

Fil-Am Community Church

Pastor Rolly Estabillo

8 May 2016

Lessons from Mary

We've come together this morning for two primary reasons. One is to honor the Lord Jesus Christ with our worship. The other, is to honor our mothers. Both are lifetime tasks, neither of which can be confined to a one hour worship service.

I struggled this week to put together a Mother's day sermon - because I don't suppose that anything has ever been said or ever will be said that is eloquent enough, or expressive enough to articulate the true value of a mother.

One mother says, "The joy of motherhood is what a woman experiences when all the children are finally in bed."

A mother talking to an old college friend said, "Remember, before I was married I had 3 theories about raising children? Well, now I have 3 children and no theories."

One mother wrote this poem;

"Some may climb Mt Everest, in search of thrills galore,
But I scale peaks that rival it, just past the laundry door:
Slopes of socks and underwear, sheer cliffs of shirts and pants.
Oh, yes, I live in mortal fear of a laundry avalanche"

Mothers are interesting. Not only do they seem to be - at times, 'superhuman' but they also speak the same language. It's not written in any book nor is it taught in any college but every mother seems to know the dialect. Perhaps you too have heard:

"Don't be smart with me." (have you ever wanted to say okay then I'll be dumb).

“Just wait until your dad gets home.”

“If you break your leg, don’t come running to me.”

“You ARE going to have fun.”

“Where’s my change?”

“That’s the last time I’m going to tell you.”

And this one “Call when you get there.”

Mothers not only speak the same language but they also share many of the same qualities: inquisitiveness, tenderness, sympathy, compassion, mother’s intuition, and so on and so forth.

Today, I want us to look at the characteristics of the mother who God chose to raise his son, Mary. And as we look at Mary we will see that she is a model of motherhood. And, as such, mothers can learn lessons from her life. But I hope that all of us, not only mothers, can distill lessons from her life to help us become better parents. Let me read Luke 1:26-38.

I find it very interesting that God went to a little town called Nazareth, a town with a bad reputation. Remember Nathanael said "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" So, God instructed Gabriel to go to a humble cottage to appear before Mary, who was probably barely a teenager, and told her that she was chosen to be the mother of God’s Son. Two times in our text Gabriel told Mary that she was highly favored by God. Why? What was there about Mary that had so caught God’s attention?

Now, we are not told the answer to this directly in Scripture – but, nevertheless, the answer is there hidden in the very brief account of Mary as seen in this passage.

I believe part of the reason why God chose Mary – it was because of what Mary already had and because of who God knew Mary would become. And as we develop these concepts today, we will see that Mary was indeed a true model of

motherhood. So, this morning let me share with you three reasons why Mary was highly favored by God.

I. BECAUSE OF WHAT MARY ALREADY HAD.

And what did Mary have? MARY HAD THE PROPER PERSPECTIVE.

When Gabriel tapped her on the shoulders that day Mary was greatly troubled. She was no doubt a little on edge having an angel of the Lord speak to her, and the message that Gabriel brought her was a very troubling one. After all, she was engaged at the time to Joseph – and engagements in that day were much more serious than they are today.

Therefore, as this "unique" pregnancy became known, Mary, a young teenage girl, faced many troubling possibilities; rejection by Joseph, the task of raising her child alone (in a culture hostile to women), in addition, she jeopardized her reputation in Nazareth should any of her neighbors find out. She even risked her very life should she be accused of unfaithfulness against Joseph. All of this no doubt troubled Mary. Not to mention the fact that Mary could have felt insecure, unworthy and insufficient for this great task of being the mother of God's Son, the savior of the world. After all others had balked at God's calls in the past. Remember what Moses said at the burning bush when given a message and a task not by an angel but by God himself;

"Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt"
 "What if they don't believe or listen to me" "O Lord, please send someone else to do it."

Sure, Moses faced a tough challenge but not any more challenging than being told you'll have a child as a virgin and that the child will be conceived through the Holy Spirit and will be the Son of God, the Redeemer of Mankind.

Mary could have said; "Lord I'm just a girl. I'm not ready to be a mother, I'm not wealthy, I'm not educated - I'm not worthy of this maybe it would be better if you got someone else."

That's not what Mary said, is it? No, she said, "I am the Lord's servant, may it be as you have said."

Mary had the right perspective. She knew who God was (The Lord Almighty) - and who she was, His servant. (The word servant used here is the same word Paul used when he referred to himself as a "bond slave " of Jesus Christ) Mary was God's servant and she knew that nothing was impossible for her God. If God said it, Mary knew that it would happen, and even if she didn't really understand the hows - Mary would go along with it because she was God's servant.

And if the Lord Almighty wanted to give her the task of raising the Son of God - then she would accept it. So, that's the first proper perspective that Mary had – that God was Almighty and he can do the impossible.

