



13 December 2024

Christmas Faith

Twelve days until Christmas. For many people the excitement and joy are ramping up. For others, not, for a whole host of reasons.

The original Christmas displays many lessons for us not just to observe, but to learn and live. One of them is what I think of as *Christmas Faith*. We see this in Mary, whose circumstance were far from ideal.



- Mary came face to face with *shattered dreams*. She most likely was a teenager, engaged to Joseph. She certainly had dreams of what it would be like to go through the festive marriage celebration and then setting up her home, building her life with Joseph. All of those images were shattered when the angel told her she would give birth to the One who would rule on king David's throne forever. Her question, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" was just the tip of the iceberg of her dreams being shattered. The wagging tongues of scandal would hardly be conducive to celebrating.
- Mary and Joseph knew the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem, not their home town of Nazareth. Giving birth in *strange surroundings*, far from home and family and, apparently no close relatives to stay with. Again, this was not conducive to celebrating.
- When Mary and Joseph arrived in Bethlehem "there was no room for them in the inn." They had *scant quarters*, a shed or corral, and Jesus' crib was a manger, a feeding trough. *Scant indeed!* How do you celebrate there?
- Mary gave birth to Jesus, the Savior of the world, the King of kings. Yet there was only a *simple welcome* from some low class shepherds. No princes or other government officials, no religious leaders. What kind of celebration was that?

How did Mary handle all of this?

The first indication was in her question to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" It was not a protest, nor a rejection of what was humanly impossible, but she wondered, tried to

understand how this would take place. In God's grace and mercy, He had the angel explain that it would be accomplished by the work of the Holy Spirit.

Then when Mary went to visit her relative Elizabeth who was pregnant with a son we know as John the Baptist, God directed her to confirm to Mary that this was God's work and His blessing on her. Mary responded with "My soul exalts the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior" as she began a grand praise song of mighty God.

After Jesus was born, after the shepherds had come to see and worship Him, after all the amazement of the people who heard about it, how did Mary respond? We are not told much. We are told, "Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart."

Question: how could she, why was she able to respond to the shattered dreams, strange surroundings, scant quarters and simple welcome? In a word, *faith*. She declared that God was her Savior, and more than saying that, she lived by faith. Scripture tells us that faith in God is indispensable to pleasing God. Take note of just three Scriptures that tell us this.

- "But I have trusted in Your faithfulness [God]; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation", Psalm 13:5.
- "For You [God] make him blessed forever; You make him joyful with the joy of Your presence. For the king trusts in the LORD", Psalm 21:6-7.
- "For our heart rejoices in Him [God], because we trust in His holy name", Psalm 33:21.

Yes, faith, trusting God in the good and easy, the horrible and grueling times is required for experiencing God's joy, for it to be released in its fullness.

What's on your plate now in this Advent season? Whatever it is, whether much or little, trust God in it. Decide to, tell Him You are trusting Him to not only take you through it all, but to give you the fullness of His joy.

Pastor Lyle