

June 30, 2024

“Mary: Responding to the Lord”
Luke 1:26-45

FCF: How to respond to the King

PROPOSITION: (anchor) Blessed is Mary.
(magnet) in how she responded to the Lord.

SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION:

Prince William can dance. Or tries to. I’m sure some of you saw this last week. He was in a box at a Taylor Swift concert in London and was caught “dad dancing” on video to (**READ**):

‘Cause the players gonna play, play, play, play, play. And the haters gonna hate, hate, hate, hate, hate
Baby, I’m just gonna shake, shake, shake, shake, shake. I shake it off, I shake it off

Of course, thousands were at Wembley Stadium, jamming to this. William was hardly alone there. But he is not just any dad. The future king of England has a way of standing out.

Which raises a question. How are we to think about a king? How are we to think about the King? We’re pressing into this summer sermon series, “Jesus and the Daughters of Eve.” Today, we’re looking at Mary - oddly enough, a text Will preached on just a few weeks ago.

SCRIPTURE READING: [Luke 1:26-45](#)**PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION****SERMON INTRODUCTION:**

Jerram Barrs, in his wonderful book *Through His Eyes*, makes this observation (**READ**):

A famous painting by El Greco (*The Burial of the Count of Orgaz*) represents the view of Mary held by the Counter Reformation Catholic Church. In this painting Mary is depicted as the Queen of Heaven. She is the one toward whom those on earth direct their prayers. She is the one to whom the spirit of the man, whose body is being buried below, appeals in heaven, asking her to intercede with Christ on his behalf. She is the one to whom all the patriarchs, apostles, and saints of the church are looking, to see what her response will be to this man’s prayers and to the prayers of those on earth. Peter is waiting for her verdict, the keys to heaven at his side. Christ is watching the scene, listening to his mother. She has the place of prominence in the painting.

Is this view of Mary correct? No. She knew her need of God’s mercy. Jesus is the only Savior and Mediator. And He needs no urging to hear our prayers. So we have to reject such ideas.

That said, this is not to say that Mary is unworthy of praise. Scripture is quite clear on this (**READ** [Luke 1:42a, 45](#)). How is Mary blessed? Three ways. First, because of her unique place in God’s salvation plans. Second, in the way we are taught by her in her song in Luke 2. And, third, in the way she is an example of faith - humble obedience, willing submission, glad trust. Blessed is Mary in how she responded to the Lord. She is given to us as an example of true faith. With Mary, one the Lord Himself calls blessed, we learn of the right response to Him.

Breaking down that response, what do we learn? What does such blessed faith look like? First, a facing of the facts. Second, a knowing of our place. And third, the taking of the step.

I. FACING THE FACTS

This right response begins with a facing of the facts. What do I mean by that?

A) Not a Blind Leap

We simply have to start by saying that, biblically, faith is not a blind leap.

1. In violation

Which is the way it is often understood. That is, it’s in violation, counter to, opposing, despite everything else we know. We have no rational reason to think, speak, act this way. We just do.

2. In full view

But faith is not in violation but in full view of what we know. Not despite it but because of it. That is, because of who God is, because of what He has done, and of what He has revealed.

Illustration:

Faith is not a blind leap but an informed step. “I don’t know everything but based on what I do know, I will then do this.” Think of making or accepting a marriage proposal. “Based on what I know of you (which is not everything), I want to spend the rest of my life with you.”

B) But Full Awareness

Another way of saying this is that it is not a blind leap but acting with full awareness.

1. Her question

Consider the question Mary asks. The angel arrives with this astonishing news. “The Messiah is now coming. Through you.” Amazed and confused, she asks a question (**READ Luke 1:34**).

2. The answer

The angel says that this child will be the Son of God, conceived by the Holy Spirit. Hers was an honest question honored with an answer. Mary wondered not if but how this would be. So an explanation is given. Followed by the encouragement of Elizabeth’s news. Mary is engaged.

Which shows us that the right response to the Lord includes a facing of the facts.

Application:

This may surprise you. Faith is not a blind leap. But also to realize that this wasn’t any easier to believe then than it is for us today. “These were pre-scientific primitive people of long ago. This was no stretch for them.” Really? You don’t think Mary knew how babies are made? We need to leave behind such chronological snobbery and arrogance. We live in the same world.

Mary is showing us that it’s right to ask, “How will this be?” It is clear that she is said to be blessed in how she responded to the Lord. And part of that includes facing the facts.

II. KNOWING OUR PLACE

Facing the facts and knowing our place. We could say that Mary is quite self-aware.

A) Exalted Status

(**READ Luke 1:28**) Mary is able to hear and believe these words spoken of her.

1. Favored one

Favored one - literally “graced one.” An object of God’s unconditional love, forever secure.

2. He is with you

And He is with you. His eye upon you, His face towards you. Already, the Immanuel promise.

B) Grounded Impulse

Mary embraces this exalted status. With a grounded impulse (**READ Luke 1:38a**).

1. Not my own

“I am not my own. I am not self-made. I am not self-ruling, self-directing, self-determining.”

2. Property of another

“I am the property of another.” She is a servant, a handmaiden, a slave - belonging to another.

All of this is true, not just for her, but for every believer. We are exalted and grounded.

