

St. Paul's Dorking Small Groups. Sept 23rd 2007

Hidden - Mary: "A response to a supernatural God"

Luke 2: 1-19



Word: Key points from Sunday's sermon

God's hidden plans have been revealed through the prophets, **Micah 5:2** and numerous references in **Isaiah, e.g. Ch 7 and 11** speak of the coming of a messiah born to a virgin, who was Mary. **Luke 2** tells of Immanuel's birth and of God's supernatural intervention as the angel of the Lord brings good news to the shepherds and of Mary who treasured all that she saw and heard in her heart.

God chose to reveal himself in a way beyond human comprehension. If we could have arranged Jesus' birthplace, our natural inclination would have been to have chosen a palace, but God chose quite differently. Jesus' birth is one of the greatest events that ever took place, and the turning point of history. But it would have no meaning for us, unless God revealed that meaning. That is where the angel comes in, for he is as the word angel implies the messenger of God. The news which is spread by the shepherds, and which Mary keeps in her heart, is *the saying which had been told them* concerning this child. It is the divine message which the angel brings concerning Jesus (see **Luke 2:11,12**)

Only God in his infinite wisdom could have chosen to reveal himself in such a way. In all this we observe Mary and how she reacts and responds. In God's timing, Mary was in the right place at the right time. Neither **Luke 1 or 2** gives any details or background information about Mary's character. We are not told that she was upright or faithful. But Mary's actions speak louder than any description of her faith. Mary responds from a place of faith to the revelation that she receives. Mary had faith, and was obedient, unlike Zechariah, John the Baptist's father. That should tell us a lot about Mary. She wasn't just chosen to be the mother of Jesus because she was in the right place at the right time. She was chosen because of the quality of her character.

Appearances can be deceptive. Those of us who appear to be strong to the outside world may actually be like Zechariah, with all kinds of difficulties and doubts. And those of us, who appear to be insignificant people, may be like Mary, with strong internal faith. We should never think too little of ourselves because we don't believe that we make the same contribution as others do. We can all rest assured that, whatever we are like inside or outside, God is prepared to work with us and to reveal himself to us. For the wonderful truth of the mystery that has been revealed to each one who loves him is 'Christ in you, the hope of glory.' (**Col. 1:26**)

There is a way in the Spirit that is higher and more wonderful than we, with our desire for logic and order can ever imagine. Who would have believed or conceived of the living God entering into our fallen world and being born in a stable in Bethlehem? Born in human flesh, carried in the womb of Mary. Obedience to the spirit's prompting is perhaps the hardest thing for us to do when what he says or asks of us seems not to be in line with our way of thinking or logic. Deep in the heart of God is his desire to make himself and his will known to us, to speak hidden mysteries to us. The wonderful hidden mystery has been made plain; God has supernaturally broken into our world revealing himself through prophecies, angels and miracles beyond comprehension. God chose a young woman called Mary and he broke through time and space as we know it to reveal himself and his plans. His desire is to reveal to each one of us hidden mysteries in the spirit that his kingdom may come and grow through prophecies, dreams, visions, signs and wonders. Each one of us is called to play our part, in obedience, just as Mary did.



Witness: Questions to discuss

1. Worship – take time to reflect on Mary's song Luke 1: 46 – 55
2. Does God still intervene supernaturally? Can you think of any instances in your own experience?
3. Has the familiarity and presentation of the Christmas story dulled our understanding of its hidden significance?
4. What can we learn from Mary's response to the angel's message?
5. Has the church lost its prophetic edge and how can this be restored?
6. It appears that God is always "thinking and acting outside the box". Share together ways in which we could learn to do the same.