

Mary, the Loyal Mother

Devotional Reading: Revelation 12:1–6

Background Scripture: Luke 1:26–56; 2:15–19; John 2:1–5; 19:25–27

Today's Scripture: Luke 2:15–19; John 2:1–5; 19:25–27

I. Mother's Amazement

Luke 2:15–19

¹⁵ When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

¹⁶ So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. ¹⁷ When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, ¹⁸ and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. ¹⁹ But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.

15. A group of *shepherds* receive a heavenly visitation. This group declares a Savior newly born.

As the *angels* return to *heaven*, the shepherds deduce that the city mentioned is *Bethlehem*. They decide to seek out the sign and *go* and *see* the Christ child. They recognize that the message they've received came from the *Lord*.

16. A *manger* is a feeding trough for cattle. Mary and Joseph used it as a crib out of necessity. What a strange sign for the shepherds to receive! Yet it proves to them the identity of Jesus, the infant Lord.

17. The shepherds' sight of the baby (*him*) in the manger is enough to confirm

what they heard from the angels. Immediately, they become evangelists, spreading the "good news" to the surrounding towns and villages.

18. The shepherds' witness is effective. People hear and respond. The story the shepherds tell includes heavenly messengers, unlikely recipients, incredible directions, and a humble infant Savior lying in a feeding trough. The story sounds far-fetched, but it is accurate and makes the hearers marvel.

19. In contrast, *Mary* stays quiet. Like creating an interior scrapbook, she takes mental notes of each moment, memory, and visitor as she experiences God's plan unfolding. Mary considers the miracle of it *all* and then tucks the memories away in her *heart*.

Imagine the things Mary *pondered*: angels, visions, dreams, her husband's obedience, a miraculous pregnancy and subsequent birth, tales of more angels, and shepherds who know what she knows—this is no ordinary baby!

II. Mother's Request

John 2:1–5

¹ On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, ² and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. ³ When the wine was gone, Jesus'

mother said to him, “They have no more wine.”

⁴ “Woman, why do you involve me?”

Jesus replied. “My hour has not yet come.”

⁵ His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.”

1. *Jesus’ mother* (who is never specifically named in John’s Gospel) attends a wedding in Cana, a small town less than 10 miles from Nazareth. Her attendance at the event makes it probable that she has a family connection with someone in the wedding party. It is possible she came early to help. At the least, the marriage involves close family friends.

Jesus’ mother’s presence serves as essential background information for the episode that follows.

2. If Mary is related to the bride or groom, Jesus is too. Therefore, Jesus’ presence may be a family expectation at the event. Jesus’ *disciples* are present with him. Thus far in John’s Gospel, we know that the band of disciples includes Andrew, Peter, Philip, Nathanael, and the unnamed disciple of John the Baptist. The unnamed disciple might be John the Evangelist, the author of this Gospel. If John is present, then it is likely that his brother, James, is in attendance too.

Weddings in first-century Judea lasted for seven days after the bride and groom finalized their vows. The invitation to this *wedding* was not to an afternoon ceremony but rather an extensive feast. Those *invited* to the celebration could expect an abundant time of joy, food, wine, desserts, music, and dancing at the groom’s family home. Jesus and his disciples accept the invitation to participate. Nathanael is from Cana, so he is likely acquainted with the family hosting the wedding.

The scene is set for the first of seven miraculous signs that point to Jesus’

identity as the Messiah (John 2:1–11; 2:13–22; 4:46–54; 5:1–15; 6:1–14; 9:1–38; 11:1–45).

3. A near catastrophe occurs: the *wine* runs out. Since the customs of honor and status naturally led to comparisons with other families and local wedding celebrations, no bridegroom wanted to be considered miserly for scrimping on the event. Tradition and public image pushed wedding feasts toward extravagance. The tendency would be to provide a lavish experience that made others in the village consider the bridegroom a generous provider. As in any era, communities have long corporate memories! The host (the groom’s family) was responsible for providing all food and drink for the duration of the celebration. To fail to do so was shameful. Therefore, a shortage of wine was an embarrassing problem!

Jesus’ *mother* informs him of the situation, and her message conveys more than simple information—it bears weight, urgency, and concern with the reputation of her family and friends. Some commentators think Mary wants Jesus and his company to leave to minimize the family’s embarrassment. However, given what follows, this explanation is unlikely. Mary thoroughly knows who Jesus is and that he has the power and authority to fix the situation.

