

Bible Readings:

Luke Chapter 1: v. 26-56.

Luke Chapter 2: v. 25-35.

Theme: A Mary Christmas.Luke Chapter 1: v. 26-56.

²⁶ Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by 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. The virgin's name was Mary.

²⁸ And having come in, the angel said to her, "Rejoice, highly favored *one*, the Lord *is* with you; blessed *are* you among women!"

²⁹ But when she saw *him*, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was.

³⁰ Then 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 bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. ³² He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give 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 Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?"

³⁵ And the angel answered and said to her, "*The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.*

³⁶ Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. ³⁷ For with God nothing will be impossible."

³⁸ Then Mary said, "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

³⁹ Now Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste, to a city of Judah, ⁴⁰ and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹ And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. ⁴² Then she spoke out with a loud voice and said, "Blessed *are* you among women, and blessed *is* the fruit of your womb! ⁴³ But why *is* this *granted* to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴ For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. ⁴⁵ Blessed *is* she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord."

⁴⁶ And Mary said:

"My soul magnifies the Lord,

⁴⁷ And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.

⁴⁸ For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant;
For behold, henceforth 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* on those who fear Him
From generation to generation.

⁵¹ He has shown strength with His arm;
He has scattered *the* proud in the imagination of their hearts.

⁵² He has put down the mighty from *their* thrones,
And exalted *the* lowly.

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 seed forever."

⁵⁶ And Mary remained with her about three months, and returned to her house.

Luke Chapter 2: v. 25-35.

²⁵ And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. ²⁶ And it had been revealed to him

by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. ²⁷ So he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, ²⁸ he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said:

²⁹ "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace,
According to Your word;

³⁰ For my eyes have seen Your salvation

³¹ Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples,

³² A light to *bring* revelation to the Gentiles,
And the glory of Your people Israel."

³³ And Joseph and His mother marveled at those things which were spoken of Him. ³⁴ Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, "Behold, this *Child* is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against ³⁵ (yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."

Introduction

Last week we learnt about Joseph and his first Christmas.

We also made some practical applications for our lives.

We were challenged by Joseph's faith and trust in God, in spite of the circumstances that faced him.

Today we will learn about Mary and her first Christmas.

There were equal challenges for Mary in her situation, but they were different, and the applications for us this week will be different also.

There are four things in the two passages that I read, that I would like to draw to your attention.

These are:

1. Mary and the Angel – Luke Chapter 1: v. 26-38.
2. Mary's Confirmation of God's Miracle. Luke Chapter 1: v. 39-45.
3. Mary's Joy – Luke Chapter 1: v.46-55.
4. Mary's Challenge – Luke Chapter 2: v.25-35.

Before we get into the scriptures we need a little background on this person called Mary.

We are told that Mary was a relative of Elizabeth, who was the Mother of John the Baptist and married to Zacharias the Priest.

This means that her background was with a Priestly family.

This explains why Mary knew so much about the **Old Testament Scriptures**.

Normally women were not taught the Old Testament Scriptures at that time, but Mary had the great opportunity of being taught the scriptures from an early age.

Mary was a young girl when she was engaged to Joseph.

Nobody knows how old she was exactly, but it is estimated that she was aged 16 years old when she got engaged and about 17 years old when she gave birth to Jesus.

We do know that **she was a virgin** and that she **knew about sexual intercourse as the way of having a child**.

We know that she lived in Nazareth which was in the Galilee region of Israel.

At this stage, from the Bible, this is all we really know.

1. Mary and the Angel – Luke 1: v. 26-38.

There are a number of facts that we can learn about Mary's encounter with the Angel.

- a) Mary was especially chosen by God for the task of giving birth to God's Son.

The N.K.J. tells us that Mary was **highly favoured** and blessed by God.

Mary was probably chosen because of her **"Priestly"** background and her knowledge of the Old Testament scriptures.

- b) **Mary was fearful**. It was natural that Mary had some fear about an encounter with an Angel. She would have known about Angels but this would have been her first encounter with a real messenger from Heaven.

