

Luke 1:26-38...Mary's legacy

Who am I since I am a virgin? This is Mary's reply...the offer to be the mother of the world's Savior. The Savior her people have been waiting for...for generations...it is her...this lowly little girl who has found favor in God's sight...and her first reply is...*who am I?*

...some have called it her moment of doubt...seeming to argue with the Almighty about His plan for restoring His creation. She has been gifted with this heavenly visit...God and his angelic hosts esteem and honor this young lady... heaven obviously speaks of her in high regard...and her reply to Gabriel's offer appears to question it...

One gets a strong sense that she is taken off guard... She's twelve, maybe fourteen...sixteen at most...and has her life already planned out. She will soon be married to Joseph...into the royal line of David...devoting herself to him and to every child God sees fit to give. This is her plan...and has been for the better part of a year...according to the contractual customs of the day.

The day most likely began as did most days...same chores...same conversations...same commitments to her faith and to her family...and God crashed in...suddenly...face-to-face with the angel Gabriel...heaven is at her doorstep.

She is no wall-flower...no flighty adolescent. She is strong and thoughtful...she ponders...the text says...meaning a deep consideration to what is going on and what is being said... She doesn't faint, she doesn't lose her mind...she does not seem the least bit

afraid...calmly...and tenderly, she holds Gabriel's words close to her heart...she squeezes as much of the infinite into her finite imagination as she can...before she answers...all the while the archangel stands before her...waiting for her answer. The moment is clear...there are no more normal days after this. She will from here-on-out carry with her the heft of God's glory. Normal will have to be redefined...for her, for Joseph...and for the entire family. They have now become enmeshed into Yahweh's salvific tale.

Yet...as robust as is this moment...it is balanced by her sweetness...by her lovely, maybe even naïve, charm...her devotion is spotlighted for all of us to enjoy...all the days before...living as God would have her live...keeping His commands and loving him as well as she has...they are all shown to have mattered.

...all the small moments of piety...of choosing the right ways of God...has ushered in this asking...this request of God's. Her entire life has been practice for what she is about to agree...

Her critics then have her all wrong...She is most favored for a reason...because what she agrees to is not automatic...

There are those who have said *no* to their moment of truth...the Scriptures are full of *almosts* and *maybes* and *flat out denials* to God's beckonings. It is not automatic.

If I were to ask you about the name Barak...you would most likely only speak of our president. You would probably not likely tell me about the Barak in the Old Testament...

My guess is that not many of us know of the military man who said 'no' to his moment of glory. When Deborah, a name you might know better, summoned Barak to restore God's people in the book of Judges chapter 4 & 5, Deborah offered him his moment...and Barak responded by tweaking the deal...he replied out of fear and lost his chance...his reply was not *who am I*...but *who are you?* He questioned God's abilities and, in doing so, lost his legacy...

I believe Luke had Barak in mind as he wrote of Mary in this scene. Where Barak went wrong...Mary did not. She says...*Who am I?* Where the military man sought to make conditions right for himself, Mary's question is born out of wisdom...it acknowledges God's greatness. Barak shuts God down...but Mary opens up the scene for all of us to be included in God's great work.

Her reply reveals that she understands patterns...what looks to be a question of doubt is more like a calling card...a response akin to great leaders of old...Moses and Gideon...names who we all recognize...two men who made this reply in their own contexts...before acquiescing to God's call to lead His people...Moses and the burning bush, Gideon with his fleece....and Mary with her womb...Mary's response is the proper beginning to a great calling...her's being the most intimate means of salvation among the

greats in God's story...God allows for her to foreshadow His own Son's bodily means of salvation.

The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you...He will cover you...and therefore this child will be holy, He will be called the Son of the most high. In her graciousness...in her humility...she does so much more than Moses or Gideon...in this scene Mary foreshadows, amazingly, her unborn Son's life and work. And she becomes herself timeless.

By covering her...by overshadowing her...the Spirit of God draws us back to the Garden yet again...replacing... supplanting...the fig leaves covering Eve in the Garden with something more substantial and healing. In Mark, as I said two weeks ago, Jesus is the Garden made new...here in Luke...Mary is somehow connected to the Garden as well...the womb of salvation...the mother of the new People of God...the healer of the world...by her *faithfulness*...the sting of Eve's *faithlessness* is somehow on the mend.

The moment is layered for sure...for this little girl embodies the best of Israel's most poignant moments. Where Barak lost his claim on his legacy, it was claimed later that same day. God's people were indeed saved by someone...just not the military man...it was another young, unsuspecting, woman...a young girl...married and humble...fearless she saved God's people that day. Jael saved a nation and was glorified by Deborah through song afterwards...much like

what follows our text in Luke. I believe Luke to have Jael's glory to be remembered in Mary's moment here...

Much like Jael, Mary is fearless. What looks like an initial objection by Mary proves to be no objection at all...instead her words give the heavens opportunity to further introduce God to His kingdom... As she ponders in her heart...she offers space for God to fill in the details of the Boy's life...for our sake. He will be great...he will be holy...and called the Son of the Most High...

She finishes with this...*Here I am, the servant of the Lord...let it be according to your word.* For this...this lowly little girl found favor in the sight of the Lord Almighty. Her faith has birthed us all.

Thanks be to God.