy. That's a broken spirit. This is; a life dedicated and devoted to God that makes me humbly aware and grateful for what I do have. God is continually wanting to give, share with us so much more. We can be extravagant because the more we give away, share, and are generous with, the more God's mercy is revealed to us. It's just a life centered in, and built on, being perpetually kind and grateful.

What can continually make you aware of God's mercy?

4. Align your values with the values of God. You WILL have a center. You will align yourself with something that informs your values and beliefs and forms who you are. And you need to have something you're looking at, towards, that gives you direction. Our lives will be drawn towards what we give attention to, and then we will become what we align ourselves with. Find something that will ground you, give you a solid foundation, in something real and life-giving.

What are you going to choose and work on, to be your center?

5. Speak against the proud, powerful, rich. This feels overtly political. And unfortunately because we often have made this a political position, it's caused us to ignore a very specific teaching in scripture. We are to call out structures and systems that favor the rich and powerful and oppress others. Be a vocal, courageous person, who speaks against those who take advantage of others. The Hebrew scriptures (how both Mary and Jesus were raised) are full of instructions about how unfair economic systems are. Calling out; charging too much interest, taking advantage of marginalized people (widows, orphans) and more. Which has to mean earthly structures CREATE marginalized people. And justice for God is calling out people who create and benefit from these structures.

In what ways are you speaking and working AGAINST forces of injustice in YOUR world?

6. Favor and take care of the under-resourced. Again, this is a very political sounding position, because we've lost sight, and the practice of doing this as followers of Jesus. We complain that helping others shouldn't be the government's job, and I agree. But the problem is the church hasn't been doing this well, and someone had to step in and save and protect people when the church wasn't. This is very specific, and seems a little out of line with our understanding of fairness. We tend to lean towards the idea of 'equal opportunities', and then let whatever happens happen. Most of us believe that those who work hard will be okay. But in the Old Testament we see what's called the "*Year of Jubilee*". This is the realization that all economic systems are unjust and wealth will always accumulate at one end. Every 50 years the Israelites were told that all debts were to be forgiven, and property gained in those 50 years was to be returned back to the original owner. Anyone want to live truly biblically? As we speak against those who take advantage of others, we give of ourselves to protect those who struggle more. What Jesus called; "*the 'least of these'*".

In what ways are you speaking and working FOR those who are being pushed to the edges of society?

7. Live and show mercy. In ALL of our relationships. Mary is aware of the mercy and kindness that God showed her. To be the mother of Jesus. A difficult life obviously. But one that also came with favor from God. We get to put ourselves in the lives of others, and help them connect with God and find their calling. We recognize and embrace God's endless mercy towards us, and then we pour that mercy out on others.

How are you daily living in, and showing others, God infinite mercy?

III Challenge.

There's not a whole lot to add to all of this. These are strong and activist type values and beliefs that Mary lifted up when she heard she would be carrying the Messiah. And we saw them lived out in the life and ministry of Jesus. We have to interact with these truths. They have to become a part of the way we live, vote, treat others, and more. They should form all of who we are and what we do.

So, as always in closing this particular look at what Mary poured into Jesus; **How would these values and beliefs speak into and shape how you live in the world now?**