

Video: *A Kid's View of Christmas* by Southland Church

I love this video. It reminds me that while Christmas is the most wonderful time of the year, if we're not careful, it can get lost in translation and become a bit confusing. B/w the birth of Jesus, Santa/his reindeer, Frosty and characters like the Grinch, amidst the tinsel/toys and stockings hung by the chimney, it's easy to NOT know *what* is *what* and *who* is *who* – whether we're talking about Cindy Lou or Cindy who!

I read about two UGA co-eds who in the Christmas spirit, went out into the woods off campus looking to hunt/chop down Christmas tree for their apartment. After being out for hours in sub-zero temps w/ several close calls w/ coyotes, one of the girls said to the other, "I'm fed up... I'm tired... I'm cold. The next tree we see I'm cutting it down. I don't care if it's decorated or not!" The other said... "I agree!"

This Christmas season, as we look at the true meaning of Christmas and the gift of God to all mankind, I thought it might be appropriate to look at the *who's who* of God's Christmas story – hence a *Who-ville Christmas*. That is, **WHO** are the people in God's Christmas story.

When Jesus came special delivery to be our Savior, it was a dark time for Israel. It'd been 400 yrs since God had spoken and the people were groping in darkness – suffering under the hand of Roman occupation. Their spiritual leaders were shackled by tradition, corrupted by power, and pawns in Herod's hands. Yet no matter how dark the day, God hadn't forgotten His people. He knew their need – and the time had arrived for God to break His silence and offer a solution to their need. Then it happened – after 400 yrs, God spoke. First, to a humble, Godly priest named Zacharias – and then to a teenage girl named Mary. Read **Luke 1:26-56**

When I think of Mary, I think of one question – Why me?

Now this is a question familiar to most of us – especially when something unfortunate occurs in our lives. Why me? Why did I lose my job and they didn't? Why did they get the break and I didn't? Why can she eat fried chicken and cheesecake and not gain an ounce – and I can't?

On the day the angel Gabriel came to Mary, I'm certain she thought – *Why me?* At 15, living w/ her parents awaiting to be married, we can only imagine how her world was turned upside-down – **and would never again be the same.**

Did you know that Mary was the only person present at Jesus' birth and death? **She witnessed Jesus entering into the world as her son and exiting it as her Savior.**

It's w/out question, that Mary was a woman greatly used by God for His glory. But what made her so special? Why did God choose her? While some people want to deify Mary, truth is she was just an ordinary woman w/ an extraordinary calling of God – b/c she loved God and was open to be used by Him.

Truth is God could've used anyone/thing. He could've used angels or dropped leaflets from heaven; but if you were to check God's M.O., you'd see God prefers to move thru people like you/me for His purposes. This AM, I want to show you (3) things I see in Mary God desires to see in us.

I Mary had a **YIELDED** Conviction

In the 6th month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is w/ you." Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor w/ God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end." 1:26-33

Lest we forget, God hasn't spoken to Israel in 400 yrs, and yet 15 yr old Mary doesn't seem too overwhelmed by the moment – b/c she was following God even when God had been silent. This speaks to the intensity of her faith and trust in God.

avored (*charis*) used for *grace*, but translated here *favor*. Why was Mary *avored* – why did God select her? I think it was b/c she had a righteous, yielded heart bent toward God. She didn't just believe in God, she trusted Him – she walked w/ Him – and her **DEFAULT** was set to 'YES'.

Augustine explains God's favor well – *God gives favor where He finds empty hands*. Mary exemplified a person w/ an open, willing life to the movement of God.

I love the idea of an open, empty hand. God, I trust you! My life is yours, open for You to put into my life, pass thru my life, whatever you deem necessary to accomplish your will.

II Mary had a **RESPONSIVE** Willingness

Mary said, "I am the Lord's servant and I am willing to do whatever he wants." Luke 1:38

servant (*doule*) slave – it refers to someone who's voluntarily obligated themselves to another. Meaning Mary placed herself at God's disposal even though she knew the outcome likely would bring shame/disgrace and even death.

Mary reflects the person whom God unexpectedly chooses to use. She brings no outstanding credentials – and there was nothing on her resume other than her availability/willingness.

This was no simple matter. She is being asked to bear a child as a virgin w/out being married. In standing up for God and His power, she will probably become the object of much doubt and ridicule. But Mary knows she is God's servant, so she will allow God to work thru her as He wills. He can place her in whatever difficult circumstance He desires, for she know that God is w/ her. Bock

Look at her calling – *you will conceive and give birth to a son who will be the son of the Most High God* – **who will save His people from their sin.**

I find it interesting that when God came to Moses, Moses said – “Ask Aaron.” When he came to Gideon, Gideon suggested they put out a fleece. When He approached Jonah – he ran. It seems that many of the people God called for His will struggled to say “yes”. I did. I ran from God for 8 mo. b/c God's plan wasn't my plan – but I finally said – yes. And Mary was no exception; yet she didn't run or make excuses – **she accepted God's call on the spot.**

I am willing – Mary says, "Whatever God says, I accept. Not my will but Your will be done."

She didn't say and so many often say to God – "Thy will be *changed!*" She responded, "Lord, Thy will be done – in me, thru me, in spite of me! I'm yours no matter the cost.

Think about it – this young/insignificant woman changed the world by simply agreeing to the mysteries of God? Why? B/c **God only needs a little of our agreement to work mighty wonders for His glory.**

When the most ordinary of people say, "*Consider me the Lord's slave...*" churches are born, ministries are started, hospital's rise, Christian universities come to be. Some of the greatest missionaries were born when a timid believer agreed and said YES to God's calling. *Calvin Miller*

When we put our trust in God and set our default to YES – we will never know where it might take us and what it might require of us – and what God might do in/thru us.

Other than accepting Christ as Savior – setting your default to 'yes' for God is the greatest decision you can ever make.

III Mary had a **WORSHIPFUL** Heart

After Mary's visit w/ Elizabeth, she offers what has become known as *Mary's Song*. This is Mary's response to the favor of God. It is an expression of her hope and desire to honor God. It is a snapshot into her heart of worship.

Mary said: “My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me – holy is his name. His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. He has performed mighty deeds w/ his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry w/ good things but has sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, just as he promised our ancestors.” Luke 1:46-55

I believe this is Mary’s desire to see the God of the possible perform the impossible. This is an expression of hopeful praise to God that His will might be accomplished on earth as it is in heaven – and that it might be accomplished in her and thru her life for His glory.

Worship is a greatly misunderstood spiritual privilege in our current spiritual culture. Sadly, too often, worship has become about a style of music or a type of church. It has become about an event or gathering. But biblically, worship is about a surrendered heart and an abandoned life to God.

It is what Mary exemplified throughout her life.

I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God – this is your true and proper worship. Don't conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – His good, pleasing and perfect will. Rm. 12:1

Notice that there is no mention of music or church events – a life that honors/glorifies God is a life surrendered. A life not conformed to the world but transformed by the Word.

So who is Mary? Mary was a chosen, willing servant of God who said YES to His invitation.

Song – Mary Did You Know