

Luke 1:26-38

Introduction: Mary was the one person on earth closer to Jesus than anybody else. She knew Jesus in a way that nobody else ever has or ever will know Him---not just as Savior, but as her son, not just as almighty God, but as the helpless baby she held in her arms. She was probably a teenager when she gave birth to the Lord, but she showed a wisdom, maturity, and love that many older people never attain. Some overestimate the importance of Mary, lifting her up almost equal with God. But I think Protestants sometimes underestimate the importance of Jesus' mother as a model for how God works in the life of ordinary people just like you and me.

The Three "C's" of Mary:

Her Character. NO MATTER WHO YOU ARE, THE LORD CAN USE YOU (vv. 26-27). Do you remember the last time you filled out a job application? You have to give them all your vital statistics, summarize your background, your education, your experience. Many of them now ask that all important question: what is it that makes you uniquely qualified for this position? How do you answer that question without coming off as a snob? Employers assume your availability, but what they really want to discover is your liabilities (things that would make you unsuited for the job) and your usability- what skills, talents will help you do the job. But God doesn't operate this way. Mary was an ordinary woman. Nowhere in the Bible do we read that there was something about Mary. Here are three things we know about Mary. First she a young woman. In those days it as customary for a young woman to become engaged at 12-13. This would help ensure her being a virgin at the time of marriage. Secondly we know that she was poor. We read in Luke 2:22-24 that when Jesus was taken to the Temple to be circumcised they brought two doves for the offering. The Law said if you were able to, you needed to bring a lamb for the sacrifice, but it did permit if you didn't have the money that you could bring two doves. Thirdly, we know that Mary was from Nazareth. Now that may not sound like a big deal, but do you remember how Nathanael reacted when Philip told him that they found the Messiah and his name was Jesus of Nazareth? Nathanael responded, "can anything good come from Nazareth?" So Mary was young, poor, and apparently from the wrong side of the tracks. These are things that many times make us think we are unusable by God. Maybe you think you are too young to be used by God or you don't have enough money, or maybe you think your past makes you ineligible to be used by God in the future, but Mary being used proves none of this is true.

Some people think they are too small or insignificant to be used by God, but I want you to think about it this way. If you think you are too small to be effective, you have never been in bed with a mosquito. The great thing about God is He is great so we don't have to be.

Her Calling. Mary was chosen by God (vv. 28-30). Notice Mary is called "highly favored" which means she has found grace in the eyes of God. This is similar to where it says that Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord in Genesis 6:8. That is repeated in verse 30 where Gabriel says "you have found favor with God." Gabriel also tells Mary that she is "blessed among women." This is often taken out of context. It was not Gabriel elevating Mary above other women, it was actually a prophecy that Mary would be blessed by women because she was carrying the Messiah and it was fulfilled by her cousin Elizabeth in Luke 1:42. God had chosen Mary for a special purpose. We don't know why God chose Mary out of all of the other virgins in the land. It simply goes back to the fact that if we God can and will use those He wants, when He wants, and how He wants. Which leads to the final point this morning, how we can be used by God.

Her Characteristic. Mary was pure (vv. 34). While it is true that God chooses whom He will use, how He will use them, and when He will use them we must understand that God is looking for specific qualities in people. The first quality God looks for is a transformed life. Paul wrote in Romans 12:1-2, "Therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies a living sacrifice holy and pleasing to the Lord which is your reasonable service, and do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." God uses those whom He has saved by His grace. Not only does God look for a person who is saved, but even more so He looks for a person who is living a holy life. God did command us in the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament to be holy because He is holy. We are to live a pure life that is honoring and pleasing to God. One final quality God looks for in a person is a surrendered life. Luke 9:23 reminds us, "If anyone desires to come after Me let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow Me." God looks for the person who says "here am I Lord, send me." He looks for the person who sincerely prays and lives "not my will, but Your will be done." Is that you, are you living a surrendered life and a sanctified life?