**THE JOURNEY BEFORE THE JOURNEY**

The Story of Bethlehem – Part 2

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December 8, 2019

**Luke 1:37 (NIV) – Memory Verse**
For nothing is impossible with God."

**Luke 1:26-38 – Scripture Reading**

One of the wonderful things that we see in the Christmas story is God using ordinary people just like you and me. Its always been that way. Where the world looks for the extraordinary to accomplish great things, God delights in using common everyday people. As we look at four of the main characters, see how our Lord uses each one of them in a unique way.

**THE UNFOLDING DRAMA CONTINUES**

1. **Mary’s Story** Luke 1:26-38

And then, one afternoon Mary was spending some time alone, perhaps sitting under a tree near a quiet stream, saying her prayers. Suddenly, she realized she was not alone. The shaded area in which she sat was filled a brilliant light. She could see what appeared to be a man. He was, actually, an angel, sent by God. His name is Gabriel. Someday we'll know him, and we'll hear him tell this story.

1. **Elizabeth & Zechariah’s Story** Luke 1:1-23, 39-45

It was *this* Elizabeth that Mary made plans to visit after she spoke to the angel. Mary knew about Elizabeth's condition, because of the angel, but Elizabeth knew nothing about Mary's situation. In fact, no one did. Not even Joseph at this point.

1. **Joseph’s Story** Matthew 1:18-24

Can you imagine how Joseph must have felt? Anyone who has been in his position would know. The hurt. The sense of betrayal. The feeling of anger. The indignation. And the fear that comes when you realize that you don't know this person at all, and maybe it wasn't the first time, and what if it isn't the last? The fear of not knowing ... and then the hurt starts all over again. Joseph's world had fallen apart. His hopes and plans for the future had turned to dust

**THREE LESSONS FROM THIS PART OF THE UNFOLDING DRAMA**

1. **You Are More Qualified Than You Think You Are**

God uses ordinary people. Or even those we might consider less than ordinary. People from the sticks. People from the wrong side of town. People from broken homes and dysfunctional families. People who can't get into the good schools. People who have to work two jobs to put food on the table. People for whom this world has never given a break. There's a place for you.

**1 Samuel 16:7 (NIV)**
…The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

1. **God Will Give You The Confirmation & Direction You Need, When You Need It**

A life of following Christ isn't a journey that you have to take alone. He is with you, and he will bring others into your life, as well.

1. **The Journey Before The Journey Begins Today**

There's a journey of great distance that God will call you take in your life. It involves your work, and your family, and your church, and the people you know, and the people you serve, and the people whose lives you will influence in the years to come. It is this Journey-with-a-capital-J that defines your life.

But before you take *that* journey, you must take *this* journey, to a place of complete surrender.

Today, I am challenging you to take the first steps of this journey-before-the-journey. The journey to surrender.

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