

When God Interrupts Your Plans
(Put yourself in Mary's sandals)

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HOW WILL YOU AND I RESPOND WHEN GOD INTERRUPTS OUR PLANS?

We're in Luke chapter 1.

As we begin this series studying the book of Luke, you might be saying "Christmas was in December." "Either you are two months late or ten months early!" The first part of Luke isn't just reserved for Christmas lessons.

Here's an opening question, and I hope some of you will share:

Can you think of a time in your life when God INTERRUPTED your plans with something that was ultimately BETTER FOR YOU? How about the plans of someone close to you? You were just going along, thinking life would be a certain way, and God INTERVENED in your circumstances with a DIFFERENT DIRECTION...a DIFFERENT IDEA. How about you? Any stories?

When God INTERRUPTS our plans we call that a DIVINE INTERVENTION.

As we'll see in Luke chapter one. That's exactly what happened to a young virgin Mary. ONE lesson for us in is HOW SHE RESPONDED to that INTERRUPTION.

Luke 1:26-38

26 In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, 27 to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. 28 The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

29 Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. 30 But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. 31 You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. 32 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, 33 and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."

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

35 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. 36 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. 37 For nothing is impossible with God."

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

- There are many things we can take from this ACCOUNT of Gabriel coming to Mary.
- We could talk about PROPHECY FULFILLED or THE IMPORTANCE OF THE VIRGIN BIRTH. Both important!
- Even the baby's name was significant...Jesus, the Greek form of JOSHUA meaning "Jehovah is salvation"...Joshua led the Israelites to the Promised Land and this baby would make a way for ALL MANKIND to have eternal life. Important!
- Of course, just reading verses 32-35 gives us the ULTIMATE MESSAGE: God chose to send His son into a fallen world to REDEEM those who BELIEVE. To save us from hell and give us ETERNAL LIFE. That alone would be a good place to say AMEN and go home.
- But I was impressed that we should PUT OURSELVES IN MARY'S SANDALS.
- That we should consider how Mary's situation compares to YOURS and MINE.
- The very definition of INTERVENTION is to interfere with the course of things in order to prevent harm or improve the situation.
- There could be no greater DIVINE INTERVENTION than the Angel Gabriel showing up.
- We don't know exactly how hold Mary was. But in that tradition, a young Hebrew girl could have been PLEDGED to her future husband as early as 12 years old.
- Imagine being a 12 to 14 year old Hebrew girl CONFRONTED by this situation!
- The angel Gabriel showing up made it clear, **GOD** WAS SPEAKING to her.
- I wouldn't predict you or I will see Gabriel...but when God wants to get our attention he is UNMISTAKABLE about it IF WE WILL JUST PAY ATTENTION!
- Look at verse 28. What did the angel say to her? You are..."highly favored! The Lord is with you."
- Only Mary was CHOSEN for this ONCE IN HISTORY role...she was HIGHLY FAVORED in a way that NO ONE ELSE will EVER BE. So, I'm cautious to make ANY comparison to US.
- However, just like with Mary, When God INTERRUPTS our plans, I believe He reassures us of WHAT two things in verse 28?: That we are FAVORED by Him and HE IS WITH US.
- Verse 29 How did Mary RESPOND?
- She..."was greatly troubled" and wondered "what kind of greeting this might be." WHAT IS THIS ALL ABOUT?
- How could we apply that to when God INTERRUPTS OUR PLANS?
- When God INTERRUPTS OUR PLANS it can be SHOCKING, TROUBLING, CONFUSING.
- Verse 30 "But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God." Again, she was REASSURED...this isn't BAD, if it's from God its THE BEST!
- Then the angel told her exactly what would happen.

31 You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. 32 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, 33 and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."

