

HOW TO PREPARE MY HEART FOR THE KING

Part one

Luke 1:26-38

The Christmas story

Shepherd > all people

Magi > every nation, tribe, and tongue

Herod > strife and suffering

This morning I want to focus on a teenage girl, living in the little Galilean village of Nazareth. Think about this for minute. God is sending his eternal son into the world to become a human being and announce God's plan for restoring the entire creation. He doesn't start in Rome, or any the capitols of the great Eastern civilization, he doesn't even go to Jerusalem, but he chooses Nazareth. There were few places in the world of less significance than the village of Nazareth.

Not only does God start in Nazareth but he begins preparing his entrance into humanity with one of the most insignificant places, but he begins by sending a heavenly messenger to one of the most insignificant people in the insignificant village. The ancient world, even Israel, was extremely misogynistic. Women were valued only slightly more than livestock. There were only two things that gave woman any significant status at all in the culture, marriage and children. Mary was engaged but not married and had no children.

God to Samuel ***"People judge by outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart."***

Contrast between Mary and Zechariah

The condition of our heart has nothing to do with age, education, position, it is defined by our willingness to submit to the King.

“Let earth receive her King. Let every heart prepare Him room.”

Last week Darby talked about Mary, the sister of Lazarus and Martha. She sets an example of someone who was making room in heart for Jesus. She chooses to sit at the feet of Jesus. Then later her love for Jesus leads her to sacrifice perfume worth a year’s wages and wipe his feet with her hair.

This message it isn’t really about the mother of Jesus it is about us, you and me and the condition of our heart. How should we be preparing our heart for Jesus to live in this next year?

Mary has a heart of submission to God.

Luke 1:26–38 (NLT) — 26 In the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a village in Galilee, 27 to a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David. 28 Gabriel appeared to her and said, “Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you!” 29 Confused and disturbed, Mary tried to think what the angel could mean. 30 “Don’t be afraid, Mary,” the angel told her, “for you have found favor with God! 31 You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. 32 He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. 33 And he will reign over Israel forever; his Kingdom will never end!” 34 Mary asked the angel, “But how can this happen? I am a virgin.” 35 The angel replied, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the baby to be born will be holy, and he will be called the Son of God. 36 What’s more, your relative Elizabeth has become pregnant in her old age! People used to say she was barren, but she has conceived a son and is now in her sixth month. 37 For the word of God will never fail.” 38 Mary responded, “I am the Lord’s servant. May everything you have said about me come true.” And then the angel left her.

This is an incredible announcement, but Mary doesn’t hesitate **“I am the Lord’s Servant.”**

To submit to someone, we must let go of our desires, plans, hopes, to embrace their desires, plans, and hopes.

Mark 8:34 (NLT) — 34 Then, calling the crowd to join his disciples, he said, “If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me.

Matthew 6:33 (NLT) — 33 Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.

Matthew 6:33 (The Message) — 33 Steep your life in God-reality, God-initiative, God-provisions. Don't worry about missing out. You'll find all your everyday human concerns will be met.

This is what Mary at her very young age was already doing that is the only way she would have said yes to God about this mission that had such potentially significant consequences. In the Law of Moses, an unmarried woman, who was pregnant was to be stoned to death. That was seldom the case in Mary's day but that did not mean the consequences were not severe. She would almost certainly have never married, it would also affect the marriage prospects of any unmarried siblings. If he had chosen to do so Joseph could have extracted significant financial penalties from Mary's father. If Mary's father had expelled her from his home, common response in the situation, Mary would have only two options, begging or prostitution. Mary was surrendering her entire future when she said yes, to God. I suspect that to some degree Mary had already offered her, desires, hopes, and dreams to God, or she could not have respond to the angel so calmly.

Mary disturbs me because I want to be like this. I want my life to be so steeped in God-reality, God-initiative, God provision, that I would immediately say yes to God, no matter what. I'm working on it, I'm making progress but Mary was there as a teenager.

One of the things that helps us get there is practicing, surrendering to God, letting go, moving things out of our heart, our affections, to make more room for Jesus.

This is not about sacrifice. Sacrifice is about deprivation and denial. Surrender is about receiving.

Surrender is not sacrifice.

