

**“Do You Know?”** 1 John 4:7-21; Luke 2:1-14 (Christmas Eve Sermonette by Pastor Anita)

Good evening and welcome in the name of Jesus the Christ to the first ever Christmas Eve Electronic Worship Service of Mt Paran Presbyterian Church.

As you worship with us this evening, you will be introduced to our 2020 Christmas Choir under the direction of Elder Akwa Angwafo. Let us prepare ourselves for worship as we prayerfully listen to the prelude.

## FOCAL SCRIPTURE

### Luke 1:26-38

<sup>26</sup> In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, <sup>27</sup> to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. <sup>28</sup> The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

<sup>29</sup> Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. <sup>30</sup> But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. <sup>31</sup> You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. <sup>32</sup> He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, <sup>33</sup> and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

<sup>34</sup> "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

<sup>35</sup> The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called <sup>Ⓜ</sup> the Son of God. <sup>36</sup> Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. <sup>37</sup> For no word from God will ever fail."

<sup>38</sup> "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." Then the angel left her.

Mary Do You Know has become one of the more recent beloved Christmas songs.

Originally written by Mark Lowry of the Gaither Vocal Band in 1991, the song has long been a staple of our radio and playlists.

It is so powerful because it comes to the heart of what we really want to ask of the scripture.

We long to take Mary aside and say to her “did you know all the things that were to come in this infant’s life?”

This simple lyric, almost a lullaby in it’s sound, pulls at our heart strings as it poses questions about Mary’s baby boy.

The song hits us because I believe it is packed with such truth as it traces the baby in Mary’s arms from the Messianic Prophecies (‘save our sons and daughters’ from Isaiah 43:6) through Jesus earthly ministry of healing the blind, walking on water as told in the gospels, and resting in the Cosmic Reign of Christ as Heaven’s Perfect Lamb. The one who will rule the nations. The One who is the enfleshed Great I Am.

In just a few verses it goes through the movement of this Mighty One who left the Throne of heaven to reside with the likes of you and me.

This song that encapsulates itself at once in both a lullaby and a solemn tone of a funeral.

It is at once expressive of both the beauty of the miracle of the birth of this 'child born unto us in the city of David, that is Christ the King' (Isaiah 9:6).

It is so powerful because it expresses the Christ that arrived on that first Christmas evening.

He appears quite the paradox to us.

He is both the newborn child who like all new born children needs everything done for him, and he is the same one whose hand was at the heart of the creation of the universe.

He is the child born to earthly parents but is the one and only Son of God.

In this moment of time, He is both creator and creation.

In the night of His birth, this night that is so Holy, we still sing of it's stillness and it's silence in "Silent Night".

The song asks "Mary did you know" whom you held.

It asks repeatedly.

And our scriptures give us the resounding answer.

The narrative of the Annunciation (Luke 1:26-38), and the content of the Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55), make it obvious that Mary knew her child would be the Messiah.

At some level she knew that God would become man within her.

As Mary rocked her baby as all mothers are want to do with their newborns, did she wonder how his kingship would play out in her poverty?

Did she know as he aged, how her little Jesus', her little Jesu, how his lordship would play out in their everyday lives?

Luke 2:19 says "Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart."

It is fair for us to assume among her nightly ponderings she had lots of questions, as any new mother would.

That's what is so striking about this song and about this moment of Mary's delivery of the Christ child.

That's what makes this miracle so startling.

Because it, this incarnation, this moment of God resting as a babe in the arms of His mother, reminds us that this is not an event to be looked upon lightly.

It is not even something that should be just accepted out of course.

This event, in order to have real meaning in our lives is not something that can be simply understood.

The event of Christ's birth and the Christ child is to be encountered.

In our encountering of Christ and the Virgin Birth, we must wrestle with the scriptures.

“In the beginning was the Word. And the Word was God and the Word was with God.” John 1:1

In order to accept this Christ as a baby we have to believe that He is a part of the Godhead.

