

Part 3: *The Healing of a Heart*

PREVIOUS SUNDAYS: Thinking about the birth of Christ --- and the reasons for his birth ---- by thinking about the desires of the heart --- as we are prompted to think of them by considering some biblical pictures of Christ.

1. **The end of hunger** *"I am the bread of life"* He alone can satisfy certain hungers of the heart.
2. **The beginning of healings** He is *"the tree of life"*: He alone can heal certain problems of the heart.

And now we are at the 3rd in a series of 4 called "HEARTS DESIRE."

And on this Sunday before Christmas, we look at the noble, brave young woman who is at the centre of the story of the birth of Christ. Her name was Mary. **Luke 1:26-55** In the sixth month [of the pregnancy of the mother of John the Baptist] 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. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" Luke tells us a little of what and who she was: "a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph of the house of David." Let's keep going on the question:

NOTES: Who and what was Mary?

1. **Mary was "a daughter of Israel" AND a living picture of the people of God.** She was a Jew, an Israelite: and very aware that she was! e.g. her response to Elizabeth: **Luke 1:54-55** He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever. A living picture of both the Old Covenant nation and the New Covenant nation. Here again, I'm asking you to practice and so to get good at understanding the sort of "word pictures" and images and figures of speech that the **Book of Revelation** is loaded up with. **Revelation 12:1-2** And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth. This is a picture of the nation of Israel longing for the new life that would be theirs if only that long-expected baby would be born!
~~"Do the math!"~~ **"Let's do the geography. Do the history."** **Mary was living in Israel in the 1st century.** An occupied country. Occupied by the Roman Empire. The terrible 4th beast of the Book of Daniel. Think Poland or Holland in World War II.

And now do the theology." **The Roman conquest of Israel was not the blessing of God.** This was the Leviticus 26/Deuteronomy 28 curse of God on their faithlessness and their disobedience. **They were the people of God living under a curse of God. But they had been promised a Savior.** *And Mary was like them.* She was living under a curse. Burdened (e.g. taxes) and humiliated and endangered. Living at a time when her hometown was occupied by the army of a cruel people, a cruel conqueror. (This people had places of entertainment where you could buy tickets to see people killing each other (gladiators) --- and people being tortured --- or torn apart and eaten by animals. These were the people in charge of Mary's hometown, Mary's country. **But they had been promised a Savior.**

2. **Mary was a believer in the God of Israel AND a living picture of an individual believer in Christ.**

To Gabriel: **Luke 1:38** "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word."

To Elizabeth: **Luke 1:47** ... my spirit rejoices in God my Savior "Savior" → recognizing that it was only God who could rescue her / deliver her / save her --- from all of the details of the curse under which she had been living all here life But she was NOT just an example of the believers, (She WAS that, but she was more than that!)

She was a picture of a believer in Christ → **BECAUSE OF HER PREGNANCY. She had Christ living within her, physically** --- as every believer has Christ living in him spiritually, *that is*, specifically, by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, dwelling in us. **Romans 8:9** You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.

NOTICE: Paul thought of life in Christ in these terms of conception and childbirth: of Christ being conceived in us and being born in us. **Galatians 4:19** ... my little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you!

NOTICE, as a living picture of the experience of every one of us who believe in Christ, how it changes her.

SHE STARTS in a state of great unhappiness.

Luke 1:29 But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be.

SHE ENDS in a very different "state of heart."

3. **As a believer in God, Mary's life was radically changed.** This is only the first chapter in the very long story of her relationship with Christ. And here are details of what was going on in her heart as she travelled from the beginning to the end of the journey. → See that her life was changed by her coming to know, experientially, the greatness of God. **Luke 1:30-33** And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. **He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."**

It was in response to that message and everything that followed receiving that message that she said to Elizabeth:
Luke 1:46-55 **"My soul magnifies the Lord,** [JOHN PIPER: NOT MAGNIFYING LIKE A MICROSCOPE, MAKING SOMETHING VERY SMALL SEEM MUCH BIGGER THAN IT IS. BUT MAGNIFYING LIKE A TELESCOPE, MAKING SOMETHING VERY BIG BUT VERY FAR AWAY LOOK MORE LIKE WHAT IT REALLY IS.] **and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; (NO LONGER CURSED!) for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name.**
And she was clear about what God had done and was doing for her ("**Great things for me!**")
And she was clear on **the undeservedness** of what God was doing for her. Notice: "**mercy.**" **And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever."**

4. **As a believer in God, Mary's relationship with Christ grew deeper.** **NOTICE** that there is an expectation of growth and development. **See her focus on the greatness of God, and on the great things that God was doing --- and the great things that she was hoping God would do "in remembrance of his mercy."** And step by step, she took the journey that God had marked out for her. Physically, from Nazareth to Bethlehem." (90 miles) And from conception to childbirth" (9 months) **Luke 2:18-19** **And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart.** And then she lived for years and years with Christ (her child!) in her heart, in her life, living in her house. It was **a lifetime experience, a lifelong relationship,** not a once-in-a-lifetime experience. It wasn't like meeting someone briefly and never forgetting it. Never getting over a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Some people's experience with Christ is like that.

ACTIONS:

a) **Pray that God will strengthen you (and the people you love) to know Christ more deeply.** **NOTICE:** the great thing that God was doing for Mary, regarding this pregnancy, is what Paul the apostle was praying that God would do for regular Christians, like the ones in Ephesus. **Ephesians 3:14-19** **For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell ("deeply down") in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.** This is Paul writing to experienced Christians (As you can see from chapters 1 and 2.) So this is Paul's prayer for their experience with Christ deepening. He is praying that God will strengthen them so that Christ, who dwells in them, would dwell more deeply in them.
NOTICE the effect that this experience has on them: it changes their comprehension, their grasp, of the love of Christ. And that change results in them being filled with all the fullness of God. **John 6:35** **"I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger..."**

b) **Focus "the eyes of your heart" on Christ himself.**

Luke 2:19 **But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart.**

Hebrews 12:1-2 **Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to ("fixing your eyes") Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith**

Ephesians 3:20,21 **Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.**

NEXT WEEK: December 26, 2010 HEARTS DESIRE Part 4: The Revealing of Many Hearts Luke 2:22-35