

The Mary Miracle: Luke 1:26-38 (from The Message) In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to the Galilean village of Nazareth to a virgin engaged to be married to a man descended from David. His name was Joseph, and the virgin's name, Mary. Upon entering, Gabriel greeted her:

**“Good morning! You're beautiful with God's beauty,
Beautiful inside and out! God be with you.”**

She was thoroughly shaken, wondering what was behind a greeting like that. But the angel assured her, “Mary, you have nothing to fear. God has a surprise for you: You will become pregnant and give birth to a son and call his name Jesus.

**He will be great, be called ‘Son of the Highest’
The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David;
He will rule Jacob's house forever—
no end, ever, to his kingdom**

Mary said to the angel, “But how, I've never slept with a man.”

The angel answered:

**“The Holy Spirit will come upon you,
The power of the Highest hover over you;
Therefore, the child you bring to birth
Will be called Holy, Son of God.”**

“And did you know that your cousin Elizabeth conceived a son, old as she is? Everyone called her barren, and here she is six months pregnant! Nothing, you see, is impossible with God.”

**And Mary said,
Yes, I see it all now; I'm the Lord's maid, ready to serve.
Let it be with me just as you say.”**

This is the word of God for the people of God. Praise be to God.

WOW. Mary's response: “Let it be with me just as you say.”

We pray this morning: Lord, help us to claim that response as our own: “Let it be with me just as you say.”

I'd like to begin today with a few lines from the book, *The Mary Miracle* written by Jack Hayford. I read this book many years ago and it comes to mind most Christmases.

You'll know why it impacted me so. In the first chapter, the first three sentences:

“It started when Phil became pregnant. That's probably the moment God began to bring greatness out of the garbage.

Ted's pregnancy came full term when he decided to deal with the abortion he had financed in college for the coed he had been with.

Mine (Jack, the author) bega a car on the freeway—and God spoke.”

So, as you can see, it had my attention. When we speak of pregnancy we don't think of it in regards to men.

Today we can celebrate that each of us has experienced this being born again and what I want to call the “initial” Mary Miracle in our life. We refer to that experience in different ways: it is part of our baptism covenant being given new birth through water and the spirit; it is sometimes referred to as accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior, and there are other expressions. I’m talking about that time when we became aware of the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit inviting us into a personal relationship. And it turned out that it was not only a relationship with God but also with each other.

Nicodemus and Jesus had a conversation about this Mary Miracle. (John 3:1-6), Nicodemus came to Jesus in the night. Jesus told Nicodemus, “I tell you the truth, unless one is be born again, he cannot be in God’s kingdom. Nicodemus asked, “But if a person is already old, how can he be born again? He cannot enter his mother’s body again. So how can a person be born a second time? Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, unless one is born from water and the Spirit, he cannot enter God’s kingdom. Human life comes from human parents, but spiritual life comes from the Spirit.”

1 Cor 3:16, we read “Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? And again in 1 Cor 6:19: Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?”

In our scripture reading for today, Mary was told the spirit would come upon her, the power of the spirit would hover over her and she would conceive and give birth to the Christ child. We live in a time that the spirit has been poured out on all flesh and that Spirit dwells within each of us. It’s the same spirit that raised Christ from the dead, the same spirit that; the same spirit that hovered over the face of the waters in Genesis at the creation of our world. Can you fathom that? Do we really understand that—it screams to me of mystery, mystery, mystery! I have to set it aside.

As a mother who has given birth to 6 children, I’m fairly acquainted with the “pregnancy” process. The joy of knowing there is to be a life, the fun to telling others, the feeling life within, the waiting, the discomfort, and the fear of is everything going to be alright? And the realization as time gets close, this is going to hurt, yes, this is going to hurt!! All those experiences, emotions, physical feelings are part of this process. I think it is part of the spiritual process of God bringing forth the Mary Miracles in our life today. It is the birthing in and of the spiritual realm in all its fullness in our lives.