Mary's second proper perspective was about her role as a mother - in that she saw it as an honor - as a blessing. In Luke 1:46-55, the passage known as Mary's Song or The Magnificat, Mary tells how she rejoices and is blessed by what God was going to do in her life. Thus, Mary saw motherhood as an honor and as a gift.

Mother's today, like Mary, need to have the proper perspective - they too are servants of God, in all things and especially in raising God's children. For each life is knit in the womb by the hand of The Almighty - and just as Mary had the responsibility to raise Jesus for God - all mothers share that same responsibility. They need to view their work as mothers as being God's servant raising His children for him... And though they may feel at times overwhelmed and inadequate for the task...they need to realize like Mary that, "nothing is impossible with God."

And though at times your children frustrate you and make you want to pull your hair out (or better yet, pull their hair out) they really are a gift from God and it really is an honor that God entrusts them to your care. Just think about it. The Bible says, "*Children are a gift from the Lord, they are a real blessing*" Psalm 127:3 (GN) A woman who had three children was asked, "If you had to do it all over again, would you have children?" "Yes," she replied, "But not the same ones." Of course, that is a joke. Children are really a blessing. Though they may be impossible sometimes, with God nothing is impossible. You can handle that child with God's help.

God the Father looked upon Mary with favor because: Mary had the proper perspective; She viewed herself as first and foremost as a servant of God (as we all should); she believed nothing was impossible with God AND she saw motherhood as an honor.

Another reason God looked upon Mary with favor was because:

B. MARY HAD A SOLID FOUNDATION

And in God's eyes there is only one solid foundation... Him and His word. Jesus talked about this in Luke 6:46-49, "*Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say? As for everyone who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice, I will show you what they are like. They are like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built. But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete.*"

Now, how do we know that Mary had a solid foundation? How do we know that she was grounded in God and in His Word? In The Magnificat, it is quite

evident that Mary knew the scriptures as there are at least 30 phrases or words that echo truths from the Old Testament.

She recognized that God is The Mighty One, that he is holy and that His mercy reaches out to those who fear Him, filling the hungry with good things.

Mary's solid foundation is an example to mothers today. For a mother who praises her God and knows his word is going to make a difference in her child's life, a mother like that will be planting seeds that will one day bear fruit.

We see an example of this very thing in 2 Timothy 1:5 as Paul writes to his young disciple Timothy; "I have been reminded of your sincere faith which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded now lives in you also." Timothy's mother and grandmother had a solid foundation and they passed that on to Timothy.

Mothers, how solid is your foundation? Do you understand who God is? Do you have His word hidden in your heart and mind so that it supports and guide you in your life and "your" motherhood? Do you know his Word well enough to pass it on to your children? Do you set a good example of one who loves to worship and praise God? Is your home life build on a solid foundation? Mother's just who is building your home? Understand that "Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain." Psalm 127:1

Some 2,000 years ago God chose a young girl to give birth to Jesus Christ. God chose Mary because of what she already had: a proper perspective and a solid foundation. And these are two qualities that all godly mothers need to have today, if they want God to look upon them with favor.

God also chose Mary because he knew what Mary would become. He knew that Mary would be

A. UNRELENTING IN PROTECTION

Mothers, as we know, have a natural instinct to protect their young, don't they? It seems that this is something that God has wired into them. And mother's instinct of protection goes beyond even human relationships.

Several years back there was in the news the story of a baby who fell into an area of orangutans at a zoo and how a mother orangutan protected the baby from the other animals. And there was the story also of a cat who was found taking care of four puppies.

Most of the time motherhood and protection go hand in hand. You see, from the very moment Jesus was born, his life was in danger, the wicked King Herod was on the throne and he soon sought the life of Jesus, forcing Mary and Joseph to flee to Egypt. Mary immediately agreed with Joseph to leave although this meant leaving the comforts of home because she wanted to protect Jesus.

Mary also protected Jesus' identity. Though Mary knew who Jesus was and who he was to become she did not go about telling people of all the wonderful, supernatural things she knew about her baby boy. Rather, as Luke says in Lk 2:19 after saying how the shepherds told what they had heard; *"But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart..."* The Greek word used here for treasure is a word that means "an intense, protective keeping." I'm sure this was what she did the rest of her life. She did not boast about her unique relationship with Jesus. Apparently, Mary was aware of the danger Jesus would be placed in if she let everything she knew about Him go public.

Mary was unrelenting in her protection. Mothers, your children need your unrelenting protection, as well. Again, for most mothers this instinct is very natural and very strong. A mother will risk even her own life to protect her child. And their children do need their protection, this is especially obvious when they are very young; for there are many potential dangers nearly everywhere. So mothers must protect them from germs, stairs, electrical outlet, poisons, stoves, stairs, etc.

Now, if you want to see a mother get riled up, do something to her child. And you'll find out.

