

DATE: January 4, 2009

TEXT: Luke 2:21-52

TITLE: "Mary: A Disciple of Christ"



Throughout the month of December I shared lessons from Mary from the gospel of Luke. I want to continue the process of looking at Mary. What I want to do is to demythologize Mary. As I said a few weeks ago Mary indeed should be greatly honored. As Elizabeth proclaimed when she encountered a pregnant Mary.... **"In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear!"** Mary was indeed blessed. I also said a few weeks ago that Mary should not be revered as a god figure... but there is another reason to honor Mary... she became a disciple of Christ. I want to share a process that I took this week. I want to share all the other text in scripture that refer to Mary other than the birth narratives. There are not a lot.... there are only four. But in these four passages we see the faith journey of Mary. Allow me to begin with a brief historical sketch.

We know a few facts of Jesus early childhood. He stayed in Bethlehem for a long time... possibly up to 2 years. Remember Herod ordered all baby boys up to 2 years old to be killed in

Bethlehem. We do not know why they stayed so long, possibly because it was very near Jerusalem and Joseph could find work, but near the end of this time the Wise men from the east came. The young family fled to Egypt to escape the evil Herod the Great. Soon after this journey Herod dies and, in a dream Joseph was directed to return to Israel. He did not go back to Bethlehem, possibly because that region was ruled by an evil son of Herod, rather he returned to Nazareth, which was ruled by a more benevolent child of Herod. The family disappeared until Jesus was 12 years old. We believe he lived a fairly normal life. He performed no miracles... but it is believed he was a very good student of scripture. At age 12 his family journeys to Jerusalem and we once again see Mary. I will share 4 lesson on Mary.

Lesson # 1 We begin by seeing Mary's lack of understanding. Mary, of course had many amazing experiences. The miraculous conception. That, of course was never forgotten. The words of Elizabeth. The words of the shepherds. The gifts and the words of the wise men from the east. *Luke 2* tells us this about Mary. **“and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. 19But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in**

her heart.”

But things seemed to change when Jesus reached 12 years old. The age of 12 was important in Judaism and still is today. It's the beginning age of adulthood. Today 12 year old boys and girls celebrate their ba or bar mitzpha at that age.

The family of Joseph would have traveled in a caravan including many relatives. For Passover they journeyed to Jerusalem. Understand this would have been a 10 day to 2 week trip. When the family caravan left Jesus was assumed to be with cousins. He wasn't. After a day of travel they returned to Jerusalem searching for Jesus. It took a day to find him.... imagine the franticness of the parents.

When Adam was a toddler we put him down for a nap. A little time later we went in to check on him and he was not in his bed. We looked under his bed.. Didn't see him.... looked around the room.. Didn't see him. Looked throughout the house couldn't find him. We had a pond across the road from our house... ran down to the pond. Wasn't there. Finally we went back to his room and fond him under the bed... in a corner hidden by some blankets and boxes

sound asleep. But we will never forget those feeling of panic and fear. This had to be the feelings of Joseph and Mary. They found him in the Temple and the text ends with this dialogue between Jesus and his parents.

47Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. 48When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you."

49"Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" 50But they did not understand what he was saying to them.

51Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart. 52And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

We see in this text Jesus is beginning a journey. His journey, quite truthfully, would take him away from his tradition. It took him away from his family responsibilities. It took him away from his family and led him into obedience to the will of God. Mary did not yet understand this truth. I understand this.... Mary and Joseph were upset... but it was a critical lesson that had to be taught to his family... the will of God overrides the will of family and friends.

This is the lesson we too must understand. The philosophy of our society is that religion is good... in small doses. Again I can almost hear our society speak. It says **"Of course you should believe in god.... of course you probably should go to church once in a while...**

especially for the children.... but don't become a fanatic... don't get carried away." Can you

hear this voice? It was the was the voice of my parents. It was the voice of many of my friends

in High School and college. It was a voice of a girl friend. It was a voice of almost all of my co-

workers throughout college and seminary. Let me be honest.... I believe it is the voice of Satan.

I believe the truth of scripture. Allow me to share two texts. First, *Matt. 7:21*

21"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

Lip service is never the will of God. Also *Revelation 3:15*

15I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! 16So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth. 19Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent. 20Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.

