

December 18, 2011
The Type Of Person God Can Use
A Christmas Sermon
Luke 1:39-55
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Did you ever wonder why God chose Mary to be the mother of Jesus? Out of all the young women of the world, why did God choose Mary? God needed someone to birth Jesus, but why Mary? That's what I'd like us to look at today. What is the type of person God uses to carry out His plan in the world? I want to tell you right up front, there is nothing more rewarding than to be used by God to bless someone else's life. There is nothing more fulfilling than to be used by God; to know that God is using you to bring about His plan in the world. Let's look together at Mary.

There are a lot of misconceptions about Mary. Nowhere in the Bible does it say we are to worship her. Nowhere in the Bible does it say we are to pray to her. Nowhere in the Bible does it say that Mary was sinless or perfect. Nowhere in the Bible does it elevate Mary onto the same level as the supernatural. In fact, what was so amazing about Mary was that she was so ordinary - just a humble, modest Jewish girl. So why did God choose her to be the mother of the Savior of the world?

It certainly wasn't because of her education, because she didn't have any. It wasn't because of her wealth, because she didn't have any of that either. It wasn't because of her maturity and wisdom, because she was just a teenager. So why did God choose Mary? Well, it was because she trusted God. She believed what God promised and she trusted in the power of God to bring it about. Now that doesn't mean Mary wasn't afraid. She was terrified; she had all kinds of fears. But she didn't let her fears keep her from trusting God.

Mary modeled three things for us that enabled God to use her. If we do these three things then God will be able to use us, too, to fulfill His plan in the world. If we follow Mary's example, God will be able to use us in His awesome plan of redeeming the world through Christ.

In Luke, chapter one we read that *"God sent the angel Gabriel... to a virgin... whose name was Mary. ...The angel went to her and said, 'Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.'*" (Luke 1:26-27) How does Mary respond? It says she was "greatly troubled." She was terrified. She was full of fear. God was calling her to be used for His purpose in the world and it was scary for her. For one thing, she didn't feel safe in the angel's presence. This supernatural being freaked her right out. She had a **fear of the supernatural**.

Mary was also afraid of what the angel had to say. What would her family and friends say about her being pregnant without being married. That was a very big deal back then. The other day I looked in the newspaper at the birth announcements and out of the eight couples who had just delivered, only four of them were married. That's amazing. That certainly wasn't the way it was in Mary's culture. In Mary's culture, it was a crime punishable by stoning to death if you were pregnant without being married. Mary struggled with the **fear of criticism**.

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I imagine Mary also had a fear of inadequacy. She must have wondered if she could cope with what the angel told her. How could she handle being the mother of God? Imagine being asked to be the mother of the eternal Son of God.

I bet Mary was afraid of how this would change her life. It's only human to fear change and Mary must have been terrified as she thought about what the angel told her was going to happen and how that would change her life. A fear of change flooded into her mind as she heard the words of the angel.

But Mary didn't let her fear of the supernatural, her fear of criticism, her fear of inadequacy or her fear of change stop her from being used by God. These same fears keep us from being used by God. They hold us back from being used by God. These same fears keep us from surrendering to God and experiencing the tremendous joy that comes from being used by God for His plan and purpose in the world. It is fear that paralyzes individuals and even churches from being used by God for His purposes.

Mary teaches us much about **THE TYPE OF PERSON GOD CAN USE.**

FIRST, GOD USES PEOPLE WHO DESIRE TO DO HIS WILL. If you want God to use you, you've got to desire to do His will more than anything else. You've got to want God's plan more than your own plan. God has an individual plan for your life. He made you for a purpose, but you could miss out on fulfilling that purpose. You could waste your life by squandering it away on things that don't really matter, on things that don't have any lasting value - any eternal significance. God uses people who desire to do His will above their own.

One day an angel showed up to Mary and told her, **"Mary, God's got this fantastic plan for your life. He's going to send the Messiah into the world through your body, so all people everywhere may know what God is really like and how much He loves them."** How does Mary respond? Does she let her fears get in the way? Does she let her fears hold her back? No! Listen to Mary's response. She says to the angel, ***"My soul praises the Lord, my heart rejoices in God my Savior, because he has shown his concern for his humble servant girl."*** (Luke 1:46-48) Mary didn't say, **"I'm too afraid. Find somebody else."** She didn't say, **"I don't have the time"** or **"I'm too busy"** or **"I don't know how to do that"** or **"I don't have the energy for that"** or **"I don't like doing things like that, or even, I've already put in my time. Ask someone else."** She didn't offer any excuses, she simply believed God and surrendered her life to Him.

God uses people who want to be used by Him. Do you want God to use you? If you do then there are two attitudes you'll need to cultivate in your life. If you really want your life to count for God then you'll need to cultivate these two attitudes in your life. Mary had them and that's why God could use her.

The first is the attitude of enthusiasm. Mary was enthusiastic about serving God. She didn't focus on the pain and suffering that would be involved. She didn't focus on how difficult it would be. She didn't look at the negatives, she didn't find fault with the plan, she didn't stew or fret over it; she simply praised God for choosing to include her in His plan. With enthusiasm

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she rejoiced over what God was going to accomplish through her. She was eager to be used by God to accomplish His plan. Nothing great is ever done half-heartedly or without enthusiasm. The word enthusiasm actually comes from two root words, "en" meaning "in" and "theos" meaning "God". When you get in to God more than you're in to yourself, you won't be able to hide your enthusiasm. Mary was totally in to God and in to doing His will.