I remember the first time that my husband was in the delivery room with me. I’m of an age that that wasn’t an option when my first children were born. He was so upset because of my discomfort and he was trying to make it better for me, I finally had to call the nurse and get him out of there. He was not helping. This too may be part of

our processes as we are in relationship with others who are experiencing Mary Miracles in their lives. We are called to come along side and love and support others.

I have lived (as much as I hate the term) a very dysfunctional life. I had two failed marriages; I was the mother of two little boys when a Mary Miracle happened in my life. My cousin arranged a blind date for me. Six months later we were married, his first, and my third. Fast forward 6 years, a most significant Mary Miracle happened, God scooped us up and set us on His path to journey in relationship and participation with Him.

There followed many Mary Miracles, some big, some small. Some mountain top epiphanies, some kicking and screaming I don't want to go there. In the beginning, God was wooing me. It was so grand to be in love with Jesus, this new life, this Mary Miracle was so joyous, so life giving. And as I grew in this life and wasn't very mature, I became self righteous and became judgmental. What happened to that wonderful unconditional love that was such a part of me?

Our physical being grows through those terrible two's and those trying teenage years, I think spiritually we grow in similar ways. As the Mary Miracles are birthed in our lives, there is a maturing process. All living things go through that, we see it all around us. We, too, need to mature spiritually. That's the hard one and we find ourselves at different levels, in different areas at different times.

Another part of the Christmas story that I want to bring in is the wise men's journey following the star. There was a chapter in another book I read about the same time as The Mary Miracle that posed the question: What do you do when you've been following a star and it leads you to a stable? What happens when all of a sudden, after thinking that something grand and glorious would be at the other end, you end up in the backyard of a barn?

Oh my husband and I were following the star and it was good. We added 4 more children in the mix, another three boys and one girl. We were enjoying a precious closeness with God and experiencing His presence in our lives. Life was good even with the pruning and trimming of the Holy Spirit. And then we ended up in the barnyard. After about 24 years of marriage, about 18 years of journeying with God, my husband was diagnosed with cancer. And 3 years later, he was gone.

And as others of you have experienced similar situations or other hard situations in general, life goes on. We go whether we want to go or not. But the Mary Miracles do not end because we find ourselves in the barnyard. I've heard it said that the stuff in the barn yard is good fertilizer for growing things. I'm sure the same is true spiritually.

Philippians has something to say about Mary Miracles: **Phil 1:6 He who began a good work in you will complete it. Contemporary English Version: "God is the**

one who began this good work in you, and I am certain that he won't stop before it is complete on the day that Christ Jesus returns." Message: from verses 3: "Every time you cross my mind, I break out in exclamations of thanks to God. Each exclamation is a trigger to prayer. I find myself praying for you with a glad heart. I am so pleased that you have continued on in this with us, believing and proclaiming God's Message, from the day you heard it right up to the present. There has never been the slightest doubt in my mind that the God who started this great work in you would keep at it and bring it to a flourishing finish on the very day Christ Jesus appears."

I love that Song: Mary Did You Know?

In that vain, People did you know that the wounds, the struggles, the despairs that you met at the stable, in that barn yard, or along the journey, would one day be healed, or maybe they would cause a much needed growth, or be a point of ministry to others? Oh, people did you know, did you know...Jesus promised that those grieving would be comforted, those who hungered for righteousness would be filled, the merciful would be shown mercy, and the meek would inherit the earth.

I believe we all have many Mary Miracles ahead.

The Mary Miracles in our lives would cause us to love the Lord, our God with all our hearts, souls, minds, and strength and love our neighbors as ourselves. And they would mature us so we would treat others as we wish to be treated, and they would cause us to die to ourselves, our egos, our selfish ways, and extend the selfless love of God to those around us all because of Mary's Baby Boy.

Communion:

A Mary Miracle is hearing the Lord's invitation to sup at His table and being able to come open hearted with this prayer on our lips: **Let it be with me just as you say.** We partake of the communion elements this morning remembering Christ Jesus as He instructed us. His body broken and His blood poured out that we might be partakers in His resurrected life in the celebration of the many Mary Miracles that have graced our lives. Amen