



## DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

### A change of plan from a human perspective ... by Gareth

*READ LUKE 1: 5-38; 11, 12, 16*

- Plans often change even in our daily lives the question is this can we gracefully embrace these plans? Many of us will be familiar with this passage of scripture and indeed about Zechariah and Elizabeth. However our familiarity of a certain passage of scripture should not allow us to switch off from the truths that can be found therein.
- What a testimony is spoken of in scripture concerning Zechariah and his wife Elisabeth (*Luke 1 vs 6*). Many may already know that Zechariah was a priest and it would appear that his life was going on as normal.
- He was a priest in his day (time in history) and one of his duties when called upon to do so was to keep the incense burning on the altar. He would have supplied the altar with fresh incense before the morning sacrifice and again after the evening sacrifice. As was the custom going back to Aaron's day in. (*Ex 30 vs 6-8*).
- Zechariah's difficulty came when he could not grasp the reality that his wife Elizabeth was going to have a baby, contrast that with Mary's response when she was told by the angel that she was going to give birth.
- *Luke 1 v38: "I am the Lord's servant, Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said?"* Then the Angel left her. What a powerful surrender. *Let it be to me according to your word. - Luke 1:38.* What must it have been like for Mary to carry God in her womb?
- The virgin birth is much more than a Christmas story; it is a picture of how close Christ will come to you. The first stop on His itinerary was a womb. Where will God go to touch the world? Look deep within Mary for an answer. Better still, look deep within yourself. What He did with Mary, He offers to us! He issues a Mary-level invitation to all His children. *"If you'll let Me, I'll move in!"*
- To His apostles, Christ declared, *"I am in you"* (*John 14:20*, emphasis mine). Paul's prayer for the Ephesians was *"that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith"* (*Ephesians 3:17*, emphasis mine). *"Christ in you, the hope of glory"* - *Colossians 1:27* (emphasis mine).
- And the sweetest invitation from Christ. *Here 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. - Revelation 3:20* (emphasis mine).
- Christ grew in Mary until He had to come out. Christ will grow in you until the same occurs. He will come out in your speech, in your actions, in your decisions. Every place you live will be a Bethlehem, and every day you live will be a Christmas. You, like Mary, will deliver Christ into the world. God in us! Have we sounded the depth of this promise?
- While Mary's life plan dramatically changed from the time the angel Gabriel spoke to her, it is certain that she never would have dreamed or planned or to be the mother of God's Son.
- Like Mary, you and I are indwelt by Christ. Find that hard to believe? How much more did Mary. And no one was more passive than she was. God did everything. Mary didn't volunteer to help. What did she have to offer? Advice *"From my perspective, a heavenly choir would add a nice touch."* Yeah, right. She offered no assistance.
- And she offered no resistance. She could have said, *"Who am I to have God in my womb? I'm not enough."* Or, *"I've got other plans. I don't have time for God in my life."*

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## Devotional Message (contd)

Issue 47

Instead, Mary said, *Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word.* - Luke 1:38.

- If she is our measure, God seems less interested in talent and more interested in trust. Unlike her, we tend to assist God, assuming our part is as important as His. Or we resist, thinking we are too bad or too busy. Yet ~~when we assist or resist, we miss God's great grace. We miss out on the reason we were placed on earth - to be so pregnant with heaven's child that He lives through us. To be so full of Him that we could say with Paul, It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.~~ - Galatians 2:20.

### Prayer

*O Lord, live in me. May Your love beat in and through my heart? May you speak through my voice? Jesus, be the strength of my soul and the fire that purges wrongs from my desires. Fill me with Your great abounding grace. In Jesus' name, amen.*

- Like Zechariah. You maybe a follower of the Lord for many years but He is desiring to change what you thought was the plan. Zechariah I am sure desired to continually serve God faithfully. This in itself is very commendable.... But God had a greater plan for him and his wife Elizabeth and that was have a baby which was to be called John. None other than John the Baptist. Something Zechariah could not grasp hold off (Luke 1 vs 18).
- In like manner Mary's life was turned upside down. A major change of plan a young woman looking forward to getting married to Joseph. I am certain that they had many plans? Who wouldn't especially in their situation?
- What has God in store for you? As we move towards the end of 2016? Could it be a plan that you had not considered before? *Jeremiah 29v11 "For I know the plans I have for you says the Lord, plans to prosper you...!"*
- As were heard last week from Pastor Billy, there are gifts within each one perhaps dormant at this moment and time?
- As Elizabeth and Mary found out, Perhaps God has a change of plan but rather introducing you to something you never thought possible. I would encourage each child of God here today, to spend a few moments reflecting on and asking God what His plan is for your life.
- Perhaps you have reached the stage in your Christian life, like Zechariah and Elizabeth of old who was happy to remain faithful which is very commendable and is not wrong. But God is saying to you I have something more in store I desire that you fan into flame that which is lying dormant at present. And as God brings that ~~revelation, may we have the same spirit that Mary had when she simply said 'Behold the maidservant of the~~ Lord! Let it be to me according to your word. - Luke 1:38.

## Events /Notices

- ▶ **The bookshop will be opened** on request for the next two weeks for those who are unable to make it in during the week. See Norah/Billy for more details.
- ▶ **The carol service will begin** at the earlier time of 7.00pm tomorrow. Cherith and the interns have arranged a buffet meal after the service for the children and all are welcome to join in. Those who want to make a donation will find a box marked "Renovation Fund".
- ▶ **Christmas morning meeting** will be at 10.00am and will include praise, breaking of bread and prize giving for the children.
- ▶ **Prayer and Fasting** - Sunday 8th of Jan 2017.