

Walking With The Characters Of Christmas
“Mary: A Willing Servant In God’s Radical Agenda”
(Part 2)

Intro: Do you ever wonder if God has a plan or is life pretty much random? Does God really have an agenda or is it simply all about cause and effect? (Look at the world today...War / Economy / Murder-Suicides lately / Evil-Violence / all seems so out of control!)

One of the greatest themes regarding Christmas is that God indeed has an agenda. God has plans and purposes that He orchestrates in real life, in real time, with real people. The Scriptures are filled with this truth.

Eph. 1:9 “God has now revealed to us his mysterious plan regarding Christ, a plan to fulfill his own good pleasure.” (NLT)

I Cor. 2:7 “No, the wisdom we speak of is the mystery of God —his plan that was previously hidden, even though he made it for our ultimate glory before the world began.” (NLT)

Eph. 1:11 “...he makes everything work out according to his plan.” (NLT)

- Today we look at one of THE most popular characters of the Christmas story...Mary. Mary stands out as this humble, willing servant to God’s agenda...an agenda that was pretty radical. I want to summarize this story and then take a look at our response to God’s agenda today. God still has an agenda today that needs willing servants.
- Summarize story: Teenage girl living in a town with a bad reputation – Nazareth.
- 3 truths regarding God’s agenda

I. God’s Agenda Involves Normal People

Luke 1: 26-27 “In the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a village in Galilee, to a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David.” (NLT)

- WHY? Why would God use normal people?

A. God uses normal people to shame the values of this world

1. Let’s think about who Mary really was. She wasn’t anything special. She was a typical Jewish girl. She wasn’t from some affluent, influential family or from an important city. She was a nobody from Nazareth.
2. This is not the way you and I would have introduced the Savior of the world to humanity. We would have chosen a highly visible person in a highly visible city. God chose obscurity!

3. During Jesus’ ministry, one person said; “Can anything good come from Nazareth?”

I Cor. 1:26-30 “Remember, dear brothers and sisters, that few of you were wise in the world’s eyes or powerful or wealthy when God called you. Instead, God chose things the world considers foolish in order to shame those who think they are wise. And he chose things that are powerless to shame those who are powerful. God chose things despised by the world, things

counted as nothing at all, and used them to bring to nothing what the world considers important. As a result, no one can ever boast in the presence of God.” (NLT)

4. God just loves to prove the worldly system wrong. There are only 2 Kingdoms. God loves to show that His Kingdom operates on different principals than this earthly, fallen kingdom. What seems utterly foolish from an earthly perspective is God’s wisdom at work! God’s strategy being implemented!
5. This world values superstars! Look at who people’s hero’s are? (Entertainers / Sports Figures / People in the lime-light.) God is unimpressed with all this. Think about all the characters of the Bible. Who did God choose to use over and over?
6. Joseph was a 17 yr old teenager / Moses herded sheep for 40 years / Gideon was a fearful farmer / King David was a teenager herding sheep / What about Jesus’ disciples? Most were just a bunch of fishermen. Jesus picked a bunch of average guys to change the world!
7. Why is this so significant? Because God indeed has a strategy that involves people just like you!

B. God uses normal people as a testimony to the world

1. Average people just serve as better testimonies to God’s agenda. We have to stop looking at our lives through this fallen world’s perspective and see our lives through God’s purposes and plans. (He’s not looking for superstars)
2. God loves to take average people and use them in supernatural ways. He loves to highlight His strategy, His wisdom, His power through people the world would not expect.
3. This gives us the opportunity to explain to people about the reality of God...the reality of another Kingdom that operates by different standards. Average people know that when God does something through them it is God and not them. They don’t take the credit. They give the glory to God!
4. Christianity has strayed from this perspective over the years. They have put their focus on getting Christian entertainers / star athletes / politicians and presidents. This will help change the world – these people are great witnesses. Often this has backfired!
5. God’s agenda has always and will always involve normal / average / every day people like you and I. These are the people God uses to change the world. Just like a girl named Mary!

II. God’s Agenda Doesn’t Always Follow Typical Methods

Luke 1:34-37 “Mary asked the angel, “But how can this happen? I am a virgin.” The angel replied, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the baby to be born will be holy, and he will be called the Son of God. What’s more, your relative Elizabeth has become pregnant in her old age! People used to say she was barren, but she’s now in her sixth month. For nothing is impossible with God.” (NLT)

A. Typical methods don’t highlight God’s agenda

1. God's methods for accomplishing His agenda are radically different than ours. Think about God's strategy with Mary. Think about how Crazy this was!!! Here the angel is telling her she was going to be pregnant and not married.
2. This may not be as big a social stigma today, but 2000 years ago? You need to try to wrap your minds around this. Maybe think about what it was like for a pregnant teenager back in the 50's.
3. Think about trying to explain this to her parents? Think about trying to explain this to her soon to be husband Joseph? This was a crazy, radical, this is hard to understand plan! BUT, God's ways are nothing like ours!