4. Jesus responds in three parts. First, he acknowledges his mother as *woman*.

Second, he asks a question. The Greek phrase underlying the translation *why do you involve me?* is an idiomatic expression. Third, Jesus refers to his *hour*. The Gospel of John frequently mentions Jesus’ “hour.” The term refers to the moment when Jesus’ complete identity will be revealed, his passion undergone, and his glory exposed. Jesus mentions this “hour” at critical moments in his personal life. Jesus’ comment may be a reminder to his mother that God the Father chooses

when and what is revealed about him in any situation.

5. Despite Jesus' brusque response, Mary is not dissuaded. She trusts that Jesus will do something helpful. Mary instructs the household *servants* to follow Jesus' lead. During large celebrations such as these, the bridegroom might hire a coordinator or steward to manage the event. Mary speaks to those serving the household and guests, behind the scenes. Although her words are specific to the situation, they hold the key to Christian discipleship; it is wisdom to *do* the things Jesus says to do! You never know when a miracle may be right around the corner.

III. Mother's Future

John 19:25–27

²⁵ Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.

²⁶ When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, "Woman, here is your son," ²⁷ and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

25. Near to Jesus' *cross*, several women gather. Interestingly, three of the four are named Mary. The group is comprised of female followers of Jesus who remain present with him despite the brutality, pain, and suffering they witness.

Matthew's Gospel states that the women were there to minister to Jesus, poised to care for his needs (Matthew 27:55–56). In contrast to John's perspective, Matthew and Mark state that the women stand at a distance to watch (27:55; Mark 15:40). Mark's Gospel adds that "many other women" were also there (15:41), so perhaps we may imagine quite a crowd. The women had followed Jesus from Galilee (Luke 23:49). Luke's Gospel

adds the detail that the women "mourned and wailed" for Jesus (Luke 23:27).

26. Here, John mentions another *disciple*: the one *whom Jesus loved*. It is very common to identify this disciple as John himself. The "beloved disciple," as many endearingly refer to him, is mentioned at a few key points throughout John's Gospel. Most famously, the one "whom Jesus loved" leaned against Jesus at the Passover table and had a conversation with him about Jesus' betrayer (John 13:23–26).

Seeing the two figures together, Jesus addresses his *mother*. Then he asks Mary to consider this disciple a *son*.

27. Jesus turns his attention to the *disciple*. This man is to consider Mary his *mother*.

More important than identifying the disciple's name who is "standing nearby" (John 19:26) is to reflect on Jesus' words to him. This man takes Jesus' saying as a direct order and obediently accommodates Jesus' mother's care. From this moment, the two are asked to think about each other as family; Mary gains a *home*.

Jesus' request is at least partially a practical measure. Jesus' (legal, but not biological) father, Joseph, is likely no longer living. Therefore, as the eldest son, Jesus is responsible for his mother's care. We do not know why Jesus asks someone outside his immediate family to look out for Mary because we do know Jesus has other brothers. What is clear, however, is Jesus' love for both the disciple and his mother. He desires to see them in a supportive relationship. As Mary loses one son, she gains another.

Jesus is in the business of reconfiguring familial relations (Luke 14:26; John 2:4). Here, John says that the disciple *took her into his home*. Jesus' work is nearly finished. Ultimately, he creates a new family built around response to his ministry rather than bloodlines.

Involvement Learning

Mary, the Loyal Mother

Into the Lesson

Find three photographs on your cell phone that represent significant moments with a loved one. What significant memories are associated with each picture?

Photo 1: _____

Photo 2: _____

Photo 3: _____

Photographs don't tell the whole story of our lives, but they can hold memories of people and events that impacted, changed, and defined us. In today's lesson, we're going to consider glimpses—metaphorical photographs or snapshots—of a very special relationship.

Into the Word

Read Luke 2:15–19. Explain the phrase, "Treasured up all these things."

Key Text

Mary treasured up all these things
and pondered them in her heart.
—Luke 2:19

How and why do we keep precious moments in our lives?

Imagine how Mary might have done this in her time and culture.

Read John 2:1–5. Write a short script of the dialogue between Mary and Jesus. Consider how ordinary people might try to resolve, complain, or worry about the lack of wine at the wedding feast.

Read John 19:25–27. What does this text reveal about what was important to Jesus?

Into Life

Life can be full of unexpected twists and turns. Mary's steadfast dedication to trusting God through all things models strong faith.

Write a prayer of trust in Jesus, expressing faith amidst uncertainty in their present life circumstances.

Thought to Remember

Loyalty to Jesus means a life
of sacrificial love.