

April 10, 11 Fifth Sun Lent Luke 2:1-40

## MARY DID YOU KNOW?

At the foot of the cross Mary says, *“From the beginning I knew that Jesus would be the great and holy one. But on that day at the cross, he was still my precious child and I thought of all the sweet memories as I laid my baby to rest.”*

Many years before she was a teenager with a special duty before her. She, like many other women, had a prearranged marriage. That was their custom. Her father and Joseph’s father had sat down to make all the preparations for their pending wedding. The engagement would last a year or so, so she had time to think about the event and get prepared. We know she had an aunt whose husband was a priest in the Temple serving. She heard a miracle happened and that Elizabeth, who was beyond years to have a child, was pregnant and that her uncle was now left without his voice. It seemed God was working in mysterious ways these days.

Mary thought Joseph was a good catch. He was a carpenter well liked and would make a fine catch for any maiden. She was the lucky one. So Mary and her friends, along with her family began the planning thinking of the guest list, the food, how they were going to house the family from out of town and out who were coming as well as all the things that went with a traditional Jewish wedding. The date had been set; they met with Rabbi Solomon and received their instructions. They signed their engagement papers which bound them together just as if they were married.

They were well into the planning stages when something happened that changed things. Hear now God’s word and Mary’s story: Luke 1:

*“God sent the angel Gabriel to the Galilean village of Nazareth to a virgin engaged to be married to a man descended from David. His name was Joseph, and the*

*virgin's name, Mary. Upon entering, Gabriel greeted her: "Good morning! You're beautiful with God's beauty, Beautiful inside and out! God be with you." She was thoroughly shaken, wondering what was behind a greeting like that. But the angel assured her, "Mary, you have nothing to fear. God has a surprise for you: You will become pregnant and give birth to a son and call his name Jesus. He will be great, be called 'Son of the Highest.' The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David; He will rule Jacob's house forever—no end, ever, to his kingdom." Mary said to the angel, "But how? I've never slept with a man." The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, the power of the Highest hover over you; Therefore, the child you bring to birth will be called Holy, Son of God." ....; and Mary said, "I'm the Lord's maid, ready to serve. Let it be with me just as you say"*

Mary's heart was glad, yet troubled because how was she to explain this to Joseph? What would her family say? How could she explain what the angel said to her? How could others believe her story when she herself was struggling with it?

But as we all know God doesn't commission us to do something without giving us the ability to do it and also to prepare the way. And though Joseph's first thought was to divorce her, call off the wedding, God told him to take Mary as his bride just as had been planned, for he would be the earthly father of God's Son and raise him as his own and God would be with them both.

Looking back, Mary did you know from that day when God's Son's Seed was planted in your womb that one day you would be standing at the foot of the cross looking up into your son's face with tears in your eyes because he was being crucified? Mary did you know that the one you loved so much would be hated by those who wanted him out of the way? Of course not! You were having a tough time just trying to understand this pregnancy from the Holy Spirit. But each passing day, each passing week, the signs of that

pregnancy were evident. Even Joseph was getting things prepared in the house that would become your home. He added a nursery and was building a crib. When together you talked about this baby you were carrying, wondering why they had been chosen for such a special time as this.

When Mary was almost due they had to travel to Bethlehem for the census. Joseph packed Mary on the donkey and led the way on a long journey. A worried Joseph thought that any time now Mary would have her baby and who would help them? Each night they prayed that God, the Father of this child, would see them through the night and the next day. Finally, after a week or so, or maybe even longer, they came to the outskirts of Bethlehem and it was late at night. Mary was tired and the birth pains were getting closer. Frantically Joseph knocked on door after door of the inns on the street but always heard words of rejection. "Sorry we're full. Try the next place." One after the other they heard those words. Joseph tried to explain his situation, a pregnant wife ready to have their baby but no one would listen, sadly no one cared.

Mary did you know that was just the beginning of the rejection of your son? You were excited about his coming, but the world wasn't. He was coming into the world of darkness because of sin to light the way back to God. But people weren't interested in changing their ways. Faith and trust in God had been lost in laws and corruption. Many were just going through the ritual while their hearts were deep in sin. The people of God had lost their way. Just like the innkeepers who failed to open their doors for God's only begotten Son, many in the world in your time, and in the years to come would reject your Son and have no room for him in their lives. How sad.

But God works all things out for those who love him. At the other end of town Joseph was rejected one more time. But as they were moving away, something stirred the innkeeper, maybe a little heart prick from the Holy Spirit. "Hey mister, if you want just

over the hill I have a place for animals. You can at least stay there a night or two while your wife gives birth.” So Joseph took him up on his offer and we know the rest of the story because that night the shepherds got the news that God’s Son had been born in a manger. With singing in the air and the guiding hand of God, God’s Son was born in Bethlehem not the way one would think the King of kings he should be born, but in a lowly stable surrounded by mooing cows and braying donkeys, and the baa from the sheep. Then not long after the birth shepherds found their way to the stable, bowed in adoration as they told their story. They had come to praise God and see for themselves, and now they would spread the news to other camps, other towns that they had seen this wonderful miracle.

