

God's Message to Mary: *Prepare to Be God's Instrument*

Sunday Morning, December 4, 2005
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Luke 1:26-38, 46-56

A couple of years ago I attended a men's retreat in Richwoods, Missouri and decided to go horseback riding. I got on a horse that had a mind of its own (and it was my first time). I did okay and got control of the animal but it kept jerking its head downward. Once, going up a steep, rocky path, the horse jerked the reins right out of my hand and I was no longer in control. The horse knew it immediately and began to climb through a thicket with me. Thankfully a guy in our group gave me the reins back and they all had a good laugh.

We're all a little bit like that horse, we want to be in control of life. We want to hold the reins. We do this with God too. We want to call the shots and decide how God will use us. As a matter of fact, we often **use God** instead of letting **Him use us**. The result is **shallow** Christian living. It's not much of an adventure when we set limits on what God can do with us.

Luke records for us the example of Mary who decided to let God use her instead of just using Him. She was fully open to Him and became an instrument in His hands. Before we understand how, let me clear up some confusion about Mary.

An Overemphasized Mary

Some segments of faith attempt to overemphasize Mary's role in the world. She gets more attention than Jesus and is even called by many as "mother of God" or worse, "co-redeemer." She is none of the like. She was just a woman saved by grace. She wasn't virgin born and she died a death just like any other human being.

An Underemphasized Mary

Many, perhaps in reaction to the overemphasized Mary, tend to underemphasize her role and leave her out of the gospel story all together. There is a balance. Mary was a godly young woman, a teenager without a clue but ready for God's assigned adventure.

WHEN GOD USES AN INSTRUMENT...

1. God uses people only by His grace. (vs. 28-30)

Numerous times in this passage, the angel says that Mary is the object of God's "favor." That word refers to His gracious choosing of an instrument. Mary was a sinner, saved by grace.

"But we have this treasure (the gospel) in earthen vessels (clay pots), that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." -2 Corinthians 4:7

When we testify of God's grace, we're giving Him the glory and letting people see Him as pre-eminent and not us.

2. God uses people who are available.

I love what Howard Hendricks says about being used of God. He says we must be "FAT."

How to be FAT for God...

Faithful
Available
Teachable

Looking at Mary's example, she was certainly all of these qualities. She was "faithful" in being ready to take up the assignment. The Bible points out three times in this passage that she was a virgin. On the theological side, this was to testify to the impeccability of Jesus' divine nature. On the practical side, it lets us know that Mary was ready for her particular assignment.

She was also available. When God spoke, she didn't say "no" and she didn't demand more evidence. She was simply ready for the assignment.

And Mary was teachable. Do you notice how quietly and obediently she listens to the Lord's messenger? She asks how it will all happen but she does not interject her own opinion of things. She simply lets God have His way.

Are you ready to be FAT for God?

3. **God uses people in His own power. (vs. 35-37)**

Mary asks how the miraculous birth of Jesus is supposed to occur. A natural question considering her virginity. God's answer is clear:

- The Holy Ghost will accomplish it supernaturally.
- The power of God will overcome the laws of nature.
- All the world will testify of God's power.

Then the messenger gives Mary the testimony of what has happened in Elisabeth's life. She too has experienced a miracle by the power of God.

Remember that verse from earlier?

"But we have this treasure (the gospel) in earthen vessels (clay pots), that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." -2 Corinthians 4:7

If you're wondering how it is that God is supposed to use you, just remember what Jesus said to His disciples...

"I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing." -John 15:5

4. **God uses people for His own purpose.**

God always has His own reasons for using people. He is never obligated to tell us His purposes and His purposes are sometimes past finding out. He just thinks differently. But we do get an insight into two of God's greatest purposes as they are revealed to Mary...

- God used Mary to birth Jesus to save others. (vs. 31-33)

Why Mary? Who knows but God. What we do know is that God selected her for the purpose of being the incubator for the Messiah so that all the world could trust Him and be saved. God does things in our lives as well so that others might be saved.

- God used Mary so He would receive the glory. (vs. 46-56)

Mary issues what is called *The Magnificat*. It is her song of praise to God. The first stanza gives God all the glory for saving her and using her. The remainder of the song gives glory to God for coming to the rescue of His people.

Are you ready to be used by God today? You first need an experience of His grace! You need to receive His forgiveness and be saved.