

Mary, the Mother of Jesus, Favored and Faithful

For this Women's Sunday, I thought about going back to "the original woman," Eve, who was created by God to be a helper to Adam, mother to Cain and Abel and the mother of humanity.

But, lately, I've been studying in the book of Matthew and decided to take a deeper dive into the life of Mary, the one who carried the Son of God in her womb and provided for us the chance to not just live, but spiritually thrive through a relationship with Jesus Christ.

I remember the day Steve asked me to marry him. It was Christmas morning 1988 and we had been dating on and off for five years so I was rather hopeful, but never imagined that we would get engaged in front of my whole family.

There was a huge box under the tree with my name on it so I was eager to see what might be inside.

As I unwrapped the box, I found another one inside, and another one after that until I got to a very small velvet box that I was sure must be earrings or a necklace.

Imagine my surprise when I opened it and found a beautiful, sparkly diamond ring!

I'm not often speechless, but in that moment, my mother had to say, "Isn't there a question that goes along with such a gift?"

To which, Steve responded by getting down on one knee and asking me to marry him!

Of course, I said, "yes," and couldn't wait to get to the corps that morning to share the news with all my friends!

Mary and Joseph's engagement story took on a whole different look and began the adventure of a lifetime for them and, eventually, for us, too.

In those days, couples were engaged to one another at a very young age most likely to assure plenty of time to have children.

Mary was probably around 12 or 13 and Joseph a few years older than her with enough time to have started working to provide for his young wife.

Of course, since they came from faithful Jewish families, it was expected that Mary would enter this marriage as a virgin.

In fact, there would be great embarrassment or humiliation if pregnancy took place before the wedding and the consequences would be harsh, both physically and emotionally.

「イエスの母マリアー信仰に満ち、好意を得た女性」

今年の「女性サンデー」では、エバについてお話ししようかと思いました。神様によって初めて作られた女性、人類の母となった女性です。

けれども聖書を学ぶ中で、マリアのことを掘り下げたいと思いました。

神の子を宿した女性、そしてイエス・キリストとの関係を通して、霊的に成長することを示してくれる女性です。

スティーブンのプロポーズを受けたのは、1988年のクリスマスの朝でした。5年交際していたので期待はありましたが、家族の前で婚約するとは思っていませんでした。

ツリーの下に私宛ての大きなプレゼントがあったので気になっていました。

その箱は開けても開けても、中に別の箱が入っていて、最後の小さいベルベットの箱の中身は、イヤリングだろうと思いました。

けれどもそこには美しいダイヤモンドの指輪があったのです。

私は言葉が出ませんでした。母が「何か質問もあるのじゃない?」と促しました。

そしてスティーブンが「結婚してくれますか?」と聞いたのです。

もちろん「はい」と答えました。小隊に行き、友達に伝えるのが待ちきれませんでした。

マリアとヨセフの物語はまったく違います。二人にも、また私たちにとっても、生涯をかけた冒険の始まりです。

当時は、子供を産む準備ができるよう、かなり若いうちに婚約していました。

マリアは12歳か13歳、ヨセフは何歳か年上で、家族を養うために働き始めていたことでしょう。

ユダヤ教の家庭では、妻は処女として結婚することが期待されていました。

結婚前に妊娠することは大変な恥と辱めであり、その結果は肉体的にも精神的にも非常に厳しいものでした。

So, when the Angel Gabriel visited Mary and told her that she had found favor with God and would conceive and give birth to a son named Jesus, it's not surprising that she was "confused and disturbed."

She asked all the right questions, the Angel answered them completely and then she simply accepted God's plan and said, "I am the Lord's servant, may everything you have said about me come true."

I imagine that felt like the easy part when she realized she would now have to tell Joseph about these strange circumstances.

He was a good man, but surely even he would not tolerate this crazy plan.

It wasn't until he, too, was visited by an angel who assured him that what Mary shared was true and that they would have the privilege of raising the Messiah.

You know the rest of the story.

Jesus was born in Bethlehem. The angels sang. The shepherds visited. The wise men brought gifts.

