

Sermon Notes December 18, 2016 “Mary’s Peace” Luke 1:26-38

Nativity scenes. Have you ever looked at the expressions on the faces of the characters in the Nativity scene? They always look so peaceful. The songs that we sing all have this real serene feeling— All is calm, all is bright...The Lord Jesus no crying He makes.” We seem to think that way when we cut ourselves off from the real peace that Jesus comes to bring from the real story.

There’s one character in particular that we probably have not understood. And that’s Mary. Today we’re going to walk through her life and what she really went through. What does her life have to say to you and me about the peace of God that Jesus came to bring?

From the very beginning an angel comes to Mary and tells her she’s found favor with God, but then in Luke 1 it says: Mary was greatly troubled at the angel’s words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. Mary is totally unprepared. This much she does know. She is not married. She is not married and she is told she is going to get pregnant. She knows she is going to have to go to Joseph to whom she was engaged. Imagine this playing out in real life. Mary knew what happened to an adulteress in her day. She would become a public disgrace in the community at the very least.

When the angel spoke, there was a lot Mary didn’t understand. She did know that all her dreams of a normal, respectable, quiet life in a small town like Nazareth; all of those were gone in an instant. And yet, there’s this amazing response. *“I am the Lord’s servant. May it be to me according to your word.”* That response to God in her life is the foundation for whatever peace she would know the rest of her days. Whatever peace she would know would not come because her life was quiet or easy or pleasant or respectable—because it would be none of those things.

Who am I? I am the Lord’s servant. What do I choose? May it be to me according to Your Word. Your will be done. Before Jesus ever suffered for Mary, Mary suffered for Jesus. She was an amazing woman.

There is very interesting text. It's easy to miss if you don't know this. Luke 2: *All who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said... (regarding the good news, Savior, peace on earth.) All who heard it were amazed...But Mary treasured up all these things, pondered them in her heart.* (Luke 2:18-19)

Everybody was amazed. One person went further. One person “treasured and pondered” and that person was Mary. Treasuring and pondering were standard words in Judaism, technical terms to describe what happened when someone, particularly prophets, would figure out what God is up to in this world; so, that people could be called to respond, to take action. It required enormous spiritual sensitivity and then courage. Who is the one who pondered and treasured the way the prophets did? It's this little, illiterate peasant, impoverished, obscure, Jewish, peasant girl.

Everybody was amazed but Mary, the first one who figured out what God was up to in sending us a new King—not just a King—a King of Kings, King over Herod, King over Caesar Augustus.

Mary and Joseph take Jesus to the Temple to be dedicated, as Torah demanded. There's an old man named Simeon who takes the baby from Mary and Joseph. He is a devout man, very spiritual, and he prays. He lifts the Baby up and prays to God. But then old Simeon turns and speaks, not to Joseph, which in that culture anybody would have done. He speaks to Mary. He says these strange words: *This child is destined to cause the rising and falling of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against... And a sword will pierce your own soul too.*

Mary is told His glory will come through sorrow and suffering. He will be misunderstood. He will be opposed. There will be a sword. That means there will be a death. There will be great pain for Mary.

Jesus grows up. Somewhere along the line Joseph dies. Mary is a widow and has to raise a family—Jesus and His brothers, and His sisters—that we know about from the New Testament. He eventually leaves His mom. He leaves home. He begins His ministry. He is poor. It is difficult, but that's not the hardest part for Mary. The hardest part

is it doesn't look anything like what she expected it to look like. It doesn't look like "Son of God, Savior" bringing peace. It doesn't look like what they thought the Messiah would look like. The Messiah was supposed to purge Israel of sinners. Jesus is hanging out with them. Jesus is like eating with them. He's welcoming them into His community.

We don't often think about how this would have affected His family, but again, there are little clues in the New Testament. "*When His family heard about this, (His strange ministry, when they heard about it), they went to take charge of Him for they said He is out of His mind.*" (Mark 3:21)

We don't hear of her again in the ministry of Jesus until the very end. Jesus was betrayed, He is facing death, He is in the garden, He is agonizing before God. God is asking Him to suffer. It is the cross before Him. It is anguish that you and I cannot even imagine. Jesus prays and He asks to be spared from having to go through this suffering but then He prays & says, "*But Father, not my will. Yours be done.*" Jesus is saying in no uncertain terms: "*I am the Servant of the Lord. May it be to Me as You have said.*" The prayer that Mary prayed when His life began is the prayer that her Son prays when His life ends. In Mary, God had chosen exactly right.

When Jesus has been arrested, tried, convicted, beaten, hung on a cross, we are told, "*Near the cross of Jesus stood His mother...*" (John 19:25). She sees her son on the cross and she remembers that little Baby. She remembers Simeon saying to her, "*And a sword will pierce your heart.*" Now she knows. She watches her Son die.

We see her one more time. The Resurrection, which will one day come for all of Jesus' family, has begun in Jesus.

And then this new community—the Church—gets launched. We are told by Luke, "*They all joined together constantly in prayer, the Disciples, along with the women (one woman gets special mention) and Mary the Mother of Jesus and with His brothers.*" Notice, now His brothers come home too. Now they know. Peace on earth and that

peace comes in Jesus, the Prince of Peace. Jesus wins. Nothing, not Caesar, not Herod, not problems, not scandal, not gossip, not death itself can stop this peace, which all began for her so long ago with this dangerous prayer.