Then one day 3 strangers showed up on their doorstep bearing gifts to honor the new King of the Jews. They too, told their story of following a star after being informed that a Holy One was going to be born in Bethlehem. And now seeing him, they gave their gifts to honor him and went home to spread the Good News that the Messiah had been born.

Mary did you know when all these people came to fuss over your firstborn that this day would ever happen? Did you know the pain that would come one day? Oh, not the pain of fixing scratches from a fall, or a broken arm, or even dealing with colds and stomachaches, but from the thorns placed on his head, or the nails hammered into his hands and feet, or even when the spear that pierced his side? Mary did you know? Of course not.

There was no singing that day at the cross, only moaning; only wailing as tears fell from the eyes of Mary and other followers of Jesus. Did you remember the day you brought Jesus to be circumcised as the Law required: Luke 2?

*When the eighth day arrived, the day of circumcision, the child was named Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived. In Jerusalem at the time, there was a man, Simeon by name, a good man, a man who lived in the prayerful expectancy of help for Israel. And the Holy Spirit was on him. The Holy Spirit had shown him that he would see the Messiah of God before he died. As the parents of the child Jesus brought him in to carry out the rituals of the Law, Simeon took him into his arms and blessed God: “God, you can now release your servant; release me in peace as you promised. With my own eyes I’ve seen your salvation;” ... Simeon went on to bless them, and said to Mary his mother,” This child marks both the failure and the recovery of many in Israel, A figure misunderstood and contradicted— the pain of a sword-thrust through you— But the rejection will force honesty, as God reveals who they really are” .... Jesus grew strong in body and wise in spirit. And the grace of God was on him.*

Mary did you know when Jesus was about to be given his name and as the priest was ready to circumcise your son that 33 years later in this same temple those same religious leaders would reject him? That more blood would flow from him? That in this same place he would be brought to trial, beaten by the soldiers, rejected by the nation of Israel and die on the cross of shame on a hill now called Calvary?

Mary, did you know that one day you would be standing where you are looking up at the face of not your son, but of God as he took the sins of the whole world upon himself and died to set the world free from its sins? You bore the pain of his birth, and the pains of each sickness, and you bore the pain of hearing the crowd yell to crucify your son. And when you saw your son standing next to Pilate after his beating you tried to run to him, to comfort him, you wanted to clean his wounds as you did when he was a child and cut himself with a saw from his father’s shop, or got a splinter in his finger. But they would not let you through. Even now, at the foot of the cross surrounded by some of your friends

and the disciple Jesus loved you can hardly take it in. You too might have questions much like you did when he was about to be born. Could there not be another way? He's done so much good. He's healed the sick, feed the hungry, gave hope to the hopeless. Why him? The criminals, yes, but why him?

But God's pain was even more that day as he could not help his Son because if he did salvation would not have happened. Your pain was great. God's pain was greater as he held your heart in his hands to comfort you!

Mary did you know about all this? And if you did would you have taken on that responsibility? I don't think so. But isn't that the wonderfulness of our God? He doesn't tell us about the future. He only controls it. He just asks us to trust, for that was Friday and Sunday was coming.

And that day when they took him from the cross and laid him in your arms one last time, how fast was your heart beating, as you did your best to clear away the blood from his face, and as you kissed him for the last time? But once again that was Friday and Sunday was coming.

Mary did God tell you all of his plan for his son that day when the angel told you how blessed you were to become? Of course not!

*Mary, did you know that your baby boy would one day walk on water? Mary, did you know that your baby boy would save our sons and daughters? Did you know that your baby boy had come to make you new? And this child that you've delivered would soon deliver you? Mary, did you know that your baby boy would give sight to a blind man? Mary, did you know that your baby boy would calm a storm with His hand? Did you know that your baby boy has walked where angels trod? And when you kissed your little baby, you kissed the face of God? Oh, Mary, did you know? Did you know that the blind will see,*

*the deaf will hear, the dead will live again; the lame will leap, the dumb will speak the praises of the Lamb? Oh, Mary, did you know that your baby boy is Lord of all creation? Mary, did you know that your baby boy will one day rule the nations? Did you know that your baby boy is heaven's perfect Lamb? This sleeping child you once held, Is **THE GREAT I AM?**”*

Mary Magdalene was there. So was John. The Centurion had to be there. Mary, his mother was there. In the end they all knew that he was truly the son of God. But the question is, do you know? Do you believe it? And if you do, what have you done about it? It's not “Mary did you know!” this morning. God asks each of us do we know for ourselves that the man who died on the cross was truly the Son of God who redeemed us by his blood?

On a hill far away stood an old rugged cross the emblem of suffering and shame. And I love that old cross where the dearest and best for a world of lost sinners was slain.