

# From The Pulpit

by Rev. Donald M. Clark

## THE CHARACTERS OF CHRISTMAS

Text: "Mary, Who Gave Him Birth." (Luke 1:26-38)

In studying the character of Mary, we omit any thought that she was other than an ordinary woman (except in the sense that the mother of any great personality is distinguished from other women). As Protestants, the great majority of us believe in the Virgin Birth of Jesus. But the fact of the Virgin Birth does not, in any sense, imply that Mary was divine. The miracle was God's, not Mary's. Indeed, there is no evidence whatever in the Scriptures that Mary accomplished any miracles, though Roman Church "saints" have allegedly accomplished many since the time of Mary.

MARY WAS HONORED above all women in that she was selected to become the mother of the Messiah. That she was so selected is evidence of her character, and the fact that she was selected over others evokes a number of interesting thoughts.



REV. D. M. CLARK

The Scriptures tell us that six months after the conception of John the Baptist, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to Nazareth to a virgin named Mary, who lived there, and was betrothed to a carpenter named Joseph. Joseph is explicitly declared to have been a descendant of David. While Mary is not so described, many believe that she, too, was of Davidic origin because she was told that her child should receive "the throne of his father, David," and also because our Lord is said to have been of "the seed of David according to the flesh." Also, the genealogy of Christ, as recorded by Luke, is through His mother.

THE ANGEL ANNOUNCED to Mary that she should have a son who she should call Jesus. "He shall be great; and shall be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord shall give unto him the throne of his father David; and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end." When Mary asked how this could be, since she was a Virgin, she was told that it would be wrought by the power of the Holy Ghost. In other words, Mary had been selected by God to be the mother of the Messiah, so long anticipated by the Jews.

Incomprehensible though the forthcoming event might be, Mary immediately accepted the truth. When the angel informed her that her kinswoman, Elizabeth, was also to become a mother, she hastened to the village of Judah, where Elizabeth lived, and there she uttered the words which we call the "Magnificat." (Read Luke 1:46-55). These words show plainly that Mary understood that she was to be the mother of the long looked for Messiah.

The first fact that we note about Mary, then, is her ACCESSIBILITY TO GOD and God's accessibility to her. God spoke; she listened; she believed; she acted. Not every mother is so accessible! God speaks only to those who are willing to listen. When God announced to Hannah that she would be the mother of a son (Samuel) it was so incredible she laughed! Not so with Mary. God had spoken, and she instantly believed.

WE DO NOT OFTEN HEAR of God speaking to men through angels today--indeed, He speaks in a far better way, and His Word is accessible to all. Yet, to many a mother (and father, too) the Bible is literally a closed book. Mary did not have our Bible, of course, but she was so familiar with the Hebrew Scriptures that she hardly needed to read them--they were written on her heart. Certainly, God would not have made Himself known to one who knew nothing of the Scriptures and the hope which they contained for a Deliverer. If we would hear God speak, there is a simple and infallible way to hear His voice: Just open your Bible and read!

# HOLY DAY OF OBLIGATION

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 8

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CONFESSIONS BEFORE MASSES



Our second glimpse of Mary is in Bethlehem, in the inn stable. Her Son has been born; He is visited and worshipped by the shepherds. Later, when Mary and Joseph took Jesus to their home, the Magi came and worshipped Him and brought Him gifts. What did Mary think about it all? "Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart." A miracle had happened. . . a miracle which she never forgot. Who is there among us who has not had a miracle in his life? Have you kept it in your heart and pondered upon it? Take the miracle of Redemption. Keep it in your heart, and think about it day by day!

We do not know a great deal about Jesus' childhood. We know that He was raised in a God-fearing home; that He heard and (as He grew older, read for Himself) the Scriptures; that He attended the synagogue services regularly. One brief glimpse of Mary's character is afforded us when Jesus was twelve years old. Every year Mary and Joseph went to Jerusalem to attend the Passover. As soon as Jesus was 12 years old, they took Him with them as was the custom when children reached that age. Jesus was attracted by the "doctors of divinity" in the temple, and became so absorbed in conversing with them that He forgot all about joining the caravan with His parents, to return home. When He was missed, they hastened back and found Him deep in conversation with the doctors. When reproved, His answer astonished them: "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" Mary did not understand how her child was to fulfill His mission--she only knew that it was her responsibility to rear Him for God's service. And "his mother kept all these sayings in her heart."

WE KNOW LESS THAN MARY DID about the future of our children. When I was a boy, my highest ambition was to become street-car motorman! My parents knew better, but they still didn't know that profession I would really choose. We cannot select careers for children, but we can mould their lives in such manner that whatever the career, motivation for same will be based on a solid foundation. After all, it isn't a matter of life or death whether a man becomes a doctor, a lawyer, or a brick-layer--but it IS a matter of life or death whether he decides to give his heart to God!

We next see Mary in the village of Cana, shortly after Jesus had commenced His ministry. Like a great many mothers of today, Mary forgot that her boy was no longer a child, and she tried to tell Him what to do. In her case, the offence was greater because she knew of His divine mission. And Mary must understand that, as far as her Son's work was concerned, she must be a follower, a disciple, like anyone else.

Mary showed the same natural trait at another time, when she sent word to Jesus, when He was busy working, that she wanted to see Him. Jesus' reply showed that He considered the spiritual bond that existed between Him and His disciples of more importance than any human ties. "For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, he is my brother, and sister and mother."

BECAUSE MARY BELIEVED in the Messiahship of her Son, it is not strange to find her following Him up that last toilsome journey toward Golgotha. And, in His last hour, Jesus thought of her, as He committed her to the care of John, the beloved disciple. It took unusual courage to stand at the foot of her crucified Son, but Mary had that kind of courage.

Our last view of Mary is when we find her in the upper room with the disciples, after the ascension of her Son. Now she could understand more fully the mission for which she had prepared Him. We do not know how or where Mary died; it is not important. It does not matter how we die--it matters a great deal how we live.

MARY SHOWS US THE WAY to devoted and pious motherhood.

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