It was Halloween, my daughter Christy was about 5 and her best friend was a girl whose family were recent immigrants. We were planning to take our kids trick-or-treating around an apartment complex. Christy's friend's family had asked to join us. Christy's friend had a little brother who was about two. He was riding on his Dad's shoulders. We got to the first door and all the kids got candy. The little brother was thrilled and held his candy in his hand and refused to put it in the bag. We arrived at the next door, candy was deposited in each child's bag, but little brother wanted his candy in his other hand. We arrived at the third door. When little brother was offered a piece of candy, he looked at one hand and then the other hand and screamed like someone was cutting off his arm. His parents again pleaded with him to put his candy in the bag, but he kept gripping it and screaming. After the fifth door Dad took him home. How sad. This little guy had a large apartment complex full of people who wanted to give him candy but he did not get any of it because he would not let go of what he had.

Philippians 3:5–9 (NLT) — 5 I was circumcised when I was eight days old. I am a pure-blooded citizen of Israel and a member of the tribe of Benjamin—a real Hebrew if there ever was one! I was a member of the Pharisees, who demand the strictest obedience to the Jewish law. 6 I was so zealous that I harshly persecuted the church. And as for righteousness, I obeyed the law without fault. 7 I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done. 8 Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.

For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ and become one with him. I no longer count on my own righteousness through obeying the law; rather, I become righteous through faith in Christ. For God's way of making us right with himself depends on faith.

Paul surrendered his pride, his reputation, his position, to know Christ. Paul did not have an easy life after he began following Christ, yet he never regretted letting go of what he had, to receive what Christ wanted to give him. This idea of preparing room in our hearts for Jesus is something that we never finish doing. Jesus wants to continue expanding his presence in our hearts so there is nothing left but him. So, no matter how long we have been following Jesus, we are still needing to surrender things, let go of them, to make more room for Jesus.

What are you holding on to that you need to let go of so that there will be more room for Jesus in your heart. Our first thought might be that we need to realize a possession, or some pleasure we enjoy and that is possible but those aren't they kind of things that most fill our hearts. Paul had to release his pride, his position, his ambitions. We might need to release bitterness, or fear.

We are never done preparing room in our heart because Jesus wants to expand his space in our hearts.

Submission requires trust. When Mary said, "I am the Lord's servant. May everything you have said about me come true." She was putting herself in a situation where she had to trust God to control the circumstances. She was going to be obviously pregnant in a few months. She had no control over how her father would respond to the situation? She had no control how Joseph would respond to the situation? She did not know where she would live or how she would provide for her self and the child. When she surrendered her hopes, and dreams she was trusting in the goodness and faithfulness of God. Even as a woman she would have been steeped in the OT. She

would have known of all the times that God had miraculously meet the needs of those who trusted him.

Do you see how letting go of what we want and trusting God work together? The problem the little trick-or-treater on his Dad's shoulders had was really a problem with trust. Trust, that if he let go of the candy he would get more later.

Most Christians do not trust God.

We believe the Bible is true, we believe that Jesus rose from the dead, we are pretty sure that our sins have been forgiven, we are pretty sure that we will spend eternity with God. Yet, we do not really believe that God is able to work powerfully, in and through are lives, right now. We do not really believe that God is able to meet our needs. Because we do not really trust God, we only want to give him a little space in our hearts.

Ephesians 1:18–23 (NLT) — 18 I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the confident hope he has given to those he called—his holy people who are his rich and glorious inheritance. 19 I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power 20 that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms. 21 Now he is far above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else—not only in this world but also in the world to come. 22 God has put all things under the authority of Christ and has made him head over all things for the benefit of the church. 23 And the church is his body; it is made full and complete by Christ, who fills all things everywhere with himself.

Notice that Paul does not ask God to give these believers power, he asks for them to understand the power that they have already been given. Christian often ask God to give us power but when Christ rose from the dead, and took his place of authority we were given more power than we can imagine.

Paul gets side track and doesn't finish telling them about his prayer until chapter 3.

Ephesians 3:14–20 (NLT) — 14 When I think of all this, I fall to my knees and pray to the Father, **15** the Creator of everything in heaven and on earth. **16** I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit. **17** Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong. **18** And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. **19** May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God. **20** Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think.

Do you see how the two halves of Paul's prayer connect? Paul wants them to experience God's power in their lives, but they will never experience his power unless they trust him, so he prays that they will understand the depth of God's love.

Do you want to prepare more room in your heart for Jesus this year? Then you need to ask God what you need to release, and you need to ask what he wants to do in your life this year.

Questions for reflection:

- 1) How are you making room in your heart for Jesus?**
- 2) What is one thing you want to let go of this year, so you can have more of Jesus?**
- 3) What is one thing that you want to trust God to do in your life this year?**