Mary and Joseph dedicated Jesus in the Temple. He grew up. His earthly ministry began publicly at the Wedding at Cana.

He developed a following of believers which included his 12 disciples.

He was arrested, crucified, buried, resurrected, and now sits at the right hand of the Father, defending us every step of the way.

So, what do we learn from Mary in all of this? And, how does it apply to our lives today?

1. Mary knew God's Word, particularly the Old Testament prophecies, so she understood the Angel's words when he shared Jesus' birth plan with her.

Later in the story, while visiting her cousin, Elizabeth, she gave praise to the Lord with words taken right from scripture.

She couldn't have done that without having listened to the lessons of her youth and applying them to her heart.

We need to study God's word so we can learn how we should live.

We need to know about the people of the Bible, their experiences can be an inspiration to us as we navigate difficult relationships and challenges.

And, when we remain in His Word, we experience a deeper relationship with Him through the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit.

ですから、天使がマリアに現れて、あなたは神の好意を得て、イエスという男の子を産むと告げた時、彼女が動揺したのは無理ありません。

マリアはもっともな質問をし、天使の答えを聞いた後、「私は主のしもべです。お言葉どおりになりますように」と神の計画を受け入れました。

けれど、ヨセフにこの状況を伝えることは、とても辛く難しいことだったでしょう。

ヨセフがいかに善良な人でも、この状況はきっと耐えられない。

しかし彼にも天使が訪れ、マリアの話が真実であると伝え、二人にメシアの両親となる特権が与えられました。

後にご存知でしょう。

イエスの誕生。天使の賛美。羊飼いの訪問に賢者の贈り物。

神殿での献児式があり、イエスは成長し、公の働きはカナの婚礼から始まりました。

12人の弟子を含む大勢の人がイエスに従いました。

イエスは捕まり、十字架で死に、埋葬され、復活し、今は御座から私たちを守っておられます。

私たちはマリアから何を学び、自分に当てはめることができるでしょう。

1番に、マリアは旧約聖書の預言を知っていたので、イエスの誕生という天使の言葉を理解しました。

いとこのエリサベトを訪ねた時、マリアはみ言葉を引用して主を賛美しています。

学んだことを心に留めていなければできないことです。

私たちも神の言葉から生き方を学びましょう。

聖書の人物から、困難や人間関係の課題を乗り越えるインスピレーションを得ることができます。

そして、み言葉を通して聖霊の力が働き、神との関係をより深めることができます。

2 Mary was willing to be used by God.

I'd like to think I would have responded as quickly as Mary, but I'm not so sure!

The truth is, if your initial reaction to God's plan for your life is fear or concern, you're in good company.

Not only was Mary initially "disturbed" when the angel visited, there were others throughout scripture who were unsettled with the plan for their lives.

Moses was concerned about his inability to speak clearly.

Jeremiah thought he was too young.

David didn't think he was worthy,

Jonah was so scared, he ran away, and we know that didn't end well!

Mary didn't have all the information, but she trusted that God did!

We must be willing to submit to God's will no matter how it might change the path we thought our lives were taking.

3. Mary had faith in Jesus and turned to Him when she had a problem to be solved.

In the story about the wedding at Cana, found in John 2:1-11, they had run out of wine and Mary took the problem to her son.

His response seemed strange to her, but although she didn't understand what Jesus was going to do, she trusted him to do what was right.

She told the servants, "Whatever He says to you, DO IT!" She recognized that her job was to take her problems to Him and lead others to do the same.

Sometimes, we take our problems to everyone except Jesus and then we're surprised when we don't get the right answers.

We must get in the habit of going to the source of wisdom and the One who knows everything about us.

4 Mary was faithful to the end, living her life as a servant of the Lord.

She was quiet before the Lord and meditated on all He did in her life.

Twice we read that she "kept all these things and pondered them in her heart." She did so just after the Shepherd's visit to the stable and then again after Jesus disappeared from the family and was found teaching at the Temple.

She was aware of God's leading as she tried to be a good mother, a faithful wife, and a student of His teaching.