- In Verse 34 she REACTED very logically: “How will this be,”...“since I am a virgin?”
- How would Mary's reaction apply to US when God INTERRUPTS OUR PLANS?
- When God INTERRUPTS OUR PLANS it may not MAKE SENSE at first.
- His ways are not our ways...when God INTERRUPTS OUR PLANS - LOGIC may be out the window!
- Verses 35-36: What does the angel say to explain HOW God will do this?:
- 35 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[a] the Son of God. Verse 37: "For nothing is impossible with God.”
- How can you and I APPLY THAT to WHEN GOD INTERRUPTS OUR PLANS?
- He will work through His HOLY SPIRIT in us to give us HIS POWER to do the IMPOSSIBLE! (Circle Holy Spirit...Power...and Impossible)
- Let's pause right here for a question: In a battle, when an army is confronted by a stronger force, what three options (other than being killed) does the weaker force have?
- They can...Fight, Flee, or Surrender
- Those options don't just confront someone in battle, but in all of life.
- Example: When I was "smitten" with Susan I could have fought it, or fled it, but thank God I SURRENDERED to her charms!
- When God INTERRUPTS our plans we can FIGHT IT, or TRY TO FLEE IT, or we can SURRENDER.
- When Mary's life got INTERRUPTED we all know how **she** responded:
- Verse 38 “I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May it be to me as you have said.” Then the angel left her.
- This young girl was OBEDIENT and STEPPED UP
- You may say, "What choice did she have?" Gabriel didn't say "What would you think about this?" or "Would you like to be the Mother of the Messiah?"
- Still, I don't believe scripture LEAVES OUT important details and this passage doesn't convey that Mary PUSHED BACK or RAN TO HER FAMILY or FELL INTO CONVULSING SOBS. She just said "May it be to me as you have said."
- When God INTERRUPTS OUR PLANS he also uses people we TRUST to help Him CONFIRM what He's told us and REASSURE us.
- Mary went to see her cousin Elizabeth and it was obvious Elizabeth KNEW what God was UP TO.

Luke 1:42-45

42 In a loud voice she exclaimed: “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! 43 But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? 44 As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. 45 Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished!”

- God used Mary's cousin Elizabeth (mother of John the Baptist) to CONFIRM what He was doing in Mary's life. He also sent an angel to her fiancé Joseph to CONFIRM it. --

- When God INTERRUPTS our PLANS He will give us CONFIRMATION.
- Again, NO ONE IN HISTORY could compare to the role Mary played.
- Still, we can LEARN from her OBEDIENT RESPONSE.
- What are some examples of how God can INTERRUPT our PLANS? How about...
- But, God...how can this be?...I thought I was supposed to marry him/her...
- ...I'm not qualified to fill this ministry role
- ...why didn't I get that promotion
- ...I can't go to Romania on a mission trip...
- ...we can't move to China and witness to those people...
- And the ULTIMATE INTERRUPTION...when God INTERRUPTS Satan's scheme and draws us to Himself THROUGH His GRACE to give us the MERCY WE DO NOT DESERVE and ETERNAL LIFE through His son Jesus Christ. -----
- When God interrupts, He promises His best...but there's one more thing to know:

Luke 2:33-35, when Mary and Joseph presented the baby Jesus in the Temple:
 33 The child's father and mother marveled at what was said about him. 34 Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, 35 so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."

- When you read the last words of verse 35 ("And a sword will pierce your own soul too.") what comes to mind about when GOD INTERRUPTS YOUR PLANS with something BETTER?
- God's INTERRUPTIONS are what's BEST, but they are not PAIN FREE.

So, What's the TAKEAWAY?

- Back to our question: HOW WILL YOU AND I RESPOND WHEN GOD INTERRUPTS OUR PLANS?
- We'll likely be TROUBLED and CONFUSED at first. Mary was.
- We'll need to understand that NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE WITH GOD. Mary did.
- Hopefully, we won't FIGHT or FLEE, but we'll SURRENDER. Mary did.
- And then she REJOICED ----- in a song we call the MAGNIFICAT which begins in verses 46-48 of Luke 1:

46 And Mary said:
 "My soul glorifies the Lord
 47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
 48 for he has been mindful
 of the humble state of his servant.
 From now on all generations will call me blessed,

As I said earlier, just reading verses 32-35 gives the REAL TAKEAWAY: God chose to send His son into a fallen world to REDEEM those who BELIEVE, save us from hell, and give us ETERNAL LIFE. To paraphrase Mary: "May it be to US as you have said."