Illustration:

Some of you remember the movie, “Hook,” starring Robin Williams as a grown up Peter Pan, suffering from amnesia. Peter has grown up to be a cut-throat lawyer and is married to Wendy’s granddaughter. But Captain Hook kidnaps his children and Peter has to return to Never Land with Tinkerbell. There’s an exchange between Peter and a much older Wendy ([READ](#)):

Wendy Darling: The stories are true! I swear to you! I swear on everything I adore, and now he's come back to seek his revenge. The fight isn't over for Captain James Hook. He wants you back. He knows that you'll follow Jack and Maggie to the ends of the earth and beyond. And by heaven, you must find a way. Only you can save your children. Somehow, you must go back. You must make yourself remember.

Peter Banning: Remember what?

Wendy Darling: Peter, don't you know who you are?

[Wendy opens up the book and shows an illustration of Peter Pan as Peter looks in wonder]

Wendy Darling: [whispers] Yes, boy. Yes.

Application:

That’s quite a question. “Don’t you know who you are?” Do we? Our exalted status as royal and beloved children. Given full access to the King. All the rights and privileges are ours.

Coupled with that, a grounded impulse. We are adopted but also redeemed. We are truly His children but also His slaves. All He has is ours. But all we have is His. At every moment.

Mary shows us it is right for us to say, “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord.” It is clear that she is blessed in how she responded to the Lord. Part of that includes knowing our place.

III. TAKING THE STEP

Which then brings us to the response itself of actually taking the step, the act of faith.

A) Pivotal Moment

When you think of it, this was quite a pivotal moment in human history.

1. What was being asked

Consider what was being asked of Mary here. To accept these amazing things as true. To let go of her plans for the future. And to open up herself to charges of adultery (or even blasphemy).

2. Range of responses

There was a range of responses in front of her. She could have chosen disobedience - a refusal. “My body, my choice.” Or self-reliance - a resolve to bring the Messiah into the world herself.

B) True Spirituality

Literally, thank God that’s not what happened. In Mary, we see true spirituality.

1. A clarifier

What do I mean by that? It’s a phrase from Francis Schaeffer. But it’s not “let go and let God.”

2. An explanation

That implies being disengaged and uninvolved. What is seen and modeled is an active passivity. That is to say, we are to be active in our resolve, in our prayer, in our steps going forward. But

we are to be passive in our submitting the whole of our lives and our relying upon the Spirit of God to bring forth what He will. And to do that however and whenever He so chooses.

We see this with Mary. The right response to the Lord includes taking real steps of faith.

Illustration:

The child Mary would bear spoke to this. The Apostle John records these word of Jesus in John 15 ([READ John 15:1-5](#)). There are two ways set forth - abiding or not. One bears fruit. The other does not. What does it mean to abide? To learn from, lean upon, look to, rely on. Not occasionally but continually. Just as any fruit-bearing branch would with a vine in a vineyard.

Application:

I'm reminded of the words of B. B. Warfield who spoke of the immensity of the task before us and the infinitude of the resources at our disposal. "How does that tie in?" you ask. Think of vows we take - baptism, membership, marriage, and ordination. Think of the call to do justly, to love mercy, to walk humbly with our God. Or the Golden Rule, to do to others as you would have them do to you. My friends, if we are honest about what those things demand, they are too much. That's the immensity of the task - like jumping an ocean or lifting a mountain.

But there is with that the infinitude of the resources at our disposal. What is impossible for us is never so with the Lord. He's the vine. We have but to abide in Him. Mary is showing us here that it is right for us to say, "Let it be to me according to your word." She is blessed in her response of faith. And part of that involves taking the step, the way of active passivity.

CONCLUSION:

Back to where we started. It is always right to give praise where praise is due. We're getting close to July 4th and talk of the Founding Fathers. I read this piece recently ([READ](#)):

Most people know that Thomas Jefferson was the main writer of the [Declaration of Independence](#). What fewer people know is that he wanted nothing to do with writing it. He was chosen to draft the Declaration because he was a Virginian. Jefferson was reluctant, and thought John Adams was a better choice. Adams disagreed. [Here's what he had to say about Jefferson:](#)

"Mr. Jefferson came into Congress in June, 1775, and brought with him a reputation for literature, science, and a happy talent of composition. Writings of his were handed about, remarkable for the peculiar felicity of expression. Though a silent member in Congress, he was so prompt, frank, explicit, and decisive upon committees and in conversation - not even Samuel Adams was more so - that he soon seized upon my heart; and upon this occasion I gave him my vote, and did all in my power to procure the votes of others."

Adams publicly [sang](#) the praises of Jefferson and that vote of confidence led to the drafting of one of the most influential political treatises in western history.

It is always right to give praise where praise is due. Thinking of Mary, it is good and right that we think of her as the one through whom was fulfilled the promise to Eve of a Redeemer. It is good and right we think of her, the author of the Magnificat, as every bit the prophetic poet that we do David, the author of the Psalms. And it is good and right that we recognize that in many ways she is exemplar of faith in the New Testament, parallel to Abraham in the Old Testament.

None of that is to say that we are to worship her. Rather, we are to worship the God she worships. And we are to praise those He deems to be and clearly declares to be praiseworthy.

She is held forth as a model disciple. Blessed is Mary in how she responded to the Lord.

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