The second attitude you'll need if you want to be used by God is the attitude of humility. Mary clearly possessed the attitude of humility. She didn't say to the angel, **"Yea, I knew God was going to choose me. I'm the obvious choice from among all the eligible young virgins who will be in Bethlehem nine months from now. I deserve to be chosen to be the mother of God."** No, that's not how Mary responded. Mary was completely humble about the whole thing. If God is going to be able to use you, you are going to have to **FIRST - DESIRE TO DO HIS WILL with an ATTITUDE OF ENTHUSIASM AND HUMILITY.** You must be like the Psalmist, who said, ***"I desire to do your will, O my God."*** (Psalm 48:8) Or like Paul, who said, ***"My only goal is to please God."*** (2nd Corinthians 5:9)

Mary was eager to please God - eager to please Him and do His will. She asked, **"What can I do to help you, Lord?"** I love people who ask that question. They're willing to serve in whatever way they're needed. That's a sure sign of someone who has a servant's heart - a heart of Jesus. Mary was like Isaiah who said, ***"Here am I, Lord. Send me."*** (Isaiah 6:8) Mary was enthusiastic and yet humble. She held everything quietly in her heart. She didn't go out and brag about it.

What do you desire most in your life? If you want God to really use you then you'll have to desire His will more than your own.

SECOND, GOD USES PEOPLE WHO DECIDE TO PAY THE COST. There is always a cost involved in following Christ. There is always a sacrifice to be made. You'll have to give up some stuff to be used by God. You'll have to take risks. There are always risks and obstacles to overcome when you are being used by God, things that require you to exercise faith. You'll be asked to step out of your comfort zone and do some things you've never done before. That's called stepping out in faith. Mary responded to the angel's message saying, ***"I am the Lord's servant, and I am willing to do whatever He wants. May everything you said come true."*** (Luke 1:38) Have you ever told God that you're willing to do **WHATEVER** He wants you to do? That's what you do when you decide to pay the cost in order to be used by God. Mary was willing to pay the cost and God used her in a mighty way. She was willing to risk everything to be used by God.

Several years ago when my oldest daughter was in ninth grade, she got it into her head that God wanted her to go to Africa to share Christ with the people of Zimbabwe through Teen Mania Missions. I tried to convince her that it was too risky. She could get killed or end up with the AIDES virus. But Katie was convinced God wanted to use her in Zimbabwe. She was willing to pay the cost. I couldn't change her mind. Instead, she changed my mind by raising all the money she needed to pay for her trip and so I let her go. She was gone for two months. I cried myself to sleep every night for the first month. God used Katie in an amazing way

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because she was willing to pay the cost, whatever it may be, for the opportunity to share Christ with people on the other side of the world. God is still using Katie in amazing ways because of her willingness to pay the cost for the privilege of serving Him. She's a youth pastor now in a large Presbyterian Church near Atlanta. She has over a hundred kids in your youth program.

What are you willing to give up in order to be used by God? Maybe you have some bad habits that hold you back from being used by God. Maybe you waste a lot of time doing things that aren't good for you. Maybe you've got some relationships, some friendships, that aren't good for you - they're pulling you away from God rather than helping you grow closer to God. Maybe you have some dreams and aspirations that keep you from seeing how God wants to use you.

If you want to be used by God and make a real eternal difference with your life, and experience the awesome joy of fulfilling God's purpose for your life, then you've got to be willing to pay the cost. The really cool thing about being willing to pay the cost is that God is going to help you do it.

The FIRST thing is to desire to do God's will above your own. The SECOND thing is to decide to pay the cost to be used by God. There's one more thing we learn from Mary.

THIRD, GOD USES PEOPLE WHO DARE TO TRUST HIS PROMISES. It takes courage to be used by God. That doesn't mean you're not afraid. Courage isn't the absence of fear. Courage is moving ahead in spite of your fear. It's facing your fears for the greater reward of being used by God to accomplish His purpose in the world.

Mary was a woman of deep faith. She dared to trust the promises of God. That doesn't mean she didn't have questions. Mary had questions. It says, "*She asked the angel, 'How can this be? I am a virgin.'* *The angel replied, 'The Holy Spirit shall come upon you, and the power of God shall overshadow you. For nothing is impossible for God.'*" (Luke 1:34-35, 37) Mary dared to believe in the promise of God and she surrendered to the power of the Holy Spirit.

Do you ever wonder why God doesn't do more miracles in your life? Why you aren't seeing God using you? Just maybe it's because you don't really trust Him to do what He says He's going to do.

Mary was frightened, but she dared to trust God's promises. Instead of worrying about what the angel told her, Mary surrendered to God's will and immediately she was filled with joy and began to worship God. She sang a song of praise, "*My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has taken notice of my humble heart and my eagerness to be His servant.*" (Luke 1:46-48) God always notices us. He is completely and totally aware of everything we do and think. But whether He can use us has to do with our desire to do His will, our humbleness, our eagerness to do His will, our willingness to pay the cost and willingness to trust God's promises.