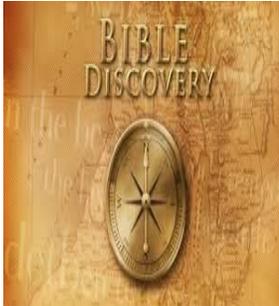


God Draws Near to Mary



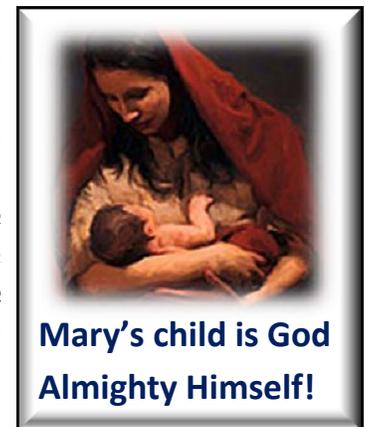
How a person approaches you says a lot about both them and their motives. For instance, if they walk up to you with their arms opened wide and a large smile on their face you figure it's someone who's really glad to see you and probably about to give you a big hug. However, if that person walking toward you has their arms tight to their sides, their fists clenched, and their eyebrows pulled together, you'll most likely consider this is someone who's either on the lunatic fringe or very angry with you. Perceptions tell us a great deal. But what is our perception of God – is He a loving Father or is He a tyrant determined to ruin our joy in life?

This Advent season I'd like to explore what it means when God draws near through the eyes of some of the familiar characters which play out in the well told story of Jesus' birth. In the gospel text before us we have an example of God approaching the people of this world as He sends His messenger to Mary, a young woman whom He has chosen to be the mother of His Son. Knowing the sinful state that this world is in we might expect God to approach the world in anger, bringing upon people his wrath and punishment. Yet, what we so often think God will do is usually the exact opposite of what God actually does.

God draws near to Mary in a way He's never come near to anyone before. He spoke to Moses from a burning bush, He called David a man after His own heart, but He chose Mary to carry His child. The baby Mary is to carry is no ordinary child, He is the Son of God; He is Himself Almighty God! Wow! Have you ever stopped and considered that God drew near to the people of this world by becoming one of us? In response, we see the modeling for our lives through Mary's example of seeking to be God's servant and how this shows us what it's like to seek to serve Him ourselves.

If that wasn't enough, Mary would soon journey to the house of her cousins, Zechariah and Elizabeth. On Mary's arrival, Elizabeth says, "*Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favoured, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?*" (vs. 42-43). Before Mary can tell Elizabeth her good news, the Holy Spirit reveals to Elizabeth that not only is Mary pregnant, but the baby Mary's carrying is Elizabeth's Lord and Saviour! Rather than ridicule from this older, righteous relative, Mary receives blessing from her as she recognizes God's mighty hand in Mary's life.

But Mary's not the only one in this world to whom God draws near. God draws near to those who seek Him, who seek to discover His purpose for their lives, who seek to surrender and follow Him. Sometimes, though, it's hard to do this. Think back over your



life and reflect on some of the more challenging experiences God has brought you through. As you remember are you able to worship the Lord for how He has stayed with you through those times of trial? Has God sent angels to speak amazing messages to you? Are people shouting for joy over the great things that God is doing in your life? Or does your life simply go on like it did yesterday, and the day before, and the day before that?

**God draws
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seek Him!**

That's the lesson we can learn as we consider the trials Mary experiences in a short time. This young girl, not much older than some of our grandchildren, is approached by a great light in which she sees a mystical figure – an angel, as a messenger of God. Out of all the people that God could have chosen to carry the Christ child, He chose Mary to be the mother of the Messiah. God sent his angel Gabriel to announce this incredible news to Mary. God caused this miraculous conception to take place in her body. And God miraculously revealed this truth to Elizabeth. God had drawn near to Mary. The only question from Mary is one of clarification. Naturally she can't understand the message because, in our human understanding we know it takes two to conceive a child. Mary had never been with a man – she was a virgin. Can you imagine her mind whirling as Gabriel explains that the Holy Spirit of God would come upon her and cause her to conceive supernaturally? It speaks volumes of Mary's character that she would absorb this deep information and accept it with humility. Later during her visit with Elizabeth, Mary is moved by all the goodness God has shown to her to proclaim:

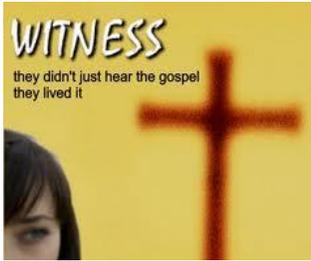
“From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me— holy is his name. His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation” (vs. 48-50).

Do we recognize the great things God has done for us? Do we praise God, as Mary did, for the miraculous things He does for us? Or are we oblivious to His presence, to the wonderful blessing God is carrying out in our lives every single day? How sad, how sinful, and how empty our lives become when we stop recognizing what our amazing Lord has done, and is doing, for each and every one of us.

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But of all that God had done for Mary, the greatest is to show her mercy. Mary had broken God's laws just as every person who has ever lived has broken God's laws. Like the rest of this sinful world Mary deserved nothing but God's wrath. She deserved to be damned to hell for the things she had done. But instead of giving Mary what she deserved, God gave her what she so desperately needed: A Saviour. In his mercy and compassion God chose Mary to be the one to bring that Saviour into the world. Mary heard from God, recognized when God chose to draw near, and believed what God said. She was saved by her faith.

Like Mary, we've broken God's laws. Like Mary we deserve nothing but God's wrath and eternal punishment. But also like Mary, God has given us exactly what we need: a Saviour. God purposefully sent his Son as our substitute suffering hell in our place. God allowed the One He loves the most to hang in agony on a cross so that He could show you mercy.



But God didn't stop there. Once his Son paid for the sins of the world God used His mighty power to work out all of history so you would hear the good news about Jesus. In mercy and love God the Father brought the gospel to your ears and your heart. Through the power of His word the Holy Spirit came and created faith in you. It's a faith that trusts in Jesus alone for the forgiveness of your sins. It is a faith that gives you eternal life.

But, again, God didn't stop there! God continues to draw near to you every single day. Every day God's mercy is new. Every day God draws near to us! Do we see Him? Do we see our Lord wrapped as a wonderful gift to the world? Do we see Jesus? That's what Mary saw and heard to where it moved her to glorify the Lord. Mary said: "My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior" (vs. 46-47). Mary heard what the angel Gabriel said about the child she was carrying. Mary saw the reaction of Elizabeth as the Holy Spirit filled her with the knowledge of how God was drawing near to his people. And when Mary heard and saw these things she was moved to give glory to God for the Saviour that God was giving to the world.

Does what we hear move us to proclaim the Lord's glory too? If we've heard the good news about that baby Mary carried; if we've heard the painful truth that it's our sins which put our Lord on the cross; that it's our sin that moved Jesus to die for us, then we too must give Him glory. It's not just what we've heard, but it's also what we've seen and experienced in our own lives that causes us to glorify God.

**God
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you every
single day!**

Our God promises, "*Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.*" May you stand firm in the knowledge that God draws near to those who seek Him. Thank God that He doesn't approach us as He has every right to with punishment for our sins. Thank God that He approaches us with his mercy and love. God draws near to bring us to faith in Him. God draws near to bring us the fulfillment of His promises; to give us eternal life with Him. Let us indeed then celebrate the reason for this season we call Christmas.

May God bless you as you enter into this Advent Season and may you know the presence of Jesus in your life today. Give us a call at 519-317-8659 or send an email to office.mbbc@xplornet.com.

Blessings,

Pastor Dave