All we are told was that the Angel was "Male".

- c) **Mary was told about the purpose of the Angel's visit**. The Angel quite clearly told Mary that she would conceive in her womb and have a son.

However the Angel told her that she must call her son Jesus.

Then the Angel went on to describe something about the future of this child. Mary was told several things about this child.

He would be “great” and would be called the **Son of the Highest**, and that He would be the **King of the Jews**, an ancestor of King David.

This child would reign over the house of Jacob forever.

Finally the Angel said that the **child’s Kingdom would be eternal.**

This was a very big announcement for Mary to try and understand.

Naturally Mary asked how this was all going to happen because she knew that she was a virgin and hadn’t had sex with a man. (Joseph didn’t know that)

The Angel replied that **God’s Holy Spirit** was going to do all of the work.

The Angel gave assurance to Mary by telling her that her relative Elizabeth who was quite old and barren had conceived 6 months previously.

The Angel’s final words were **“For with God nothing will be impossible.”**

Mary’s final words to the Angel declared that she was happy to be God’s servant and believed in what the Angel said.

The Angel then departed and left. His job was done and He returned to Heaven to get his next assignment.

Application

It will come out very strongly later in verses 46-55, but Mary was a student of God’s word. I am sure this was one of the reasons why God chose her to mother Jesus, God’s own Son.

If we can hope to be servants of God, then we too need to know God’s word.

However it is not just the knowledge of God’s word that is important.

It is also a Holy Life in obedience to God’s word.

There must be a **surrender to God’s word** so that the Holy Spirit can do **His work in our lives.**

They used to say that if you only concentrated on God’s word, you would

“dry up”. If you only concentrated on the Holy Spirit then you would **“Blow Up”**, like a balloon.

If you had a balance between studying the word and obeying the Holy Spirit then you would **“Grow Up”**.

Mary knew God’s word. Now she had to obey the Holy Spirit, through the Angel and then she would grow up to know and love Jesus.

How about us? Are we **drying up, blowing up** or **growing up?**

Over the last 5 years as Pastor of O.I.C. I have been encouraged that many believers have grown up and matured in their faith.

This has come about by a knowledge of God’s word and an obedience to God’s Holy Spirit in their lives. May God continue to do His work in your lives.

However if you haven’t matured or grown up as a Christian over the last 5 years, don’t give up, but you need surrender your life to Jesus, and serve Him, focusing upon His word and obeying God’s Holy Spirit in your life.

2. **Mary’s Confirmation of her miracle – v. 39-45.**

Mary went to visit her relative Elizabeth.

I expect she went to check out what the Angel had told her about the amazing miracle of Elizabeth having a child in her old age.

We are told that as soon as Mary arrived at the home of Elizabeth that the baby in her womb leaped and she was filled with the Holy Spirit.

Immediately Elizabeth had the witness of the Holy Spirit that Mary was going to have a very special baby. After Mary shared about the privilege of being the Mother of Jesus, Elizabeth told her about her **own baby leaping for joy at her arrival.**

The words of Elizabeth to Mary are very apt for all of us. She said,

“Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfilment of those things which were told her from the Lord”.

I am sure that Mary being a young girl of 16 years old would have received great assurance and confirmation from Elizabeth.

Elizabeth was a much older lady and the wife of a Priest. **What better confirmation could she have, than to have confirmation from such a godly woman?**

Although Mary probably didn't realise it at the time, John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus was leaping in the womb of Elizabeth because Jesus had arrived in the womb of Mary! John the Baptist was the person chosen by God to prepare the hearts of people prior to the beginning of the ministry of Jesus on this earth.

Application

When we take a step of faith to **obey God's word**, especially if it is a big issue in our lives, we usually get confirmation in our circumstances.

God knows that we are often weak in our faith **and can get discouraged.**

3. Mary's Joy – v. 46-55

In v. 46-55 we have a song of Joy compiled by Mary.

