

Ready for Whatever

December 24, 2017

Some of the biggest decisions you will make in your life require a big commitment to an unknown future. For example, getting married requires you to put a lot of trust into another person, your new spouse. Some people change a lot after marriage. Some become hard to live with, though they were pleasant enough while engaged to them. You don't really know if your spouse will change. So marriage requires a big commitment, sort of a blind commitment.

Another example is joining the military. You make a total commitment to the military, and yet you have little say in what that will entail. The military will give you a job you might not have chosen for yourself otherwise. They may send you to places you might not want to live. You don't know what the future will hold for you as you serve your country.

This morning we'll see another life situation that calls for a blind commitment. We see this in the Christmas story in Luke 1.

Luke 1:26-38 (NIV) In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."

"How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month. For nothing is impossible with God."

"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said." Then the angel left her.

God revealed His will to Mary. God interrupted the normal course of her normal life and changed its direction.

The revealing of God's will changes the course of our lives.

Mary was a young woman, likely a teenager. In addition to all the normal chores and tasks of everyday life in her family, she was busy making preparations for her marriage. It would mean moving out of her parent's home. It would mean sexual intercourse. It would mean adjusting to living with someone new. We don't know how well she and Joseph knew each other already. It may be that they hardly knew each other at all. If so, she would be apprehensive about what marriage to Joseph would be like. He might bully her, demean her, or beat her. It was not uncommon then or today.

Then all of a sudden an angel shows up, out of the blue. Angels had not been showing up every year or so since she was a child, preparing her for this special task. No, the angel's visit was new and unexpected. And suddenly her normal life was redirected by God.

My call to the ministry was the same way. I was focusing on one possible career path when God called me to a totally different direction. It was as much a surprise to me as it was to my pastor when I told him.

The revealing of God's will for us will change the direction of our lives. It changes the focus of our obedience. It will change our expectations of what life will be like from here forward.

The revealing of God's will calls for a response from us.

We are bombarded with information each day. Most of it we forget. It goes in one ear and out the other. But God's will revealed is important. We should not treat it like most of the other information we receive each day. God expects a response from us.

Now people respond to the revealing of God's will in different ways. Some people DO ignore what God has revealed. They walk away from it as if it is just another bit of trivia to forget. I would not recommend this response.

Other people acknowledge that God has revealed His will, but refuse to cooperate. Their response is, "Not me. I'm not going to do that." This is what Jonah did. He got the message, but he ran from the task. I would not recommend this response either.

Some people verbally respond with a yes, but do nothing to make it a reality. Still others try to bargain with God. "I will do that, but only under these conditions." All of these fall short of what God expects from us.

Look at Mary's response. **Luke 1:38 (NIV) "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said."**

Or to put it another way, Mary said, I'm ready to live His will whatever that may be. I'm ready for whatever." No greater commitment can you make to God. And in fact, no lesser commitment should you make.

Mary was given the most important and prestigious job in history. Though it did not seem like it at the time. And she could not prove it was true. I wonder if Mary tried to tell her family about the angel visitation? I wonder if they believed her? Even if they did, many in the community likely did not. Probably, she carried a bad reputation the rest of her life, one she did not deserve. How hard that would be, especially in a small village like Nazareth. That hurt. That was a hard burden to carry.

Mary did not know all of what her total commitment to God's will would mean. Other than having an unnatural baby, she did not know what lay ahead. God did not promise her riches or fame or glory or comforts. She likely suffered the pangs of birth like any other woman. They were traveling when she was fully pregnant and she went into labor outside, in the weather instead of in a home. So she paid a price for her big commitment to God.

What might God call you to do?

Let me share with you some of the possibilities. God is still calling out men to be pastors in churches. Some start new churches and others go to existing churches. God is still calling some to be teachers in Christian colleges and universities. God is still calling some to chaplain ministries in the military or hospitals. God is still calling men and women to be missionaries around the world. Some are Bible translators who produce translations of the Bible into languages that do not yet have a translation. Some are doctors and nurses who work with the poor in makeshift hospitals. Some are agricultural missionaries, teaching poor farmers how to sustain themselves through better farming and animal husbandry methods. All of these seek to share Jesus with those they come into contact with. Maybe God is, or will, call you to some sort of full-time missionary work.

Another possibility is that God will equip you for a specific ministry in your church. Many have served in our church for years in a particular ministry. Janet Cook was an excellent teacher of children. She taught the older children for years in our church. Some years she had a small group of children. Other years she had only one. She worked extra hard when she had only one, to make it fun and to introduce that child to the love of God expressed to us in Jesus Christ.

God may call you to a particular ministry like He did me. But there is another revealing of God's will that we all experience. **God reveals His will for how we are to live.**

As we read the Bible the Holy Spirit reveals the meaning and application of Jesus' commands. And we must respond. For example, we might realize Jesus wants us to humble ourselves, or to love each other in a specific way, or to resist a certain temptation. These and many other things we learn are his will for all of us. And this too calls for a response from us.

"How can you make such a whatever commitment to God?"

That's what some of your family or friends might ask. They may not want you to make a blind commitment to God. They may fear the relationship will change. They may try to pull you back from a total commitment to God.

But it is a fair question. How can you make such a commitment to God? How can you say, "I'm ready for whatever?" How can you just give God your whole life when you don't know what it is He wants you to do?

1. We live in God's grace.

Mary was told that she was highly favored by God. By faith in Jesus Christ we are highly favored by God. We don't just experience a little bit of God's grace now and then. No, we stand in grace. We live in His grace.

Romans 5:1-2 (NIV) Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.

Christians, we don't just get to experience a little bit of grace from God, now and then. No, we LIVE in His grace. We are living in the favor of God. We are adopted by God. We are heirs with Jesus. You can't get any closer to God, any more in His grace than you already are.

How can we make a total of commitment of ourselves to God? Knowing what kind of god He is, how can we not? We are highly favored by Him. God is for us. If God is for us, who can be against us?

2. God is with you.

Whatever God has for you to do, it does not mean that you are going out to do it on your own without God. God was with Mary in the conception, in the gestation, in the contractions, in the birth of the baby, and in the raising of Jesus to manhood. God never departed Mary. And God will not depart you. God has placed His Spirit in you. You are never apart from the presence and power of God.

3. God can do anything.

Like the angel told Mary, nothing is impossible for God. We should take courage in that because God can do anything. While I can't do much on my own, God and I together can do anything.

4. My future is secure.

Everything the angel told Mary about her future came true. She became pregnant miraculously and the baby was a boy and he was called the Son of God.

God keeps His word. His word to us is a salvation yet to be completed. This salvation entails the forgiveness of all of our sins, a new resurrection body, and eternal life with Him. The cost of this salvation has already been paid in full by Jesus on the cross. The transfer of this salvation has already taken place based on our faith in Jesus' death and resurrection. Jesus is now preparing a place for us with Him. And when it is ready, and the time is right, He will return for us.

1 Peter 1:3-5 (NIV) Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade--kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

Our completed salvation is safe in heaven. And while we are living a total commitment to God down here, we are shielded by God's power. The devil can't lose you your salvation.

How can I make total commitment of myself to God?

Because of the four truths above, I can sacrifice my present life to the will of God.