

Daily Reflection on Scripture Week of November 27 Mary's Story



When Elizabeth was six months pregnant, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a city in Galilee, to a virgin who was engaged to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David's house. The virgin's name was Mary. When the angel came to her, he said, "Rejoice, favored one! The Lord is with you!" She was confused by these words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. The angel said, "Don't be afraid, Mary. God is honoring you. Look! You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great and he will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of David his father. He will rule over Jacob's house forever, and there will be no end to his kingdom." Then Mary said to the angel, "How will this happen since I haven't had sexual relations with a man?" The angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come over you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore, the one who is to be born will be holy. He will be called God's Son. Look, even in her old age, your relative Elizabeth has conceived a son. This woman who was labeled 'unable to conceive' is now six months pregnant. Nothing is impossible for God." Then Mary said, "I am the Lord's servant. Let it be with me just as you have said." Then the angel left her. Mary got up and hurried to a city in the Judean highlands. She entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth.

Luke 1:26-40

If you would like to receive the Sacred Pause on your phone, text "crossroads" to 41411.

Sunday, November 27, 2016

Luke 1:27b-31 The virgin's name was Mary. When the angel came to her, he said, "Rejoice, favored one! The Lord is with you!" She was confused by these words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. The angel said, "Don't be afraid, Mary. God is honoring you. Look! You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus.

Reflection: Mary is invited to give birth to the Son of God. Like anyone else receiving such an amazing invitation, Mary was confused and afraid. And yet Mary did not run from the invitation instead she embraced it even though it was going to put both her and her fiancé Joseph in a dangerous spot. Even so Mary seemed to know that God was bigger than the fears and dangers surrounding them. Her confidence came by pondering and holding in her heart all that God had done in the lives of her ancestors, family and friends before her. By verifying God's unending presence, she was able to accept God's invitation to give birth to God's son. What stories of God's unending presence do you remember when you are invited to do something for someone else?

Sacred Pause: Today you may be invited to help someone. Reflect on how God has supported you before. May that reflection give you courage to accept God's invitation to help.

Monday, November 28, 2016

2 Samuel 7:28 "And now, O Lord God, you are God, and your words are true, and you have promised this good thing to your servant..."

Reflection: Have you ever looked back over your life and considered how far you've come? In this chapter of 2nd Samuel, King David reflects on his journey and comes to realize that God's grace is what has carried him through. David responds to God's faithfulness in kind, by declaring his trust in God's promises. Spend a moment today reflecting on your life's journey; are you able to recognize signs of God's grace in the good *and*

the bad times? How might you begin trusting God with your anxieties about the future? If possible, record your thoughts so you can return to them later.

Sacred pause: Today you are invited to reflect on your life; are you able to recognize signs of God's grace in the good and bad times? Can you trust God with your future?

Tuesday November 29, 2016

Psalm 20: 7 "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses, but our trust is in the name of the Lord our God."

Reflection: In the ancient world, chariots and horses were the equivalent of military vehicles; they are what you would ride if you were going to war. So, when the author of Psalm 20 declares, "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses, but our trust is in the name of the Lord" they are saying: our trust lies not in worldly power, but in the One who is greater.

As flawed and fearful human beings we are prone to putting our trust in the wrong things. We trust fad diets to change how we feel about our bodies; we trust politicians to fix all the world's problems; we trust products to fill the empty places inside us. But this trust is misplaced. God doesn't promise us a life free from pain and disappointment; He promises abundant life — a life so full of meaning and purpose that we can endure whatever comes our way.

Sacred Pause: Have you ever put your trust in something that promised what it couldn't deliver? Today you are invited set aside easy answers for trust in God's faithfulness.

Wednesday, November 30, 2016

1 Corinthians 1:27 But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.

Reflection: Throughout the scriptures, God consistently chooses the least, the lost, and the lonely to act as His representatives. And nearly just as often, people doubt their fitness to fulfill God's call. Thankfully, our doubt never has the final word. As the apostle Paul reminds the Corinthians, God's specialty is using what we consider foolish to accomplish His purposes.

As you pray today, ask God to reveal how your weaknesses and failure can be assets in God's kingdom.

Sacred Pause: 1 Corinthians tells us God uses what the world considers foolish to shame the wise. Today you are invited to trust that God can redeem what feels like failure.

Thursday, December 1, 2016

Revelation 21:5 And the one who was seated on the throne said, "See, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true."

Reflection: God can make all things new? We hear these words in the book of Revelation and think to ourselves, "Surely not *all* things!" But this is the good news of the Gospel: through Christ we have become new creations. We can trust God's promise to do something new and beautiful with our lives, if only we let Him.

Sacred Pause: Revelation 21:5a says, *And the one who was seated on the throne said, "See, I am making all things new."* Today you are invited to trust in God's new thing!

Friday, December 2, 2016

Proverbs 3:5-6 Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.

Reflection: Throughout time and culture there are an endless number of stories about the human tendency towards hubris. Icarus, who in Greek mythology dared to fly too near the sun on wings of feathers and wax, perished as a result of his pride. In Aesop's fables, the speedy hare falls asleep mid-race, and is surprised to find upon waking that he has lost to the turtle.

As beings with a limited perspective, we would do well to follow the advice of the wisdom teacher who

admonishes us to *“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding...”* Prayer, community, teachers and mentors — these are avenues through which we discern the wisdom way.

Sacred Pause: Sometimes we trust in our ability to save ourselves more than we trust in the One we call savior. Today you are invited to be still and know He is God.

Saturday, December 3, 2016

Psalm 143:8 Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love, for I have put my trust in you. Show me the way I should go, for to you I entrust my life.

Reflection: Quaker author and thinker, Parker Palmer, says this about discernment in his book, *Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation*: “Vocation does not come from willfulness. It comes from listening. I must listen to my life and try to understand what it is truly about - quite apart from what I would like it to be about - or my life will never represent anything real in the world, no matter how earnest my intentions.” Palmer reminds us that God’s voice pulses through the everyday, ordinary movements of our lives. Our job is to pay attention and respond in kind.

Sacred Pause: “Before you tell your life what you intend to do with it, listen for what it intends to do with you.” – Parker Palmer