



Links Players

Mary, the Mother of Jesus

In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. (Luke 1:26-27, ESV)

This week certain characters are gathering in Orlando, FL, for the 2022 PNC Championship. I'm not referring to the Disney characters but rather to pairs of golfers like Tiger and Charlie, Annika and Will, and Nelly and Peter. Oh, I mustn't forget John and John II.

While I'm looking forward to watching the golfers go head-to-head, the Christmas Story contains a much more intriguing group of characters to keep our focus on. In a previous devotional, I shared about the town of Bethlehem. Today, I invite us to consider Mary, the mother of Jesus.

Some traditional views represent Mary as sentimental, soft, and meek. I suggest that Mary embodied a robust confidence in God, carried mental and emotional strength, and had fierce courage.

Let's consider three elements of Mary's story:

Age. In the first-century culture, girls were often given in marriage between the ages of thirteen and fifteen. In describing Mary as a virgin, Luke gives a clue that Mary was likely in her mid-teens when the angel Gabriel said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you (Luke 1:28)."

Betrothal. A first-century betrothal was typically a year-long process. It was a formal marriage contract arranged by the parents with the couple's consent. The legally binding betrothal period could only be dissolved by divorce or death. I wonder if this flashed through Mary's mind and heart upon hearing that she would conceive and bear a son before the consummation of her marriage with Joseph.

The Lord called Mary into a difficult position within the honor and shame culture in which she lived. We know Joseph didn't divorce her, but in that moment, Mary did not know what he would choose. Yet, Mary responded, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word (Luke 1:38 NRSV)."

Here am I. Your translation might have the word behold instead of "Here am I." The Greek word is *idou* (pronounced ee-doo) which means look or behold. *Idou* is often used to imitate the Hebrew word *hinnê* (pronounced hinneni), which takes us to a scene in the Biblical narrative when God summoned Moses at the burning bush, "Here I am (Exodus 3:4)."

In the face of potentially facing divorce and shame, Mary answered a divine summons from God. Rabbi Joel Nickerson says, "Hinneni is about being present on the precipice of change." This takes confidence, strength, and courage.

Mary, a teenager, stood on a precipice that would change the world and said yes, I am willing, regardless of the cost. Today, God is still looking for people willing to say, "Here I am."

I find it much easier to slink away from the hard things God asks of me. But when I answer yes, like starting the Tracy Hanson Initiative, the impossible becomes possible.

Do you hear God summoning you...how will you answer?

Prayer: Father God, thank you for wanting me to partner with you in your story. Help me hear your voice and, in turn, respond with confidence, strength, and courage.

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Tracy Hanson
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