

## **20250511 Favor, Fear, and Faith: Navigating Life's Divine Interruptions – Ps Bijoy**

I read a story in an article "This dear mom was pushing a shopping cart through "Stuff-Mart." Her daughter was riding in the shopping cart but continually screeching and screaming. Apparently, there was something the child wanted and mom denied the request. The mom kept offering words in a soothing voice: "Now Calm down, Ellen. It will be all right, Ellen. It's almost time to go home, Ellen." One of the checkout clerks observed the scene and how the mother remained calm in the face of the child-storm. To encourage the mother, she said: "Ma'am, you are to be commended! I am amazed at how patient you are with little Ellen." The Mom looked up from the child and said to her: "Lady, I'm Ellen!"

Happy Mother's Day!

Luke 1: 26-33

In the sixth 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 with 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 with God. <sup>31</sup> 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."

In some traditions, Mary is honoured in shrines, prayed to, and even worshipped. In others, she's often forgotten, treated as little more than a means to an end. She's barely mentioned, if at all. When she is, it's usually as the young woman who played a noble role in giving birth to Jesus, often depicted as quiet, graceful, and obedient. She does her part, alongside Joseph, and then fades into the background. If we set aside the familiar way her story is often told and truly consider her context, we see that Mary encountered a divine disruption unlike any other

in human history. Certainly, giants of faith such as Abraham and Moses experienced powerful divine interventions that redirected their lives. As we trace the narrative of Scripture, it becomes clear that God's involvement in people's lives often arrives unexpectedly, shaking up their plans. Yet none were entrusted with carrying the Son of the living God as Mary was. And you know, I believe Mary was certainly not more than seventeen years old when that happened, according to the culture of the Jewish people.

Luke 1:28-30

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### **Mary – highly favoured**

Mary found the favour of the Lord and what a privilege it was to be chosen by God to be the mother of His Son. What an honour to become the mother of the Promised Messiah.

Hearing that phrase can be surprising. Mary was a faithful Jewish woman, and she probably understood how heavy the word "Favor" was. Like anyone with a humble heart, she must have wondered, "Why me?" The people who actually qualify are often the last ones to think they do. I felt the same way when I sensed God calling me into ministry. I kept asking, "Why would You choose me, God? I'm not someone who should be talking about faith. I don't know enough, and I've still got so much to learn." But then my pastor said something I'll never forget - that feeling of unworthiness was the very reason I was called.

### **Mary's fear**

Yes, what a privilege and what an honour but at the same time, what a burden. In Jewish culture at the time, Mary and Joseph were already legally bound. You know there was suspicion when Mary started to show from her pregnancy. You know there had to be rumours

from the family and the neighbours. She was not married at the time. What an atrocity. In that day, she could have been stoned for being pregnant out of wedlock.

Mary is from a town called "Nazareth", an often-despised place of little importance. No one really knew or cared about Nazareth. The angel comes to this young girl from a small, forgotten town and basically says, "I know you're not married, and you're still a virgin, but you're going to have a child. Not just any child, but the Savior your people have been waiting generations for the Messiah. You, someone the world barely knows, are going to be part of God's greatest plan. And yes, it's going to disrupt everything, your plans, your peace, your sleep, your relationships. Nothing about your life will stay the same. But Mary, you're the one God has chosen. His name will be Jesus, and He will one day sit on God's throne and reign forever. And therefore, this interruption is a divine plan of God. Have you ever felt like God was nudging you toward something?

When God asks us to do something difficult, we tend to pull back. Whether it is serving in some ministries of the church, becoming a life group leader or doing street evangelism, we often say, "Are you sure, God? Do you realize how complicated this is for me? Can we pray about this a little longer? I need more time to work through it. Is it urgent, God? Do you need an answer right now?"

Phillip Yancey says that "often a work of God comes with two edges, great joy and great pain, and in that matter-of-fact response Mary embraced both. She was the first person to accept Jesus on his own terms, regardless of the personal cost. Its admirable, isn't it?

### **Mary's song of faith and praise (v 46-55)**

And 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.

..."

After everything - her fear and her willingness to say "yes", she bursts into song. In Mary's response of praise in Luke 1:46-55, you will find allusions to 11 Old Testament passages.

Mary knew her Bible, and she drew upon its wisdom during a chaotic period in her life. It brought her perspective, direction, comfort, and hope. Old Testament allusions in Luke 1:46-55 include Genesis 17:7, 19; Job: 5:11; Psalm 35:9; 98:1; 103:17; 107:9; 118:15; 132:11; 138:6; and Habakkuk 3:18. The Scriptures were the foundation upon which Mary was building her life - no doubt a foundation passed along to her by her parents. Romans 10:17 says, "So then faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Her fear turned into praise, God's interruption in Mary's life took her fear, favour, and her "yes."

Interruptions are frustrating, and our faith lives are like this. When God interrupts us, when we find the purpose, we have been called to chase after, we hang on like this. This is what it looks like when we allow God to interrupt our lives. Just like in Mary's story, it requires full commitment, holding tightly to the rope of faith, no matter how much it tugs or pulls us out of our comfort zone because interruptions come from the hand of God, from the hand of our loving Father. And he can be trusted.