Mary was so full of praise to God for her situation that she opened her mouth and **out came scripture.**

In her song of Joy Mary declared many of the **attributes of God.**

God is Mighty - v. 49. Mary quotes from Psalm 71: v. 19.

God is Holy – v. 49. Mary quotes from Psalm 111:v.9.

God is a Merciful God to those who fear Him. – v.50.

Mary quotes here from the 10 Commandments in Exodus 20:v. 6, and Psalm 103: v.17.

(Exodus 20:v. 6 in N.K.J.)

⁶ but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

Psalm 103: v.17 in N.K.J.

¹⁷ But the mercy of the LORD *is* from everlasting to everlasting

On those who fear Him,

And His righteousness to children's children,

God is faithful to His Covenant promises. – v. 54-55. Mary was referring here to God's original covenant with Abraham and to his seed forever.

Mary was aware that the covenant that God made to Abraham was an **everlasting covenant.**

When I teach my series on God's purposes for Israel, the people and the land we will go into this everlasting covenant more deeply. Mary was well taught in her Priestly family community about God and His attributes and promises.

There are more attributes of God in her song but we don't have time to expound on them now. Perhaps you can find some more?

4. Mary's Challenge – Luke Chapter 2: v. 25-35.

When Mary took the baby Jesus to be dedicated in the Temple she met a man called Simeon. He was told by the Holy Spirit that he would see the Lord's Christ before he died.

Simeon took Jesus into his arms and thanked God for allowing him to see Jesus.

Simeon's prayer and conversation to Mary and Joseph is recorded in v. 29-35.

(in the N.K.J.)

²⁹ "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace,
According to Your word;

³⁰ For my eyes have seen Your salvation

³¹ Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples,

³² A light to *bring* revelation to the Gentiles,

And the glory of Your people Israel."

³³ And Joseph and His mother marveled at those things which were spoken of Him. ³⁴ Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, "Behold, this *Child* is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against ³⁵ (yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."

There are at least three things of interest in this passage.

Simeon said that Jesus was going to be **a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles.**

The Holy Spirit had revealed to Simeon that Jesus was going to shine His light into the hearts of Gentiles. **Gentiles could be grafted into the Jewish covenant promise.**

This was an amazing revelation. Ever since God chose Abraham, and made all of His promises to him and his descendants, the Jewish nation were the only focus of the scriptures. Thank God that He allowed the Gentiles to benefit from the New Covenant!

The next thing that we notice is in v. 34 . Here it is pointed out that Jesus will be a **blessing to Israel**, but also an **offense to Israel.**

In other words, **some people would receive Him** and be blessed and **other people would be offended because of Him.**

2 Corinthians Chapter 2: v. 14-16 in the N.K.J.

¹⁴ Now thanks *be* to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. ¹⁵ For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. ¹⁶ To the one *we are* the aroma of death *leading* to death, and to the other the aroma of life *leading* to life. And who *is* sufficient for these things?

2,000 years later, nothing has changed. People continue to react in the same way.

The question I need to ask you today, is how are you going to react to the message about Jesus?

Q. Will it be like a fragrance that attracts you to find out more about eternal life? Or will it be the aroma of death, that only gives you hope for this life?

Today you can talk to somebody, and pray with somebody, if you feel that something is speaking to your heart about death and eternal consequences.

We are here to help, not to judge. Jesus is the only judge of our lives.

Finally it is the words in brackets in v. 35 that were a real challenge to Mary.

"yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also..." (N.K.J.)

Most Bible scholars feel that this is the prophecy about the death of Mary's Son Jesus.

Although Jesus was born, by the Holy Spirit of God planting a seed in her womb, nevertheless Jesus grew up like a normal child. Therefore Mary would have had the same feelings for her child like any other woman.

To watch your child grow up and be crucified on a cross would not have been a good experience for Mary.

At the time when Jesus died on the cross we are not sure how much Mary understood about the purpose of His death in God's eternal plan.

However what is important is what we understand about the eternal consequences of the death of Jesus Christ, God's Son, or God in human form, to be 100% accurate.

May God's Holy Spirit give you understanding today!