

God's Doing

Romans 16:25-27 and Luke 1:26-38

First United Methodist Church, Des Moines † December 18, 2011

In Luke's Gospel this morning, we learn more about Mary, the mother of Jesus, than in any other passage in the New Testament.

While Roman Catholics and Orthodox Christians place Mary in a place of honor, we Protestants remain a bit uncomfortable with Mary, and so we little about her.

This morning I want to focus on Mary, for I believe deeply that she offers us a model of how to be a disciple.

Mary remains open to God's leading in her life. Her response to the angel Gabriel makes this clear: "let it be to me according to your word." She trusts God with her future, even though she has no idea of the details of that future. This trust is what we mean when talk about faith.

Where does such faith come from? Paul, in this morning's reading from Romans, suggests a surprising answer to that question. It is God's doing.

Paul writes that "the mystery that was kept secret for long ages" has been disclosed in Jesus Christ.

What is that secret of God? God seeks above all "to bring about the obedience of faith." In other words, God never ceases to love us so that, in the amazing acceptance we discover in God's love for us, we chose to trust our futures to God's love.

So, Mary's choice is God's doing.

And, it is *also* Mary's choice. God wants us to love him fully, with our hearts, souls, minds, and strength. God knows we cannot be coerced into loving someone like that. We must chose, freely and openly, to trust our future to God's love, as Mary does.

Besides trusting God with her future, Mary offers us a second demonstration of discipleship. She agrees to be the bearer of Christ into the world.

Though none of us bear Christ exactly as Mary did, God also asks us to be bearers of Christ. To be a disciple of Jesus Christ is to bear Christ visibly into the world in our bodies, our words and our actions.

Mary shows us how to trust God with our futures and how to bear Christ visibly into the world. She also shows us a third aspect of discipleship: how to live in gratitude for what God is doing in our lives. She sings her thanks to God

in a song of beauty and praise which begins “My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior...”

For Mary, the natural, automatic response to what God is doing in her life – both her faith and her mission as a bearer of Christ – is to magnify and rejoice in God.

So that’s what Mary teaches us about being disciples: trust God with our future, gladly accept the ministry of being a bearer of Christ to the world, and sing praise to God with joy for what God calls us to do.

As we come forward this morning to meet Christ in the bread and the cup, may we follow Mary’s example and trust God with our future, agree to bear Christ out this sanctuary and into the world, and sing a song of gratefulness for all God is doing in our lives.

In the name of the One God, Holy and Undivided Trinity. Amen.

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