We have to accept as Mary did that He is Messiah.

We have to accept as Mary did that God is still in the miracle working business.

Indeed a woman at this time in humanity's timeline would have no access to miraculous IVF.

She would have only had her belief in God, and the word of an angel.

At the heart of the scriptures of this most blessed of nights, when the most blessed of assignments was given to the most blessed of women, is a simple incredible act of faith.

The song asks “Mary did you know”, but our scriptures ask “Beloved of God, did you know...”

Did you know that God’s plan of this night, the Christmas story itself, was born in the creation of the world.

In the beginning was The Word, who is Jesus Christ the Lord.

Why would Israel, Jerusalem, Bethlehem or us, we need a savior?

Because from the first time man and woman were upon this earth their hearts sought to live in a way that was other than God’s way.

And each person since has as Isaiah said in Isaiah 53:6 “we all like sheep have gone astray, each one has turned to his own way”

Our sin kept us from God and we needed a bridge from our sinful selves back to our loving God.

Jesus came as that bridge.

Jesus’ birth is a fulfillment that God would not leave us to wallow in the mistakes and abandonment of Him through our sins.

Jesus’ birth is a fulfillment that God’s love for us would give us entry to the one who loved us best and loves us still.

Jesus’ birth meant that our sin sick souls would not bear the punishment that we deserve, but God would make a provision in love for us.

‘God’s perfect love’, the scripture tells us, ‘... perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.’

God desires us to accept His love.

God desires us to accept His loving gift of the Christ child.

This birth each year demands that we look at our hearts and at the scriptures and find the meaning that is intended for us.\

Beloved of God, God sees your need.

God saw your need even before you knew you needed it.

God sees the broken heart, the one crying out to be made whole.

God sees the hungry and the lame and still longs to heal broken mankind.

The Christ child who was born on that first Christmas evening, was nailed to the cross that we might be called the sons and daughters of the Most High.

He longs for those who have already accepted Him as their savior to open their hearts just a little wider to Him that we can truly be enabled to be the hands and feet of Jesus in the world.

1 john 4:19 “We love because he first loved us.

God loved us first, continually, consistently.

Do we display His love wherever we are?

Could people tell by the way you love others that the Christ child resides in your heart?

2020 has brought so much upon the world and our way of life, whatever we define that to be.

In this year especially, Christ is not a present to be discarded, but a joy to be uncovered all the year.

God wants you to have a life of abundant, joy, hope, peace, love.

We get there by not ignoring the greatest gift of all.

The God who sent Himself.

The Christ who was the Gift and the Giver of life.

This Christmas, let the love, joy, peace, hope of Christ dwell in you.

It is the only present you need under the tree.

The newest technology cannot give it to you.

The prettiest jewelry cannot give you what Christ can.

The song our Choir sang this evening asks a simple question of Mary. Mary did you know that this child was the great I Am?

The scriptures ask of you this evening, beloved of God, do you know how much God loves you?

Do you know that you can hold on in the difficult times, because with God better times are ahead.

Do you know that this child born unto us, is the Great I Am?

Amen.

Join with us as we sing with the choir, "Silent Night"

## CHALLENGE

Beloved of God, please leave this worship service this evening being assured of the fact that Jesus, God incarnate, loves you.

He loves you enough to continue to reach out to you to call you into a deeper relationship with him

This Christmas unwrap the Christ anew.

Amen

## BENEDICTION:

Let us go from this place proclaiming

that we have seen the glory of God

Believing that there is a light that shines in the darkness

Which the darkness shall not overcome

And may the love of the Creator

The joy of the Spirit

And the peace and hope of the Christ-child

Be with you this Christmas, and evermore

Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.—**Ephesians 3:20–21**

Go in *peace*, knowing you're God's beloved child!

Thanks for joining us this evening. Tomorrow we will post a quick Christmas devotional. Join us. You are always welcome at Mt Paran.

Now one quick announcement before we go....