

God Has A Surprise For You...You Have Nothing To Fear!

Luke 1:26-38

December 2, 2018

1st Sunday of Advent

SURPRISE!!!

How do you handle surprises?

Most of us love a good surprise IF the surprise is good!

Life is full of surprises!

Some surprises are amazing and make you feel good in your heart.

I don't know about you but I still find tears welling up in my eyes when I see a military mom or dad surprising his or her family by coming home from a deployment earlier than expected. A couple of weeks ago this scene happened when a military husband/dad came running out of the tunnel at a football field and his wife and two small children came running from the sidelines to bear hug him at mid-field. You gotta love those kind of surprises!

Some surprises are simple surprises. Someone treats you to a cup of coffee. My wife was standing at the check out line at Lowe's the other day...my wife is a Lowe's wife!!!

Anyways, an older man was in front of her and a new check out line opened. He invited my wife to go ahead of him. She graciously did so. He then got behind her in that line. When my wife was finished checking out she turned to him and surprised him with a coupon for \$10 off his purchase! My wife is full of surprises!

Simple surprises are great!

There are, of course, those surprises in life that leave us saying, "I certainly didn't see that one coming!"

Often those kind of surprises are not the kind we plan for, much less desire. Those are the "not so good" or even "bad or tragic surprises of life."

The surprise of a devastating diagnosis from your doctor after all the tests and lab work results have returned.

The surprise that a family member is moving far away from home.

The surprise of a car accident or a broken marriage or relationship.

Life is full of surprises: big and simple; good and tragic.

God is full of surprises! However, God is never surprised.

Throughout the bible, from the beginning to the end, we find God surprising people. When you read God's Word you can't help but notice that God surprises.

God surprised Noah with His boat building plans.

He surprised Moses on leading an exodus from Egypt...a journey that should have take 40 days took 40 years to reach the promise land.

God surprised Joseph when he told him his fiancé, Mary, was pregnant and he was not the daddy.

God surprised some simple shepherds that they would be the first to see the Messiah!

Jesus surprised some ordinary fisherman to follow His plans and become his disciples.

Whatever plans God's people made, however they tried to fit God into their plans, God surprised them with His plans. They faced turns in their journey of life they didn't have mapped out on their itinerary. Why do God's people often experience the surprises of God?

We tend to focus on the outcome, the destination, and not the journey. We simply want things to turn out well, translated: how we want them, our way! God surely cares about us and desires the best for us but on His terms. He is graciously at work in the surprises of life along our journey in life.

The Old Testament prophet, Isaiah, certainly understood the God of surprises way when he reminded the people of God's promise: ***"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."*** (Isaiah 55:8-9)

God is a God of surprises but God is never surprised!
God is never caught off guard at the surprises we experience in our lives: good or bad. God is able to cause all surprises to work out for our good when we love and trust Him and follow His lead in our lives. (Romans 8:28 paraphrased)

Perhaps one of the greatest surprises in the bible is the one God brought to a ordinary teenage girl, about to be married to a great guy by the name of Joseph. I would imagine she was planning the wedding, making the guest list, getting all excited about the big day in the life of a young girl, when God surprised her. The angel of the Lord had a great opening line...

"Mary, you have nothing to fear, God has a surprise for you..."

Any time someone says to you, "Now don't worry...or are you sitting down..." you know the news that is to follow is not going to be a great surprise.

We know the rest of Mary's surprise, breaking news story. It worked out very well for her. But we need to try to put ourselves in her position, when she had no clue how this unplanned pregnancy would work out for her, and how she handled God's surprise in her life.

How Mary handled God's surprise is the way you and I can learn to handle God's surprises in our lives.

"You have nothing to fear" surprises can be paralyzing. Fear can immobilize our journey in life if we allow it. We have a choice when God allows a "You have nothing to fear" surprise into our lives...fear or trust.

David, the psalmist, understood this choice. Listen to his choice when the enemy, the fear, came surprising him:

"The Lord is my light and my salvation---whom shall I fear?"

The Lord is the stronghold of my life---of whom shall I be afraid?...

***Though an army besiege me, my heart will not fear,
Though war break out against me, even then will I be confident."*** (Psalm 27: 1,3)

David faced many surprises in life and in each of them He chose to trust in God's presence, power and guidance. His confidence in God's will and ways gave David an assurance in the presence of life's surprises.

Mary responded to such surprising news most likely the same way we do when we are told, "You have nothing to fear" surprises.

Mary asked the question we ask:

"How can this be happening to me?" vs. 34

Another way we may ask this same question is, "What did I do to deserve this?"

Or if we really are honest we probably respond with, "Are you kidding me? For real? This can't be happening! Not me, not now!"

If we are honest that is how our heart is beating when we get a "mayhem surprise" in life. Where is God in the mayhem surprises of life? God reveals a bit of His plan for you and you don't like the direction He is wanting to take you. His way is challenging, outside your norm. You are afraid because you have not gone that way before in life. You have no clue how this surprise will end up. Perhaps God accidentally "butt dialed" you and not the person He really had this surprise intended for. Here is an amazing theological truth, "God doesn't butt-dial!" God is a God of surprises but God is never surprised!

Do you remember the angel's answer to Mary's question, "How can this be happening to me?"

Hear the angel's surprising answer again:

"Nothing is impossible with God." vs. 37

No matter the surprise, God can see us through it. NOTHING, no matter what kind of surprise you may be experiencing, is impossible for God to walk us through.

After hearing this reassuring promise Mary responds with the great surprise statement of choice:

"I'm the Lord's maid, ready to serve." vs. 38a

Take a breath here. Think about this from the heart response. Could you or will you be able to respond to God as Mary did when life surprises you?

"I'm yours God. I am ready to serve. Your will be my will!"

The choice is given to us. Serve God or serve self! Jesus warned that we cannot serve both. (Luke 16:13) He also celebrated the truth that God, our Heavenly Father, honors those who serve Jesus, surprises and all. (John 12:26)

When surprise happens we have a choice on how we respond: obedience to God or obedience to self.

Mary confirmed her choice in the midst of this mayhem surprise with a simple statement of faith,

Let it be with me just as you say." vs. 38b

What a trust!

I remember a time I was out to eat with my son, TJ. The waitress asked him what he would like to order. I had never heard him, much less anyone, say to the waitress when they are asked what they would like to order what TJ said that day...

"SURPRISE ME!"

I was thinking, "What? This waitress has no clue of your likes and dislikes of food." TJ trusted that the waitress knew what was good and would bring that dish to TJ. I don't remember what it was but I do remember TJ enjoyed it.

I think I might try that from time to time...surprise me!

How about with God? Are you and I willing to pray, to ask God each day, "Surprise me!?"

This is saying to God, "I trust you, because you know what is good and best for me in my life."

We don't have to have all our "I's" dotted and our "T's" crossed in life. We simply need to be willing to trust Jesus enough to say, "Surprise me!"

The Apostle Paul wrote to young Timothy this assurance of God's best for him in his life with this "surprise me" confidence:

"I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day." (II Timothy 1:12)

No matter the surprise, Paul expressed his faith in God, his confidence that God would guard and guide him throughout life's surprises.

God has a surprise for you!

How will you respond?

Mary's "MAYHEM SURPRISE" responses worked for her and they will for us.

"How can this be happening to me? Are you serious God?"

"I'm ready to serve you God over myself!"

"Your will be for me...surprise me!"

God has a surprise for you!

You have nothing to fear!