Mary had to learn this lesson. Jesus would have to be a follower of God. That following was costly to his family. We must have Christ as Lord of our lives. This by the way is the last reference to Joseph in Scripture. We assumed he died before Jesus began his public ministry.

Lesson # 2 Mary learned that Jesus was indeed a special man of God. The next appearance of Mary was at the beginning of Jesus' ministry. In John 2 we have the record of

Jesus first miracle at a wedding in Cana. Jesus had been baptized by John the Baptist. Jesus had begun to call disciples... but then Jesus had a family obligation.. A wedding that his family had been invited to. He joined his family at the wedding. Weddings were multiple day events. To run out of wine at a wedding was a grievous social embarrassment. Notice this dialogue between Jesus and his mother...

3When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine."

4"Dear woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied, "My time has not yet come."

5His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

The term “dear woman” in Greek is a term of tremendous love and care. Jesus had never performed a miracle. Yet Mary still told the servants to obey Jesus. Mary knew Jesus was a man of authority, compassion and able to accomplish wonderful deeds. Mary did not understand what it meant to have a son who was a Messiah... But we see the progression of faith.

The application is this... faith is a progression. It was true with Mary... and it is true with us. We begin with a decision to make Jesus our Lord. We may make this for the first time as a child... or a teenager... or as an adult. But that is not the end of the story... far, far from that. Again and again we must make the decision that Jesus is our Lord. Again and again we must

surrender our lives to Jesus. We must do this every day of our lives. Christian maturity is a process. The growth of faith is a process that begin before our conversion and continues to the day we are in the presence of Christ. The important fact is this... continue the process. Weather you are 11 or 21 or 41 or 61 or 81 or 101 the process of Christian must continue. Christ must be allowed to mold all of us into his likeness. That is a lifelong process.

Lesson # 3 We see Mary's continued reluctance to trust in Jesus. This story is recorded in

Mark 3:31

31Then Jesus' mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him. 32A crowd was sitting around him, and they told him, "Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you." 33"Who are my mother and my brothers?" he asked. 34Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! 35Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother."

First, some interesting details. Jesus had brothers and sisters. The idea of Mary's perpetual virginity is not biblical. The idea came in the early Catholic church because it connected original sin with the act of sex and did not want Mary to be subject to original sin.

But we see that the family of Jesus were not disciples of Christ. They actually tried to prevent his public ministry. We also see this wonderful lesson.... We are the family of Christ.

We are the brothers and sisters of Christ.

Here is an important application... familiarity breeds contempt. This is true in all of life including faith. Sometimes those who grow up in the church become so familiar with the things of religion that they fail to see and experience the miraculous presence of Christ. This is the sad truth for many, many families. What can we do? Two things. First, pray. We pray for our children... we pray for our grandchildren... we pray for the children of our church. Second, we choose religion and we embrace Jesus Christ. Religion is habit. Religion is obligation. Religion is duty. Jesus Christ is wonderful. Jesus Christ is alive. Jesus Christ is present. Jesus Christ is loved and returns that love.

The family of Jesus took a long time to come to be disciples... but many did come to Christ. Our children and grandchildren may choose a path of wilderness... but we continue to pray and embrace Jesus.

Finally, Lesson # 4 Notice that Mary became an intimate follower of Jesus Christ. This final appearance of Mary in the Bible is, of course, at the foot of the cross. *John 19:25*

25Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. **26**When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Dear woman, here is your son," and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

Mary stood at the foot of the cross. All the disciples with the exception of John had gone into hiding... but the women stood there including Mary. She was a follower of Jesus. Could we think anything different. As a young girl she followed her God. As a teenager she accepted the will of God. Now, as an older woman, she followed her Lord and God... her son Jesus. It is clear at this time that her children had not become followers... she was placed in the care of, not her family, but of John. She moved in and lived with John. You see, even Mary needed the family of believers to continue her faith walk. Think about that. We need each other in our walk with Christ.

We know that one other brother came to Christ. James had the resurrected Jesus appear to him (1 Corinth. 15:7) and he became the leader of the church in Jerusalem and wrote the book of James in Scripture. We do not know about the rest of the family.

This is the journey of Mary. A woman of God. A faithful follower of Jesus Christ. A

wonderful example for all of us. A blessed woman.

AMEN