Then, as the child grows, they still need mom's protection. Although they may be able to handle the stairs, wash their hands, and keep their hands off the stove, even though they may have passed safely by / those dangers it is not time to relax;

because there are new dangers out there as they grow and these new ones they face may even be more deadly... Low self-esteem, drugs, alcohol, peer pressure, sexual immorality, internet addiction, suicide.

You need to protect your children from these and you need to protect them from the worldly value system that is being marketed by some of the TV shows, Movies, Videos, and Music that is out there promoting things that stand in total opposition to the message of Christianity. And you need to protect your child from the subtle things that don't seem bad but tend to crowd out God (like too much too much extra-curricular activities, etc).

My point, mothers, parents, if you're protecting your children the way you should, you're doing a good job. Keep it up. If not, or you feel you're lacking in this area, be aware of the need to do it and do it constantly. The dangers out there are real.

Mary was unrelenting in protecting Jesus - and that pleased God. And God expects all mothers to do the same for his other children -- that is why when a child is abused by someone who God has ordained to protect them it is such a heinous tragedy.

God looked with favor upon Mary because He knew she would be unrelenting in protection and because he knew she would be:

B. UNWAVERING IN LOVE AND DEVOTION

Mary's love and devotion for Jesus began before he was born and lasted even beyond the cross. The first picture we have of Mary is as a teenage girl in Nazareth and the final picture we see of Mary is that of an older woman, her hair probably a little grey - with skin dark and wrinkled by years of exposure to the Judean sun, with eyes that show the wear of years of struggle.

Do you know where it is that we find this last glimpse of Mary? No, not at the cross of her son - though she was there.

No it's not when Jesus hung on the cross and said to her and John, "Woman behold your son - son behold your mother..." As a matter of fact you won't find this last glimpse in any of the gospels but rather in the book of Acts; *"They all joined together constantly in prayer along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus and with his brothers..."* Acts 1:14

30+ years later and Mary is still right where she is supposed to be - and Jesus is still the center of her attention and the focus of her entire being. Mary's love and devotion for Jesus is unquestionable. Now you may be thinking, "but Jesus must have been so easy to love."

And you are right. It was easy to love Jesus but loving Jesus wasn't an easy road for Mary to travel - in fact it was difficult right from the start. Remember what the Old prophet Simeon said to Mary as she presented her month old baby boy at the temple. "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel...And a sword will pierce your own soul too." LK 2:33,34

Mary's soul was pierced many times because of her love for Jesus - when she had to flee to Egypt because of King Herod who sought his life - and twelve years later, she looked frantically for Jesus for three days in Jerusalem, not knowing what has happened to his precious child who turned out to be discussing theology with some learned Jews in the temple.

In Mark 3, there's another occasion that must have pierced her soul. Some leaders in Jerusalem were saying that Jesus was a fanatic, a lunatic who was demon possessed. What mother wouldn't be hurt if people were saying those kinds of things about her child?

And in John 7 we read where Jesus' own brothers and sisters rejected Jesus and didn't want anything to do with him, they didn't believe what their older brother was saying. Can you just imagine what the conversation was like at Mary's dinner table? This must have pierced her soul as well.

Not to mention every time she saw a lamb being led to sacrifice - every time she read Isaiah 53 and the other prophecies about his death, Mary's soul was pierced. And then on that dark Friday; her Jesus, the baby she had given birth to - when Mary watched his hands and feet nailed to a cross... Hands and feet that she had once held in her hands - as she watched them beat her son, stripped her son, mocked her son -- killed her son, Mary's soul was pierced.

Sure Jesus was easy to love -- but loving Jesus wasn't easy.... Yet Mary's love and devotion was unwavering from conception to the cross... and even beyond. When others mistreated Jesus, Mary was there. When others turned Him away, he always knew that His mother wouldn't. Even at the cross she was there.

At the Pan Am games, champion diver Greg Louganis was asked how he coped with the stress of international diving competitions. He replied that he climbs to the board, takes a deep breath, and thinks, "Even if I blow this dive, my mother will still love me."

Mary was devoted in her love to her son. The disciples had fled but Mary was still there. His most trusted followers had abandoned him but not his mother.

George Elliot once said, "We often do the impossible, not because we think we can, but because someone we respect knows we can, and that someone is our mother!"

Mothers, may you have Mary's kind of love and devotion for your child. Loving your children may not always be easy -- The road may get very difficult -- you too will have your soul pierced at times -- by the things that happen to them -- when they are hurt, when they are sick, when they get lost, when they are betrayed, and your soul will also be pierced at times by what they do. They may live a life that goes against all that you believe and hold dear... They may even rebel against you and reject your love.

But even then your love and devotion needs to be unwavering. You don't have to condone all they do to love them unconditionally.

Mothers, this Mother's Day, hats off to you for what you do and accomplish for your child. Yours is not an easy task. But remember, someone before you had gone through a very difficult experience before. Her life is a shining example of a mother's great and sacrificial love for her child. May God look upon you with favor as he looked upon Mary.