

Advent Refection

Advent is fast coming to a close and we are all scrambling to finish our last minute details to make Christmas special. This year will look quite different for most of us as we celebrate without the big family dinner around the small table and all the chatter and food and fun. For some there are people missing at the table and that brings sadness and the attempt to start new traditions. Whatever we are doing we can say this is a year of turmoil and uncertainty.

That got me to thinking about Jesus birth and the uncertainty and turmoil of that time too. What must it have been like for Mary! She was still a child when the angel visited her and told her she was to give birth to God's son. Now if that wasn't scary enough she had to tell her family and then pack up with Joseph and journey far from home to Bethlehem for the census. But she, like most women, took it in stride and headed off only to get there and find no place to sleep but a stable. Now I love animals but all I can think of is the smell! Still, someplace to lay down when you are about to give birth is better than nothing! Despite the chaos and uncertainty Mary said YES.

I wonder what Mary thought about her child as she carried him for those 9 months. All of us who have given birth remembered thinking what will our baby look like, will he/she be kind and smart and good etc. What did Mary think? That reminded me of a song that I have listened to Kenny Rogers sing and heard last night from Mark Curtis and I want to share it.

"Mary, Did You Know?"

**Mary, did you know
That your baby boy will one day walk on water?
Mary, did you know
That your baby boy will 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**

**Mary, did you know
That your baby boy will give sight to a blind man?
Mary, did you know
That your baby boy will calm a storm with His hand?
Did you know
That your baby boy has walked where angels trod?
And when you kiss your little baby
You've kissed the face of God
Mary, did you know**

Oh Mary, did you know

**The blind will see
The deaf will hear
And the dead will live again
The lame will leap
The dumb will speak
The praises of the Lamb**

**Oh Mary, did you know
That your baby boy is Lord of all creation?
Mary, did you know
That your baby boy would one day rule the nations?
Did you know that your baby boy is heaven's perfect lamb?
The sleeping child you're holding is the great I am**

**Oh, Mary did you know?
Ooh, ooh Mary did you know?
Mary did you know?
(Mark Lowry 1984)**

At 13 I'm not sure Mary could have understood how revolutionary this child, that she gave birth to in that stable, would be. But her love for God and willingness to listen and respond changed the world and made it possible for each of us to celebrate God's amazing love and forgiveness. God's entering into our world to be one of us and to show us the way.

So, as you come to Christmas and remember that tiny baby will you like Mary be led by your love for God to say YES amidst the turmoil and uncertainty today? Will you say yes to journeying where God leads you? Will you say yes to caring and sharing? Will you say yes to finding new ways to be the church in our community? Will you say yes to accepting the dignity of all persons and speak for justice?

Remember, you are not alone. Jesus was born to be with you always. He will give you all you need when you open your heart and say yes.

So, enjoy the final days of advent and take time to prepare for the greatest gift of all – Jesus!

Helen Wheeler