

1. The Divine Interruption: Mary's Calling

The story of Mary's calling is the ultimate example of a "divine interruption." The central theme for us today is this: God's calling may interrupt our plans, but it always leads to lasting joy when we trust His purpose. Have you ever had your life perfectly mapped out, only to have God step in and suggest a different path? This is precisely what happened to Mary. A young woman in an unremarkable town, engaged to be married, her life was set on a predictable course. And then, God interrupted with a calling that would change the course of human history forever.

Let's read her story in Luke 1:26-38:

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

Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. 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, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

"How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

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 the Son of God. 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. For no word from God will ever fail."

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

True joy is found not in a predictable, carefully planned life, but in actively participating in God's grander purpose.

2. God's Call Comes to Ordinary People

There is profound encouragement in the fact that God chooses ordinary people for extraordinary purposes. Mary was not a person of influence or wealth. She was a young girl from Nazareth, a "backroads town" that held no special status in Israel. She was, by all human standards, ordinary. And that is exactly the kind of person God delights in calling. God often begins His greatest work in the most unexpected places and through the most unlikely people.

The Apostle Paul affirms this principle in his letter to the church in Corinth:

Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him.

1 Corinthians 1:26-29

Perhaps you have disqualified yourself from being used by God. You might think, "I'm too young," "I'm too messed up," or "I'm just too ordinary." The Christmas story stands in direct opposition to that thinking. If God can use Mary, He can use you. Do not believe the lie that God will pass you by because there is nothing overtly special about your life. He longs to call ordinary people to do extraordinary things. He loves to bring restoration to a life messed up in sin and shame. He longs to breathe new life into a dead soul.

While God's call is an open invitation to everyone, it often challenges our comfortable routines.

3. God's Call Will Disrupt Our Comfort

A calling from God does not always feel peaceful at first; in fact, it often feels disruptive and even scary. Imagine the reality for Mary. An angel tells her she will conceive a child by the Holy Spirit. This news would have upended everything. She had wedding plans. Maybe she was picking out a dress, searching Pinterest for ideas, and dreaming about the family she and Joseph would build together. Maybe she was practicing signing her name with her husband's new last name, getting the signature just right for her checks, or naming her future children. Suddenly, that entire future was thrown into question, threatening her reputation, her engagement, and her safety.

From this, we learn a vital principle: **What we call "interruptions," God often sees as invitations.** Those moments when we feel our lives are being thrown off course may actually be God inviting us to participate in something higher and better than we could have planned for ourselves. How often do we shake off these divine invitations, dismissing them as mere inconveniences? If we can remain sensitive enough to see our interruptions as possible invitations, God may lead us somewhere new and special, bringing a depth of joy we could never have predicted on our own.

When God interrupts your comfort zone—perhaps calling you to forgive someone, start a new ministry, or serve in an unfamiliar way—remember that He is not trying to take joy from you. He is trying to bring joy *through* you. God's calling may cost you comfort, but it will never cost you His presence.

4. God's Call and the Crisis of Belief

When God calls us to do something that seems impossible, it will almost inevitably lead to a crisis of belief. This isn't a failure of faith, but a natural human response when confronted with a divinely appointed task that is beyond our own capacity. We see this very moment in Mary's story when she asks the logical, valid question:

"How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

Luke 1:34

Mary had a good point. From a purely physical standpoint, what the angel described was impossible. Her question was not one of defiant disbelief, but of honest bewilderment. Gabriel's answer is the divine response to every crisis of belief we will ever face:

"For no word from God will ever fail." Another translation says, "For nothing is impossible with God."

Luke 1:37

This same crisis of belief can manifest in our lives today. Perhaps God has called you to relocate, start a new career, adopt a child, or grow your family, but the financial provision just doesn't add up. Maybe you have been called to undertake a project that seems impossibly large. In these moments, we must remind ourselves that what is impossible for us is not impossible for God. And if we truly believe that God can make a way, then we will have a powerful story to tell of what He has done—a story that brings amazing joy to His mission in the world.

Facing the impossible is the precursor to the final step that unlocks true joy.

5. Joy Comes in Surrender

Surrender is the final and most crucial step toward experiencing the joy of the Lord. Joy is not found in having all the answers or maintaining control over our circumstances. It is found in trusting the One who calls us. Mary's ultimate response is a beautiful model of this faith-filled surrender:

"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled."

Luke 1:38

This simple statement is profoundly powerful. Mary didn't understand how it would all work, but she made herself available and chose to trust God's word to her. Joy isn't the absence of questions; it's the presence of trust. Like Mary, you may not have all the answers for what God is asking of you. You just need to have the availability. If you're ever going to live with joy, then God's calling for you to follow Him must end with your surrender to His will.

6. Personal Application: Your Roadmap to Joy

In this beautiful Christmas story, we find a roadmap for a new believer. Think about it: God calls a person who feels far from Him, someone who doesn't feel worthy of His love. They feel very ordinary. This divine calling to follow Jesus brings major disruptions, interrupting life as they know it. But if they can see this not as an interruption but as a life-giving invitation, they will choose to follow Him. This often leads to a crisis of belief, where questions arise that they can't yet answer. But faith isn't about understanding everything. The final step, like Mary's, is to surrender to the word of the Lord. Her journey is a perfect picture of what it looks like to say "yes" to Jesus for the first time.

As you reflect on Mary's journey, consider your own. Ask yourself these two questions:

- *Where is God calling me to say yes?*
- *What interruptions in my life might actually be invitations from God?*

True, lasting joy is found when we, like Mary, surrender to God's incredible calling on our lives.