

“In Those Days...It'll Be Worth It, After All”
Brother Marshall Crum
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“In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin’s name was Mary. And he came to her and said, “Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!” But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.” And Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?” And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.” And Mary said, “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her.” (Luke 1:26-38)

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John MacArthur once said that “[w]e’re not remembering what a man has done or what men have done, but what God has done. This is not a celebration of human history. This is not a recognition of human achievement. It is a recognition of a marvelous, miraculous, divine accomplishment. Christmas celebrates the most monumental event and the most monumental person in the history of the world. Christmas is all about the eternal, sovereign creator God of the universe coming to earth, coming into the earth of His creation as a human being to live among His creation as one of them...It says in verse 26, this angel named Gabriel was “sent from God.” Always Luke focuses on the divine aspect. The source of the message was God. This is really the key to the whole story. Luke is recording the truth about divine intervention.” Most, if not all, saints today don’t dispute MacArthur’s statement, but do we truly grasp the meaning of his statement? If so, how so? If not, why not?

Brother Marshall said that Mary laid down her wants, desires and dreams so that she can be committed to God and submitted to the will that God had for her in her life. Is that true of me as well, or are there some things in my life that I am holding on to?

What things have I not fully surrendered to Him and why?

How do I let go of “stuff” that hinders my commitment to His calling in my life?

Brother Marshall also pointed out that when Gabriel said that Mary is the “favored one” that he was saying that she was to be great, that she was the “empowered” one and then hypothesized that Mary’s attempt to “discern what sort of greeting this might be” centered around what it was that she was empowered to be. Do I consider myself to be one of His “favored” ones and if so, why?

Charles Spurgeon once said that “[t]here are times when, if I sit alone and think of the grace of God to me, the most undeserving of all his creatures, I am ready to laugh and cry at the same time for joy that ever the Lord should have looked in love and favor upon me.” (According to Promise, p. 10) When is the last time that I sat alone and thought (meditated) “of the grace of God to me...that ever the Lord should have looked in love and favor upon me” and if so, what did I learn from it?

If I am one of His “favored ones”, then what am I being empowered to be/empowered to do? Explain.

Brother Marshall reminded me that because Jesus was fully man and fully divine, He feels what I’m feeling when I’m tired, or depressed, or afraid, or hurting...He knows from first-hand experience what I’m going through, that (as Brother Marshall put it) “I can rest in His humanity, but I’m saved by His divinity”. In what way(s), if any, have I experienced being able to “rest in His humanity”?

How does my being “saved by His divinity” affect my day-to-day life emotionally, physically and spiritually?

He went on to say that Jesus was “anointed” (“set apart”, Webster, 1828 Dictionary) “to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” (Luke 4:18-19) For what have I been set apart (anointed) by God to do and how do I know?

Though Brother Marshall did not get a call back regarding his voicemail message seeking “helpful holiness” that he left for Luke, he pointed out that Luke’s text message said that I need to examine my heart when I pray. Zachariah sought proof when he doubted what Gabriel said would happen (Luke 1:18), but Mary sought clarification for her confusion (Luke 1:34). How much time do I spend in discerning why I want/need something as opposed to what it is I want/need before I go to God in prayer with it?

Scripture tells me that Mary was provided with a Helper and a Protector for her (Luke 1:35) knowing that Mary’s divine pregnancy would result in human (at least initially) condemnation/ social disgrace. What am I truly willing to endure in order to fully submit to God’s will or have I “modified” God’s will to minimize any possible embarrassment, ridicule, or harassment that might come my way as a result of my full submission and compliance with God’s will in my life? Explain.

Mary said “let it be to me according to your word.” (Luke 1:38) What is the “it” in my life that God is calling me to accomplish and does this response link with my previous answer to the question regarding what it is I’m being “empowered” to be or do?

Discuss Brother Marshall’s statement that in order for anything to be conceived in me by God, I must first be intimate with Him.

“There is greater grace here than at first meets the eye. It was no light matter to become the mother of our Lord in the unheard of and mysterious way. It brought with it, later on, great honor; but for the present it put Mary’s reputation at stake and was a great test of Mary’s faith. All this danger and trial the holy Virgin Mary was willing to risk. She asks no additional questions. She raises no further objections. She accepts the honor placed on her. She says, Here am I, the servant of the Lord (verse 38).” (The Classic Bible Commentary) There is a phrase in business, “paralysis by analysis” which says that progress is severely hampered by incessant questions and study. It’s reasonable to assume that Mary had a ton of questions and/or objections, but she decided to set them aside. How critical is her understanding of her position in all of this (“the servant of the Lord”) to her decision to not raise further questions and/or objections and accept what Gabriel said would come to pass and why?

Discuss Brother Marshall’s assertion that my faith must overshadow my fears...that God is faithful and if God said it, it’s going to happen.