



Series:	Reference:	Title:	Date:
Advent	Luke 1:30-33	The Power of Love	12.24.17
Website Writeup:			
The power of Christ's love is clearly seen in the life of Mary, the object of His love, and one who reciprocates with love. She's small but mighty, responding well to God's plan.			

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-SLIDE PERSON: PLEASE RECORD THE SERMON-

We've spoken of Hope, Peace, Joy, and today we speak concerning the power of love seen clearly in the life of Mary - the object of God's love & one who reciprocates with love. In Luke 1:30-33 she's confronted with the message from the angel.

But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. 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, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

Mary's the personification of one loved by God, and who loves God back with passion. Ordinary in her own right, there's something special about Mary as well. The young girl chosen to be the God-bearer to the world. Mary's been the subject of songs, carols, poems & novels. Cathedrals & churches named after her, some of the most famous sculptures & paintings in the world seek to capture the likeness of this tender young woman of faith.

Have you ever met someone small in stature, but large in character? Mother Theresa was such a person. Born on August 26th, 1910 into an Albanian family in Macedonia, she left home in 1928 at age 18 for Ireland to train as a missionary. Never to see her mother or sister again. She arrived in India in 1929, learned Bengali & began teaching.

In 1950 she founded the Missionaries of Charity, with over 4,500 sisters active in 133 countries by 2012, all vowing chastity, poverty, obedience & to give free service to the poorest of the poor. A little Albanian girl, small & mighty - not formidable in stature, but when God called she said yes - and He did great things through her.

Queen Elizabeth II has a similar bearing - at 91 years old she's reigned going on 66 years since 1952 over the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia & New Zealand. She's Head of the Commonwealth, Queen of 12 countries which've become independent in her time & she's considered the Supreme Governor of the Church of England. Only 26 when installed - a young woman born into greatness. Chosen, in a sense, but who said yes. Now she's just a little old lady of 91 years, small, but mighty.

Then there's sweet little Mary of the Christmas story. We can say with confidence, Mary was more than meets the eye. A young strong woman of faith. Mary had been expecting, praying for & talking about the Kingdom of God for her entire life before this moment! By the time the angel speaks, Mary's simply ready to say yes to whatever God had in mind. Unlike so many who would second guess God's word, or succumb to fear & turn away. She said yes & great things happened! Shown love, she reacts in love. Love goes beyond feeling. It's not just sentimental, but active & choosing. It listens & follows. Love does something.

And God's plan was for her to be a pregnant teenage bride to be, betrothed to a man she'd not yet 'been with' in a conservative Jewish society & small town. A teenage pregnancy is tragic, but not uncommon these days & not cause for death under the law as it would've been then.

We've lost sight of the cultural upheaval this would've caused - what this young girl faced bearing her distended belly for all to see. "Who's the father?," everyone's asking. Imagine old Jewish women gathered at front doors as Mary waddles by, whispering & gossiping about her unbelievable story of an angel & the Messiah in her belly. All trying to guess who the father really was. Going indoors telling their Jewish ruling husbands to do something about this degrading little girl. The perceived shameful sin of pregnancy outside of marriage is an impossibility to hide in a small village. The Scriptures say she was greatly troubled, afraid & confused.

But although she starts afraid, she finishes fearless & with the clarity of love! **In v38 she simply says, "I am the Lord's servant, ...May your word to me be fulfilled."** And in light of this she reacts with the joy we spoke of last week - listen to her song after she discovers she's chosen to be the God-Bearer as found in Luke 1:46-55...

*"My soul glorifies the Lord
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has been mindful
of the humble state of his servant.
From now on all generations will call me blessed,
for the Mighty One has done great things for me—
holy is his name.
His mercy extends to those who fear him,
from generation to generation.
He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;
he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.
He has brought down rulers from their thrones
but has lifted up the humble.
He has filled the hungry with good things
but has sent the rich away empty.
He has helped his servant Israel,
remembering to be merciful
to Abraham and his descendants forever,*

just as he promised our ancestors.”

Fear never disqualifies anyone from experiencing the in-breaking Kingdom! It's how we respond to fear which takes us deeper into God, or deeper into isolation from God. Whichever you choose. Mary made the right choice, she chose Love! She received love & reacted lovingly. Remember, *there's no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear (1 John 4:18)*. That's the case for Mary. Mary had experienced the Father's love, which enabled her to say yes to His plan to surprise the world with His coming in Christ. We can make that same choice this Christmas season.

Mary reveals in her song she's well versed in Hebrew Scripture - the Story of God. She's been waiting for the Messiah. She would've known Isaiah 9:2, predictive of her sons in-breaking kingdom, *which says, "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned."*

All confirmed in Luke 2:25-35 for Mary on meeting Simeon at the Temple... a man who'd been told *he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ*. When Mary & Joseph brought Jesus, Simeon held him saying...

²⁹"Sovereign Lord, as you have promised,
you now dismiss your servant in peace.
³⁰For my eyes have seen your salvation,
³¹which you have prepared in the sight of all people,
³²a light for revelation to the Gentiles
and for glory to your people Israel."

He then said to them... *"This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."*

Christ has broken in, bringing Love to this world. Mary felt that love, responded to it, even when it meant her own pain. Her song reveals she knew this was bigger than herself. She didn't remain in fear, she finished fearless. Maybe the darkness threatens you? To make you a servant of fear or anger. Remember Mary's loving response, *"I am the Lord's servant...May your word to me be fulfilled."*

Christ's love means we're no longer under the control of the Accuser who seeks to cloud our thoughts, steal our joy, rob us of hope, destroy our peace & silence our voice. Jesus came to destroy the works of Satan (1 Jhn 3:8). To restore those things Satan seeks to destroy. There's no one, or nothing which can separate you from the love of Christ (Roman 8:38-39) - he will never leave you nor forsake you (Heb. 13:5). These are Scriptures promises to you.

Ask Jesus for a renewed experience of His love for you, breaking in on the sad stories you may tell yourself. God loves you! He won't let you go! He may allow you to be embarrassed, like Mary was as an unwed mother, but you will never be an embarrassment to Him! Say yes to whatever He has in store in this coming year.