

## Mary Was a Woman of Great Faith

Message 3 of 6 in the series: "Hidden Gems: Things You've Never Noticed About Christmas"

### A. The Creator God of the universe often does things in ways we don't understand and can't explain.

"Oh, how great are God's riches and wisdom and knowledge! **How impossible it is for us to understand his decisions and his ways!**" Romans 11:33 (NLT)

1. God's thinking is beyond our comprehension. We can't understand God's thoughts and His ways without His help. "My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts," says the Lord. **'And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine.** For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts.'" Isaiah 55:8-9 (NLT)
2. Because our intelligence is so limited, we need to accept what God has revealed to us by faith. **"And it is impossible to please God without faith.** Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him." Hebrews 11:6 (NLT)

### B. When the angel Gabriel informed Mary that she would miraculously become the mother of Jesus, Mary showed herself to be a woman of great faith.

"In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a village in Galilee, to a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David. Gabriel appeared to her and said, 'Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you!' Confused and disturbed, Mary tried to think what the angel could mean. 'Don't be afraid, Mary,' the angel told her, 'for you have found favor with God! You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. 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. And he will reign over Israel forever; his Kingdom will never end!' **Mary asked the angel, 'But how can this happen? I am a virgin.'** 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. 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. **For the word of God will never fail.**' Mary responded, **'I am the Lord's servant. May everything you have said about me come true.'** And then the angel left her." Luke 1:26-38 (NLT)

**IMPORTANT!** It is right and good to seek understanding from God about what He wants us to do. **"If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you.** He will not rebuke you for asking." James 1:5 (NLT) But it is sinful and wrong to doubt God once He's made it clear what we need to do. **"But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt,** because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. **Such a person is double-minded** and unstable in all they do." James 1:6-8 (NIV) This is the big difference between Mary's question to Gabriel about the miraculous birth of Jesus and Zechariah's question to Gabriel about the miraculous birth of John the Baptist. "Zechariah said to the angel, **'How can I be sure this will happen? I'm an old man now, and my wife is also well along in years.'**" Luke 1:18 (NLT)

1. It took great faith for Mary to become the mother of Jesus because the OT punishment for being sexually active before marriage (everyone must have assumed this about Mary) was death by stoning. "The woman must be taken to the door of her father's home, and there the men of the town must stone her to death, for **she has committed a disgraceful crime in Israel by being promiscuous** while living in her parents' home. In this way, you will purge this evil from among you." Deuteronomy 22:21 (NLT) Even though Joseph married her, Mary still lost her reputation, social standing, dreams, and plans.

**IMPORTANT!** Mary viewed any sacrifices God asked her to make as worth it because she regarded herself as the Lord's servant. This gave Mary an eternal perspective that made her sacrifices seem small and her troubles seem short-lived. The Apostle Paul had this same perspective, and so should we. "You see, we don't go around preaching about ourselves. **We preach that Jesus Christ is Lord, and we ourselves are your servants for Jesus' sake...** That is why we never give up. Though our bodies are dying, our spirits are being renewed every day. **For our present troubles are small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever!** So we don't look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever." 2 Corinthians 4:5 & 16-18 (NLT)

2. It took great faith for Mary to become the mother of Jesus because she had no idea how everything was going to turn out. “Sovereign Lord, now let your servant die in peace, as you have promised. I have seen your salvation, which you have prepared for all people. He is a light to reveal God to the nations, and he is the glory of your people Israel!’ **Jesus’ parents were amazed at what was being said about him.**” Luke 2:29-33 (NLT)

**IMPORTANT!** Living by faith means trusting God to provide the guidance/protection/resources/help we need as we follow His calling. “It was by faith that Abraham obeyed when God called him to leave home and go to another land that God would give him as his inheritance. **He went without knowing where he was going.**” Hebrews 11:8 (NLT)

**C. When Mary went to stay with her relative Elizabeth, she praised God for choosing an undeserving nobody like her to be the mother of the Messiah.**

“A few days later Mary hurried to the hill country of Judea, to the town where Zechariah lived. She entered the house and greeted Elizabeth. At the sound of Mary’s greeting, Elizabeth’s child leaped within her, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Elizabeth gave a glad cry and exclaimed to Mary, ‘God has blessed you above all women, and your child is blessed. Why am I so honored, that the mother of my Lord should visit me? When I heard your greeting, the baby in my womb jumped for joy. **You are blessed because you believed that the Lord would do what he said.**’ Mary responded, ‘**Oh, how my soul praises the Lord. How my spirit rejoices in God my Savior! For he took notice of his lowly servant girl,** and from now on all generations will call me blessed. For the Mighty One is holy, and he has done great things for me. He shows mercy from generation to generation to all who fear him. **His mighty arm has done tremendous things!** He has scattered the proud and haughty ones. **He has brought down princes from their thrones and exalted the humble.** He has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away with empty hands. He has helped his servant Israel and remembered to be merciful. For he made this promise to our ancestors, to Abraham and his children forever.’ Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three months and then went back to her own home.” Luke 1:39-56 (NLT)

1. Like Mary, we will be blessed if we believe that the Lord will do what He says. “**If you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.** For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.” Romans 10:9-10 (NIV)
2. Like Mary, we should praise the Lord and rejoice in God our Savior because He took notice of undeserving nobodies like us. “But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; **God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.** God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him.” 1 Corinthians 1:27-29 (NIV)

**IMPORTANT!** Mary was uniquely blessed to carry the baby Jesus in her womb, but all believers are blessed to carry Jesus in our hearts through the indwelling Holy Spirit. “I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit. **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.”

Ephesians 3:16-17 (NLT)

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**Connect Group Questions:**

1. Read Luke 1. What was the big difference between Zechariah’s question to Gabriel (Luke 1:18) and Mary’s question to Gabriel (Luke 1:34)? (James 1:5-8)
2. Why do you think God chose an undeserving nobody like Mary to be the mother of Jesus? (1 Corinthians 1:27-29) Why do you think God chose undeserving nobodies like us to serve Him today?
3. Why didn’t God explain everything about Jesus’ life and ministry to Joseph and Mary before Jesus was born? Why doesn’t God explain all of His plans to us? Why do we need to live by faith? (Romans 11:33, Hebrews 11:6, Isaiah 55:8-9)
4. Why did it take great faith for Mary to carry the baby Jesus in her womb as a servant of the Lord? (Deuteronomy 22:21) Why did it take great faith for Abraham to leave his homeland? (Hebrews 11:6)

5. Discuss the following quotations regarding surrendering every part of our lives to Jesus so we can become servants of the Lord. Spend some time praying together asking God to make us all willing servants.

“Decades ago, I heard a talk at a Christian conference center on turning our lives over to Christ and doing His will, not our own. Two questions were put to us. First, are you willing to obey anything the Bible clearly says to do, whether you like it or not? Second, are you willing to trust God in anything He sends into your life, whether you understand it or not? If you can’t answer these two questions in the affirmative, we were told, you may believe in Jesus in some general way, but you have never said to Him, ‘I am the Lord’s servant.’” Tim Keller

“I am no longer my own, but yours. Put me to what you will, rank me with whom you will; put me to doing, put me to suffering; let me be employed for you, or laid aside for you, exalted for you, or brought low for you; let me be full, let me be empty, let me have all things, let me have nothing: I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things to your pleasure and disposal. And now, glorious and blessed God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, you are mine and I am yours. So be it. And the covenant now made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven. Amen.” John Wesley’s Covenant Prayer

**Great Resource:** *Hidden Christmas: The Surprising Truth Behind the Birth of Christ* by Tim Keller, Penguin Books, 2018.