We, too, should enjoy the intimacy of our relationship with the Lord. Not everything has to be shared, some things should just deepen our faith in Him.

Her faith held strong to the very end. Mary saw her son die. She wept, yet her faith grew, and she dedicated her life to Him.

2 番目に、マリアは御心を望みました。

自分はマリアのようにすぐに応答できたかどうかと思います。

もし恐れや不安が最初の反応であれば、それはあなただけではありません。

マリアが「動揺」したように、神様の計画に不安を感じた人たちが聖書には何人も登場します。

モーセは口下手であることを

エレミヤは自分は若すぎる

ダビデは自分はふさわしくないと、

そしてヨナは恐れあまり逃げ出しました。

マリアは理解できない中にも、神様を信頼しました。

私たちは自分の計画とは違ったとしても、神様の御心に従う必要があります。

3 番目に、マリアはイエス様を信じ、イエス様に頼りました。

カナの婚礼で、ぶどう酒が無くなった時、マリアはイエス様に頼りました。

どう対応するのかは分からなくても、イエス様に頼れば大丈夫との信頼があったのです。

問題はイエス様に持っていくこと。周りの人にもそのように進めることをマリアは心に留めていました。

イエス様に頼ることをしないまま、答えが見つからず苦しむという経験をしていないでしょうか。

知恵の源である方、私たちのすべてをご存知の方に頼りましょう。

4 番目に、マリアは主のしもべとして信仰の生涯をまっとうしました。

自分の生涯でイエス様が行われたことを黙想しました。

「これらの出来事を心に納めて思い巡らした」という箇所が2回あります。羊飼いが訪問した時と、イエスが神殿で教えておられる姿を発見した時です。

母、妻、また神の教えを学ぶ者として、マリアは神様の導きを心に留めました。

私たちもこのような主との親しい関係性を楽しみましょう。神様への信頼が増していきます。

マリアは最後まで信仰を堅く保ちました。イエスの死に涙した後も、信仰は強められ、生涯をささげました。

We see proof of this in Acts 1:13-14 where we find Mary in the upper room with the disciples after Jesus ascended to heaven. There she was helping plan for the creation of the Church.

She understood what Paul later referred to in Romans 12:1 as a living sacrifice, "the kind He will find acceptable."

So, the questions for today are simple.

Are you spending time in God's Word, getting to know Him intimately?

Are you willing to be used by God to do whatever He needs you to do?

Do you turn to Jesus immediately when you have a need?

Is your faith growing stronger even as the world around us seems to grow weaker?

Consider those questions as I close with Ephesians 3:16-21

I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit. Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong. And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God. Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think. Glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations forever and ever! Amen.

使徒言行録 1 章 13-14 節にその証しがあります。マリアは弟子たちと共に、教会の誕生の計画に加わっていました。

イエス様が「神に喜ばれる生けるいけにえ」(ローマ 12:1)であることを知っていたのです。

皆さんにお聞きします。

み言葉に聞き、神様と親しんでいますか？

神様に用いられる備えはありますか？

イエス様に頼っていますか？

困難の中でも信仰は成長していますか？

エフェソ 3 章 16-21 節を最後にお分かちします。

「どうか、御父が、その豊かな栄光に従い、その霊により、力をもってあなたがたの内なる人を強めて、信仰によってあなたがたの心の内にキリストを住ませ、あなたがたを愛に根ざし、愛にしっかりと立つ者としてくださるよう
に。また、あなたがたがすべての聖なる者たちと共に、キリストの愛の広さ、長さ、高さ、深さがどれほどであるかを理解し、人の知識をはるかに超えるこの愛を知るようになり、そしてついには、神の満ちあふれる豊かさのすべてにあ
ずかり、それによって満たされるように。
わたしたちの内に働く御力によって、わたしたちが求めたり、思ったりすること
すべてを、はるかに超えてかなえることのおできになる方に、教会により、ま
た、キリスト・イエスによって、栄光が世々限りなくありますように、アー
メン。」