

Advent Week 4: Mary, Did You Know?

Luke 1:46b-55

Rev. Shannon White

Wilton Presbyterian Church

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Normally on this Sunday, we would have the Christmas pageant... a wonderful tradition in this congregation which has been produced and acted in many different ways over the years.

But since we are virtual this year, I thought we would focus on Mary and her relationship as a future mother... and this morning we've also heard about her cousin, Elizabeth, who was also an expectant mother at the time.

One of my favorite Gospel songs has been, "***Mary, Did You Know?***"

Mary, did you know that your baby boy would one day walk on water?

Mary, did you know that your baby boy would save our sons and daughters?

Did you know that your baby boy has come to make you new?

This child that you've delivered, will soon deliver you

In spite of the fact that Mary was a young teen... Mary was a formidable character in Christian history.

As one meme circulating around on clergy sites says of the question posed in the song, "***Mary, Did you Know?***" ... oh... Mary Knew. She knew alright. Based on the words, which Christians have quoted over thousands of years... Mary knew exactly what she was up against. And she was ready. And good thing she was... because Jesus would need her to be the best mother that she could be.

Mary may have been young, but she was smart. She knew how important it was to be bonded to her baby... just as Elizabeth and her baby were bonded.

The bond between parents and loving surrogates and their children is deep and is essential for the healthy functioning of a baby as he/she grows into childhood and beyond. Emotional connection and physical touch have been proven to have a formative impact on strong development. And the emotional well-being of parents is key in order to provide the safe haven and stable environment for their children to come into the world and to give them room to grow and learn. Parents who are emotionally healthy can provide the space their children need to be free to pursue whatever their God-given paths are.

Thank God Mary had the inner wisdom and maturity, even at such a young age, to make way for however that would unfold for Jesus.

Mary was not some docile young woman (as depicted in so much artwork through the ages) who was expected to do only as she was told. How on earth could the son of God be born to such a woman? No, the son of God needed a strong woman, who was confident enough in herself to bear such a child, and who could lay open the opportunities he would need to prepare him for the God-given mission which was ahead.

In an op-ed in the Washington Post from several years ago, DL Mayfield says, "Mary, no longer just a silent member of the nativity, or a holy womb for God, or an obedient and compliant girl, has become the focal point for how I, and many other Christians, celebrate Christmas while living in the reality of waiting for true justice to come." (*D.L. Mayfield Washington Post article, Mary's Magnificat is Revolutionary; Some Evangelicals Want to Silence Her,* Dec. 20, 2018.)

And what of Joseph? We don't know a lot about him. He was an older parent at the time of Jesus' birth. A skilled craftsman, who was from Nazareth. The gospel writers handle Joseph's story differently, and he mostly stays in the background to Mary's role throughout his ministry. Most scholars believe that Joseph was not living at the time of Jesus' crucifixion, since it would have been his duty to care for the body following Jesus' death. And he's not mentioned even in Jesus' early ministry... but we don't know. What we can surmise, however, is that in Jesus' early and formative years, Joseph was present and that there was a stable home environment, which allowed Jesus to grow and flourish.

In a few minutes, we will celebrate the baptism of Elizabeth Kay Summey, daughter of Allison and Scott Summey. It was actually held last weekend with a small group here in the sanctuary and videotaped so that you could be part of the service to affirm your commitment to her. A note... we were socially distant. You may notice I pulled my mask down for this short service... which was to accommodate those with hearing issues.

In the baptism, the parents and the godparents affirm that they will raise this young child in the faith to know and to love Jesus. The congregation pledges to provide nurture and support as she grows in faith as well... to be the child, adolescent and woman she is destined by God to be. We all need to continue growing in our faith lives so that we may provide our youth with the environment to love and serve our God with freedom and joy.

So... parents... and those who are in roles of caring for children... we know our task is huge, don't we? We need to keep working on ourselves so our own agendas don't get in the way of the important ways each of our children need to contribute to the world.

And Children... follow your dreams. Each and every one of you is deeply beloved and known by God. Each one of you has been given unique gifts

for you to use. Be appreciative of your parents and caregivers for giving you the opportunities and resources to nurture what it means to be uniquely you.

And the world will be the better for it. Alleluia! Amen!