

## “HOPE IN THE ANTICIPATION”

by Rom A. Pegram (12/22/19)

Have you ever noticed that a mother, the instant she knows she's with child, lives her every moment in anticipation of delivering that bundle of joy within her? After a time, she cannot even take a step, make a move, or think a thought that is not associated with the coming of her child...

Where in America it's been traditional for people to somewhat overlook the obvious fact that a woman is pregnant, in other parts of the world it's different. For example, if a man's introduced to a woman who's an expectant mother in France, it's the height of politeness for him to congratulate her. In effect, they'd say to the woman: "I congratulate you on your hope!" That's a common phrase among the cultured there...

And, just as a woman becomes 'pregnant in anticipation' when it comes to bearing a child, so too when a believer becomes saved, they become 'pregnant with anticipation'—the anticipation of being fully like the Lord Jesus Christ some day! Anticipation is simply a fact of this life in Christ God's given to us...

In our Bible story for today, God gave Mary HOPE through an incredible time of anticipation—about 9 months to be exact. It was not the usual gift of anticipation though; it was a time that could've been wrought with fear and anxiety; it was a time that would take a great deal of faith ... to see God's HOPE in the situation. Listen now to how God was operating in Mary's life ( Luke 1:26-38, MSG)...

<sup>26</sup> In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to the Galilean village of Nazareth <sup>27</sup> to a virgin engaged to be married to a man descended from David. His name was Joseph, and the virgin's name, Mary. <sup>28</sup> Upon entering, Gabriel greeted her: Good morning! You're beautiful with God's beauty, Beautiful inside and out! God be with you. <sup>29</sup> She was thoroughly shaken, wondering what was behind a greeting like that. <sup>30</sup> But the angel assured her, "Mary, you have nothing to fear. God has a surprise for you: <sup>31</sup> You will become pregnant and give birth to a son and call his name Jesus. <sup>32</sup> He will be great, be called 'Son of the Highest.' The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David; <sup>33</sup> He will rule Jacob's house forever— no end, ever, to his kingdom." <sup>34</sup> Mary said to the angel, "But how? I've never slept with a man." <sup>35</sup> The angel answered, The Holy Spirit will come upon you, the power of the Highest hover over you; Therefore, the child you bring to birth will be called Holy, Son of God. <sup>36</sup> "And did you know that your cousin Elizabeth conceived a son, old as she is? Everyone called her barren, and here she is six months' pregnant! <sup>37</sup> Nothing, you see, is impossible with God." <sup>38</sup> And Mary said, Yes, I see it all now: I'm the Lord's maid, ready to serve. Let it be with me just as you say. Then the angel left her.

I find incredible HOPE in how God operates. He helps prepare us for what's ahead by giving us a time of *anticipation*. In doing so, God helps us anticipate what's coming next, to prepare us for what's ahead...

The truth is a large part of life centers around *anticipation*. Could you imagine waking up one day and someone suddenly announcing: "Christmas in 10 minutes!" That's not enough time to get ready, is it? The enjoyment found in many of life's events is built on

the fact that we have time to anticipate them. Think about these events in your life for just a moment:

- CHRISTMAS – sometimes we complain about the advertising starting a little too soon, but how much more fun it is to have time to look forward to it, to plan, and to prepare. With every detail, we get excited...
- VACATIONS – half the fun (especially as an adult) is in the planning, looking forward to it, and trying to imagine just how the kids are going to react to the wonderful plans that lie ahead—the surprises that they'll experience...
- MISSION TRIPS (or similar projects) – For years, I helped start the planning for the next mission trip ... as soon as we got back from a current one. Yes, it takes time to plan ... but also, half the fun is in anticipating all that's going to happen—all that God's going to make happen—during the upcoming trip...
- SPORTING EVENTS OR CONCERTS – Many of us have grown up with heroes of one sort or another. For my son, it would be sports heroes. For my daughter or me, it might be music heroes. So, if we get a chance to go to a major sporting event ... or a major concert or music festival, *now that's something to look forward to!*

You get the idea... Anticipation (that time we're given to look forward to things) is a real gift from God. *Just listen to what our Bible lesson teaches us today:* In our times of anticipation...

**HOPE CAN COME BY THE TIMELY WORDS OF OTHERS.** Verses 28-30 tell us, "Upon entering, Gabriel greeted her: 'Good morning! You're beautiful with God's beauty, Beautiful inside and out! God be with you.' She was thoroughly shaken, wondering what was behind a greeting like that. But the angel assured her, 'Mary, you have nothing to fear. God has a surprise for you'..." And ... God sure did! Have you ever been at a crossroads in life, trying to make a very important decision, trying to figure out what your future will be like or what difference it will make ... then someone steps into your life and says just the right thing ... that gives you HOPE ... and lets you know that the future—*your future*—will be bright indeed?

Life wasn't easy for a young Jewish girl in Mary's day. There weren't a whole lot of options. You could hope to meet 'Mr. Right' who hopefully had a good job and then you would have some security. Whatever you did, you needed to make sure you didn't botch any potential relationships that would lead to that secure future...

Well, Mary was about to face more storms in her life than she could've ever imagined. She was engaged to be married to a man named 'Joseph'—an honorable man who seemed to have a good business going ... and she'd have her security for the future. It was hard enough to make sure things would work out for the best ... but, then the angel came and said, "God has a surprise for you!" Mary could have said—like many of us, "But, I don't like surprises!" Things are going O.K. just as they are; we don't need to mess with it...

