
RESPONDING TO GOD

Martin Luther loved Mary.

- How many of you knew that?
 - Throughout my career as a Lutheran pastor, I have regularly been surprised by how few Lutherans know that.
 - I suspect that's because, while Lutherans often know too little about our Roman Catholic kindred,
 - one of the things they do know is that Mary has a significant place in the story of GOD's saving act in JESUS CHRIST.
- Martin Luther, despite his battles with those in charge of the Roman Catholic Church, indeed loved Mary.
 - And what he loved most about Mary was how Mary responded to GOD.

"I am the LORD's servant. May your word to me be fulfilled."

- I wonder what the world would be like if Mary hadn't responded in this way to GOD'S interruption in her life.
- I wonder what the world would be like today if more people did respond to GOD'S breaking into their lives like Mary.

Mary models the kind of reaction we should have to GOD's appearing in our lives.

- She wonders and ponders.
- She questions and considers.
- She answers in awe.
 - And Mary's reply to GOD's call understands that fear is the normal response to GOD when GOD enters abruptly into our lives.

Because Mary knows her GOD.

- And only a few verses later, she will testify to the GOD she's always known,
 - the GOD who shows mercy for those who fear GOD;
 - who scatters the proud in the thoughts of their hearts;
 - who brings down the powerful from their thrones and lifts up the lowly;
 - who fills the hungry with good things and sends the rich away empty;
 - who remembers Abraham and all of his descendants, which includes her. Forever.
- And now, more than ever, Mary knows who her GOD is.
 - She knows what her GOD has done—for her, and for her relative, Elizabeth, for the outcast, the overlooked, for those discarded, disenfranchised, dismissed.

In other words, she doesn't view this angel thing as business as usual.

- She gets that GOD is GOD and cannot be predictable.
- She doesn't question why GOD has chosen her at this moment in this time and this place to be the one GOD needs and wants.
- She doesn't attempt to control GOD for her own gain.
- She doesn't say, "Well, that's interesting, but no thanks. I have other plans."
- She doesn't try to figure out how to maneuver GOD for her own benefit.

And Mary would never assume GOD is not on her side.

- She never presumes to speak for GOD.
- She would never suppose that she could regulate the will of GOD.
- And she certainly would never imagine that she could determine what GOD might do next.

Mary reminds us of what it looks like and what it sounds like when GOD shows up in your life—unannounced, unexpected, and unplanned.

- And this is an important reminder as this season of Advent draws to a close.

While Advent moves toward both the anticipation and preparation for the birth of JESUS, there is, in the end, a certain outcome:

- that which we expect will indeed come to fulfillment.
- GOD indeed enters into humanity.
 - But the annunciation of Mary we hear today helps us remember that GOD becoming human should always unsettle and upset,
 - especially when we have settled into times of trying to predict GOD's arrival or determine GOD's favor.

Mary exposes how we tend to react to GOD's intrusion in our lives.

- Because GOD's interruption is often thought of as an inconvenience.
- GOD's impossibility is all too frequently met with disbelief
- And GOD's intrusiveness is all too commonly met with resistance and control.

But, when GOD breaks into the world and our lives, our response needs to be the same as Mary's, who says:

- *"I am the LORD's servant."*
 - Because when GOD intrudes, how can you not?
 - I mean, what else is there to say?
 - GOD intrudes when GOD must.
 - GOD intervenes when GOD's Kingdom is in peril.
 - GOD interrupts injustice.
 - GOD interferes when power oppresses.
 - And we should be saying, "We are the LORD's servants."

"I am the LORD's servant," is the right response, is the "Mary response", when GOD calls you to stand up for the vulnerable.

"I am the LORD's servant," is the "Mary response" when GOD calls you to be fierce against bills and laws that are passed that perpetuate entitlement.

"I am the LORD's servant," is the "Mary response" when GOD calls you to insist that diversity is the hallmark of the Kingdom of GOD.

"I am the LORD's servant," is the "Mary response" when GOD calls you to affirm those persons who give witness to God working in their lives.

“I am the LORD’s servant,” is the “Mary response” when GOD calls you to call out discrimination against gender, transgender, and gender non-conforming people.

“I am the LORD’s servant,” is the “Mary response” when GOD asks you to care for GOD’s creation, as the environment cries out against those who ignore science-based evidence.

Christians, Mary’s response needs to be ours—this Sunday and especially as Advent fades into Christmas

- and as GOD’s imposition of divinity into humanity is long forgotten.
 - Mary has empowered us to say, “I am the LORD’s servant.”

Watch for GOD’s interruption.

- Listen for GOD’s call.
- And then say it, “I am the LORD’s servant.”
 - Say it with me now:
 - “I am the LORD’s servant.”
- Watch and listen for GOD to intrude into your life.
 - Then say it: “I am the LORD’s servant,”
 - and then...see what happens.