

Pictures of God's Saints

Mary the Mother of Jesus

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Luke 1:26-38 (NASB)

[1:26] Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth, [27] to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. [28] And coming in, he said to her, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." [29] But she was very perplexed at this statement, and kept pondering what kind of salutation this was. [30] The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. [31] "And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. [32] "He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; [33] and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end." [34] Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?"

Have you ever asked yourself this question? How can I do what God has asked me to do, it seems so impossible? Men have always asked that question, remember the great man of God - Moses? Excuse after excuse after excuse. You see we ask that question because we are only looking at doing what He has asked us to do, in our own strength and power. But if like Moses and Mary we let God get involved, nothing would be impossible. In the next verse the angel tells Mary how it is possible to do what God has asked her to do.

[35] The angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God.

The word power (g1411) used here, is a Greek word that means "a spirit of strength, meaning manly vigor in opposition to a spirit of cowardice" **CWS-NT** It is this power of God, that is the opposite of cowardice, that accomplishes His will. In other words our Faith in God overtakes our cowardice and we step forward to accomplish His will in our lives.

God's power is intertwined with His sovereignty. He is not afraid to do whatever He wants to do, even something scandalous in our minds. To bring His Son into the world by a woman who becomes pregnant before she is married. Can you imagine what Mary and her family went through?

Another important word used here is the word overshadow (g1982). This Greek word is only used to describe three events in the New Testament.

1. It is used to describe the power of God coming over Mary to bring Messiah into the world for the salvation of mankind. (Lk 1:35)

2. It is used to describe the power of God descending on the mountain top when Christ was transfigured. This is when God came down to confirm that Jesus was His Son, doing His will here on earth. (Mt 17:5, Lk 9:34)

3. It is used to describe the shadow of Peter that touched and healed the sick people that were laid in the streets as Peter would walk by. It is God's confirmation of the continuing work of His Son here on earth through the church. (Ac 5:15)

This word is used to describe God's personal intervention and action in the world He created. What if God were to overshadow our church in 2008? And what if we were to step out in faith, leaving our cowardice behind to accomplish His will?

[36] "And behold, even your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age; and she who was called barren is now in her sixth month. [37] "For nothing will be impossible with God." [38] And Mary said, "Behold, the bondservant of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word."

And the angel departed from her.

Mary surrenders to God's will leaving behind her fears about how this will happen. She steps out in faith to accomplish God's will in His way.

Luke 2:1-20 (NASB)

[2:1] Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth. [2] This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. [3] And everyone was on his way to register for the census, each to his own city. [4] Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, [5] in order to register along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child. [6] While they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth. [7] And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. [8] In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. [9] And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. [10] But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; [11] for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. [12] "This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." [13] And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, [14] "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased." [15] When the angels had gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds began saying to one another, "Let us go straight to Bethlehem then, and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us." [16] So they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger. [17] When they had seen this, they made known the statement which had been told them about this Child. [18] And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds. [19] But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart. [20] The shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them.

I love the story of Christmas and the Christmas season. I must have passed that on to my daughter. She puts up several Christmas trees in her home every year. She has a southwestern style tree, a star wars tree, a hot wheels tree, a traditional tree, and every room in her house is decorated. But the first thing that goes up is a beautiful manger scene to celebrate the real meaning of the Christmas season, the birth of Messiah.

Vonda and I have a simple tree in our home. It has fiber optic lights that change colors, and Vonda decorates it with cut tin ornaments. We have a manger scene of cut tin ornaments as well. Outside we outline the house with colored lights and put up a simple manger scene in the front yard. For us it is a time to remember the birth of God's only son, Jesus the long expected Jewish Messiah and Savior of the world.

A big part of the Christmas story is Mary the mother of Jesus because she is an example of what we are.

Mary the Mother of Jesus *(An example of the uniqueness that is common to all of us.)*

Mary was a unique individual in many ways:

1. Very few people heard directly from God in those days but Mary heard from the angel Gabriel.
2. Mary was unwed and pregnant in a day when that was a disgrace.

3. She had to deal with watching the torture and murder of her Son.

4. She was the Mother of the only Son of Almighty God.

In the eyes of God Mary was not more important than you and I are.

Mary was simply to be a mother. Her **faith** came in listening to the Messenger from God. Her **cross** came in seeing her son killed. Her **joy** came in doing what God made her to do. She knew of the resurrection and was a participant in the beginning of the Christian church. Remember the church came under great persecution in those early days.

Mary was unique, not because she was the mother of Jesus, but because God created her unique. He created her for a specific purpose. That purpose was to fulfill His will in her life and do her function in the Body of Christ.

The Saints who are at Ephesus: *(The theology of uniqueness.)*

Ephesians 1:1 (NASB)

[1] Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are at Ephesus and who are faithful in Christ Jesus:

Paul is writing to the saints of the church not the world. And then to be very clear he notes that these are the FAITHFUL saints.

Ephesians 1:3-4 (NASB)

[3] Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, [4] just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love

God knows us intimately.

Ephesians 2:8-10 (NASB)

[8] For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; [9] not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. [10] For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

God made everyone unique. We have a very specific function to do on this earth and that function makes the body of Christ healthy.

Ephesians 4:15-16 (NASB)

[15b] ...we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, [16] from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

As we do what we were created to do we fit properly into the Body of Christ and the body is healthy.

You and I Today

We have no less a job to accomplish than Mary the mother of Jesus had to do. She did what she was created to do, that which God had decided before the foundation of the world was created. You and I were created unique and before the foundation of the world God had something for us to do as a part of His body.

The big problem with most Christians in the church today is they don't know what God created them to be. Most don't know what their talents are, they don't know what God created them to be

and as a result the church suffers.

We are at the threshold of a new year. It is a time for reflection and change not just as individuals, but also as a local congregation.

So let's reflect for a moment. The reality is, our church has been in decline for several years now. Churches have a life-cycle just like humans do. Some live longer than others but eventually all die. Are we at that point where we are winding down to that time of death, or does God still have more for us to do? Personally I do not believe God is through with Mountain View yet. I believe God needs us here, but we must find a way to move forward and I believe that God has showed me a way in which we can do that. It starts with all of us working together to discover what God has created us to be as individuals, what talents he created in each of us. Then we must work together to use those talents that God created in us to do our function in the Body of Christ.

Remember the Greek word overshadow that we looked at earlier? It is used to describe God's personal intervention and action in the world He created. What if God were to overshadow our church in 2008? I believe He wants to do that here at Mt. View. As His called pastor here, I set before you that we are going to step forward, not backward, in 2008.

In 2008 our focus is going to be a focus of discovering who God created us to be. We are going to discover the unique person He made us to be by discovering the talents He created in us as individuals. Then we will learn how to strengthen and use those talents to better our personal lives and our church. In this process we are going to let the Power of God Overshadow us so that we at Mt. View can carry on God's purpose and will both in our personal lives and in our church.

Starting in mid February we will begin taking our leaders and those interested in mentoring and training others, through a process of discovering and strengthening their talents. Then in early summer we will begin to take all of our congregation through the process of discovering and strengthening their talents. When this process is over we will begin to put teams of people together to better accomplish God's will and the mission of our church in the Kingdom of God.

There are three things you can do right now to prepare for this exciting step forward for our church:

1. Pray daily about your role in the future of this church.
2. Take action to participate in this process of discovery and training.
3. Set aside \$20.00 to purchase the book you will need.

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