Is. 55:8-9 "My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts," says the LORD. "And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine. For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts." (NLT)

4. There are times when obedience is going to seem crazy. There are times when following God is not going to seem logical. There will be moments where getting on board with God's agenda will simply not make sense.
5. I think about my own journey with God. I would have never planned for me to get kicked out of my last church; be abandoned by my denomination / be unemployed / thoroughly confused / to begin a church called Foothills over 11 years ago in a elementary school cafeteria.
6. BUT, now in hindsight I can see God's agenda all along the way. WOW! What a strategy. What wisdom. What an amazing thing God did and is doing? Talk about a non-typical method! BUT what an agenda! (Wasn't random – it was orchestrated

B. Typical methods do not highlight God's power

1. God's methods highlight His power not man's strength. God's methods highlight His wisdom not man's ingenuity.

I Cor. 1:25 "This foolish plan of God is wiser than the wisest of human plans, and God's weakness is stronger than the greatest of human strength." (NLT)

2. God choosing to use Mary and choosing a radical method just highlights God's greatness! If the Messiah came through natural human methods of childbirth, where would the power be in that? No, this was supernatural!

I Cor. 4:20 "For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power." (NIV)

3. Often, what appears to be a crisis, a problem, what appears to be a barrier, to our natural understanding is simply God's method to highlight His power. It is God's non-typical method to accomplish His will and people see Him.
4. 2 weeks ago the building project was stalled out. Permits were 10 days out...or even more. (Clackamas County) We tried our human ways to proceed only to be blocked. Therefore, we prayed and asked God to move. Next day they gave us a courtesy inspection and permits to continue.
5. All this did was highlight God's agenda and His power! It once again illustrated to us what Kingdom method produces power...PRAYER
6. God's agenda for Mary didn't follow a typical agenda. God's agenda for your life

more than likely, won't follow one either. We need to embrace this understanding. WHY? Because you don't want to miss out on what God has in store for you. God has a plan for your life.

- How do I discover it? The same way Mary did.

III. God's Agenda Requires Our Cooperation

Luke 1:38 "Mary responded, "I am the Lord's servant. May everything you have said about me come true." And then the angel left her." (NLT)

- Mary's response speaks volumes about her character and the childlike simplicity regarding her faith. Her response illustrates complete and total cooperation with God's radical strategy. Her response is a great example for how we should respond to God. BUT, what does cooperation require?

A. Cooperation requires the mindset of a servant

I am the Lord's servant...

1. I honestly believe in our culture this is not a positive term. Even though it is represented hundreds of times in the NT, I think we tend to resist it. We value individualism in our culture not servant hood.
2. Yet to cooperate with God fully, we need to embrace the same mentality Mary had. "I am the Lord's servant." God, I will do whatever you require / whatever you want / whatever you say.
3. I think we resist this mentality because with it comes the idea of ownership. We don't want to be owned by anyone. Yet, this is exactly what Scripture teaches.

I Cor. 6:19-20 "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price..." (NIV) Does God really own you?

4. God has an agenda for your life. No matter how off course you may think you are, God's plan for your life still remains. It simply requires your cooperation. It requires you to embrace the attitude of a servant.
 5. If we are going to become servants this means giving up your agenda for your life in order to embrace God's agenda. You can't have both. Until we embrace the attitude of servant, we will always serve our agenda before God's.
 6. Is it scary? Yes? Will the journey be predictable? No! Will you ever regret giving up your plans for God's? Never!
 7. I feel like I am the most unlikely person to be the Pastor of Foothills. I never aspired to be a pastor / never thought of myself as highly spiritual / never dreamed of doing great things for God / Then, God began revealing His plans for my life. \ Now, I had a choice to make. I won't lie to you...it was tough! It was out of my box. It was a scary thing to decide, "Lord, I am your servant".
- In order to cooperate with God like this, it requires one more thing....

B. Cooperation requires us to surrender to His will

May everything you have said about me come true....

1. This is what Mary did. In order to be an effective servant in the Kingdom of God, You have to sacrifice your will for God's. See the surrender in Mary's response? She surrendered to everything the angel said.
2. Is this our response when it comes to the word of God? Is this how we respond when we are confronted with God's truth? "Lord, May all that you say in your word be a reality in my life?" WHY? Because I am surrendered to You and what you say!
3. Here is where the rubber meets the road in embracing God's radical agenda for our lives. The critical spiritual issue is the surrendering of the will. Until our will is surrendered, we simply can't embrace God's agenda.
4. WHY? Because everyone one of us has a built in default setting. Our default setting is to always to our own thing. Live independently of God. Be your own Master. Serve your own needs and desires.
5. The only way this is reprogrammed, is to surrender our will to Jesus. It is to relinquish our rights to our lives and surrender our plans for His.
6. The reason so many believers have a mediocre experience with God is because of this issue. They are trying to follow Jesus while still in their default setting. This is IMPOSSIBLE! This is why God's agenda isn't clear / you can't see it / struggle following it.

One of the central truths regarding the Christmas story is that God has a plan! God has a plan for this world...God has a plan for humanity...AND God has a plan for your life. In a world that seems so chaotic / random / and out of control, what a comfort it is to know there is a God who is IN control. AND, this God who is in control would love for you to submit your life under his care...under His agenda for your life.

- His agenda is not beyond you. It's for normal, everyday people like you.
- His agenda is not going to follow typical patterns, so you can plan on being surprised...amazed....BUT, you'll never regret it.
- His agenda though, requires your cooperation. Just like Mary. It will require us to become servants, who are surrendered to His will.

Therefore, if you are tired of the results from your agenda, I want to invite you to change your default settings today. I want to invite you to respond to God today like Mary did so that God's agenda for your life can become your reality.