But folks, Mary was a young Jewish girl of tremendous faith—sensitive to God's work in and through her life—in and through the lives of her people. So, when God

intervened, even though it shook her momentarily (and who wouldn't be shook going through this), Mary's faith *wasn't* totally in Joseph ... or her circumstances; Mary's faith was ultimately in God...

So, when one of God's messengers showed up that day ... Mary listened carefully, in faith. She was a woman of faith ... and God could trust her. God sent her HOPE through the words of an angel ... to show Mary just how bright her future really was! She was given the gift of anticipation—time to look forward to all God was going to do through her...

Do we do the same? Do we look forward, in faith, to all God's going to be doing through us? God's given us the gift of anticipation, but are we recognizing it? Who has God sent your way, to speak to you about your future? And, are you listening? In times of anticipation ... HOPE CAN COME BY THE TIMELY WORDS OF OTHERS ... and:

**HOPE CAN COME BY BELIEVING IN A GOD OF THE IMPOSSIBLE.** Verses 31, 34-35 pick up with the story: "You will become pregnant and give birth to a son and call his name Jesus ... Mary said to the angel, 'But how? I've never slept with a man.' The angel answered, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, the power of the Highest hover over you; Therefore, the child you bring to birth will be called Holy, Son of God.'" 'But, but, but...' Ladies, what would you be like if an angel showed up and told you about this 'surprise' in your life? Mary was a woman of faith; that's how she got through all of this like she did ... *by God's grace!* Folks, I want you to know today that God still brings us HOPE through anticipation, when we'll believe He's the God of the impossible!

A few years ago now, I was able to have a short visit with a woman by the name of Joy Clark—at Upland Hills Rehab in Dodgeville. I sat down in a chair beside her wheelchair ... and I knew I was looking straight into the face of a miracle! You see, the last time I saw Joy in that place, we didn't know if she'd make it to the next day or not. The family prayed, they talked, and they decided (with God's wisdom) that they should med-flight her to Madison to try everything possible ... which they did...

First she couldn't have surgery because she was too critical, then she had surgery on her brain, then she recovered from that and made itsy-bitsy steps of progress throughout several weeks. Finally, she was well enough to finish her rehab in Dodgeville. And there she was ... a living, breathing miracle ... and *nothing short of...*

Folks, the family—very much like Mary the mother of Jesus—*just put their faith out there* ... and trusted God for the outcome! As Mary Berg (one of Joy's daughters) told me afterward, "With God, when there is no hope, THERE IS HOPE!" Why? Because *they believe that God is a God of the impossible* ... and their mother's situation sure seemed impossible at one time. Just as an aside, the ICU Staff at St. Mary's had a meeting shortly before Joy left there ... and one of the doctors told Mary that their family had really taught the staff there something—that nothing is impossible. And Mary, of course, added something like, "...with God!"

In a similar way, Mary the mother of Jesus *just put her faith out there* ... and believed ... and acted like she believed ... and came through for God and for all of us! Her HOPE was in the fact that she was serving a God of the impossible; that's what she anticipated

... in telling Joseph, in carrying the child, in raising the Son of God! And, we now have eternal life with God because of that HOPE in the midst of anticipation. ... So, we find HOPE THROUGH THE TIMELY WORDS OF OTHERS and we find HOPE IN BELIEVING IN A GOD OF THE IMPOSSIBLE. And finally...

**HOPE CAN COME BY KNOWING GOD IS TRUE TO HIS WORD—ALWAYS!** In

Verses 36-37, the angel continues: “And did you know that your cousin Elizabeth conceived a son, old as she is? Everyone called her barren, and here she is six months' pregnant! Nothing, you see, is impossible with God.” *We can always trust that God is true to his word and to his nature; did you know that?*

Just think about the ‘seasons’ of our lifetime for a moment, will you? God gives us ... *seasons of the year...*

- In the spring, we can anticipate the warmth of summer coming soon...
- In the summer, we can anticipate ‘football’—the cool of the fall months and the beauty of the leaves turning color...
- In the fall, we can anticipate a time of winter—a time where many living things go dormant ... sometimes including us...
- And, in the winter, oh yeah ... we can anticipate that wonderful spring weather ... and a time to plant...

And then there’s the ‘seasons of our lives’ ... where we can anticipate things like ... graduation, a career or job we enjoy, marriage, family, being together for holidays and birthdays, opportunities for kingdom work through the church—like mission trips, Christmas Teas, a Beat the Winter Blues Bazaar, and so forth...

This is God, folks. This is how God operates. And, we can always count on God and his word and his nature being true and consistent. We can receive great HOPE through that—great JOY in knowing that...

So, God has given us *the gift of anticipation!* ... Because of the GREAT GIFT of *this* season, we can find GREAT HOPE in the anticipation of our life in Christ. We can continue to grow closer and closer to God, as we grow and learn to be more and more like his Son, Jesus. Are we going to be ready for eternity? Yes ... and we can anticipate that, as long as we continue to walk with Christ! And if, like Mary, we simply learn to say ‘yes’ to God in faith—to *put our faith out there*, so to speak, there will never be a dull moment. Life will be one big adventure of anticipation—something to look forward to...

So ... what are you anticipating today? What’s God showing you in your life, to prepare you for what’s ahead? What’s God saying to you through others? And, does the vision God’s given you for tomorrow seem impossible? If it does, it may be time to allow God to transform your doubts ... into faith—the kind of faith that’ll teach you that God is always true to his word—even in your life. Once again, just as the angel reminded Mary (v. 37) he reminds us today, “Nothing, you see, is impossible with God.” Folks, there’s no greater HOPE than that comes through anticipation ... that God gives. Won’t you trust him with your future today?