

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER THE PENTECOST

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At the beginning of the story of the Virgin Mary, after an Angel appeared to her, Mary said yes to something so far beyond herself, that she could not see it for what it would be eternally worth. But there were also times when she only saw what was right in front of her, losing track of the big picture. These instructive moments are not wasted; rather memorialized forever for our sake, being recorded in the Bible.

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be always acceptable in thy sight, O Lord our strength and our redeemer. Amen.

Thank God for the Holy Scriptures, the Bible. Paul makes the same statement in the portion we heard from his second letter to the Corinthians, as he says, "I believed and so I spoke", making the direct connection between their faith in Christ, and the scriptures. He said that we have this spirit of faith that is in accordance with the scriptures. And as a result, the source of those scriptures, God's Holy Spirit, is working for our good, to God's glory. He said that by God's design and will, "everything is for your sake, so that grace, as it extends to more and more people, may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God."

The Holy Scriptures are able to lead us to all faith, and we also learn that GOD's faithfulness toward **us** leads **him**....leads **him**..... to do what we need to keep moving and growing in faith. He does not want to push us down into place, or to keep us from spiritual growth. On the contrary He wants us to grow up in Him, and move in faith with him as he chooses those moments for each of us when WE see our calling angel, and WE are called to bear Christ to the world.

That sounds very healthy, doesn't it. Every mother and father should be able to relate – or if not – take heed to do the same with their children, or any other caregiver and their charge.

It should be a matter of "Ok. Let's get moving along", rather than, "I think you should stay home with me/ or perhaps you hear it better as, "I can't let you go."

Once you release to growth, you release to the unknown. And as a Christian, this should be absolutely second nature.

But if you hold so tightly, **then you see only what is right in front of you**, which might be like you see that there are dangers, pitfalls, steep embankments, the POSSIBILITY of physical or emotional risk that COULD lead to injury.

These also Paul spoke to in a moment of incredibly inspired writing, "So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure, because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal."

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.And this is where we biblically begin with the Virgin Mary, when she began to be the Mother of God, the God Bearer, at these two divine moments, the annunciation, and her conception. What did she say in response to the news given to her by the Angel? In leading up to her saying "yes", she proclaimed at one moment not what SHE saw, but what GOD saw and Mary could not yet!

for **GOD, has looked** with favor on his humble servant.

Mary, inspired is saying That God has looked not just upon her with His eyes, if you will, but has also decided to bring about a promise of His from days way gone by to bring about something in its working out that is so far past conceivable, ...and then in a vision of what affects her now says

From this day all generations will call me blessed,
the Almighty has done great things for me,
and holy is his Name.

He has come to the help of his servant Israel
for he has remembered his promise of mercy,
the promise he made to our fathers,
to Abraham and his children for ever.

Hallelujah. And I might add, something that Abraham never saw fulfilled. But held the faith.

As Mary grew with the growing Jesus, even as the scripture says she treasured and pondered all these things in her heart, still, there are moments in her life with Jesus where Mary had such a terrible time releasing Jesus into his ministry, and, rather, being caught up in the momentary, trying to keep her relationship safe with him.

A Pastor tells a story of family set in Long Island, New York. This is Brian Doyle's family, and in his family you were allowed to take the train alone from Long Island into New York City only after your twelfth birthday. Brian had a great desire to make this pilgrimage to watch his hero basketball team, the New York Knicks, in that great cathedral known as Madison Square Garden. But before he could leave, he was compelled to wait, fidgeting in the threshold of his front door, impatiently shifting his weight from one foot to the other, as his mother fiddled with his jacket collar in a way most unlike her. Stalling, holding on, his mother reviewed details already covered, giving him last minute advice he already knew:

"I can't believe you're *twelve*," she said in between checking and re-checking him for hat and mittens and an extra pair of eyeglasses. "One minute ago you were four and talking to the birds. Make us proud of your behavior. You need a new winter coat. Don't forget to call. Are you *really* twelve? You had better stop fiddling about and get to the station. I will assume that you have a clean handkerchief. Go." And she sighed, "Go." An empowering moment of release he would never forget.

We know there comes a point when every caregiver, like Bryan's mother, or nursing in Hospice, or Teachers with their students, or even Jesus' mother, must say, "Go." Brian Doyle seemed to put up with the fussing without comment, still looking toward his departure. Surely that is the ideal,

And yes, we see Jesus putting up with his mother's fussing, knowing he must move along with his ministry. The stop he made at "12 years old" to talk with the elders at the temple steps, the

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miracle at the wedding in Cana of Galilee, most likely moments around and during the passion week.

But now, wait.... Did Jesus say some rude things to his family here in this story which belies a LACK of patience? As some commenters ask, and I have, too, in the past: How could Jesus talk like that to his *mother*?

But no. A closer look at the story tells us that even though Mary and the family did show up, they couldn't get to where he was because of the enormity of the crowd. So, the WORD came forward to him they were outside at the fringe of the crowd wanting to come retrieve him. Jesus' comments were made to those he was teaching, and to their ears and hearts, they were words of Good News. And that means Jesus was once again doing this father's business. He did not send a reply message back out to them. He kept HIS eye on that which was not yet seen, so that more and more of his mission would be fulfilled. Be sure, he was not rejecting his family..

Every parent should know the goal is to allow children to grow up in order that they can become all God has called them to be. Yet every caregiver also knows it is much easier to declare, "No!" than to sigh, "Go." It seems to me that *restrain* describes our fear, which under the guise of good intentions, may well be in opposition to faith.

What a good time to have this message in our hearing, as so many children and young adults are embarking through graduation to futures that are absolutely unseen as yet. And we must therefore be in prayer for them, that for the sake of their community, and their future worlds, and for all of us, they will GO toward that which is unseen, without forgetting that both feet are needed on the ground to get there. There—that would be my graduation ceremonies speech, Go, not No.

There is a true story — that is told in a certain Christian congregations of how a certain director of graduate admissions at a veterinary school removed her horn-rimmed spectacles and dropped them without apparent concern for their being damaged upon the desk in front of her, and then fixed her eyes on the young woman nervously seated across from her large oak desk with a patronizing look. "Perhaps," she began, "you would best be served by considering a different career path."

Later that day, this young woman would be found crying inconsolably, heartbroken, on the floor of her childhood bathroom. **But** in that moment of rejection in the office, she had maintained her composure--her nostrils flaring with an audible exhale of anger, not unlike certain large animals she'd been around her whole life.

It had been her passion almost from birth, a true love of horses. The truest calling. She'd always had that *way* with these animals... --that *gift*, . Even her church people knew it, and pretended not to notice when she tracked mud from her riding boots into the nave. And upon learning about the rejection from the veterinary school, these same folks did not try and protect her with patronizing there-there's presuming some done deal; no provision of a safer vision for her life. They also did not ignore her, they did not keep silent with her, staying safe in their own lives. Rather, the parental figures in her church reminded her of the many other times they'd seen her fall off only to get back up again. They gave her Encouragement, not knowing themselves of what was to become. But they also had faith to be able to minister that encouragement.

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I can hear that verse from Galatians 3:20, that might have been on their lips, “Glory to God whose power working in us can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine.” And they helped her focus on the most life-giving relationship she could have, by asking when they saw her “How are you and Jesus doing?” And after asking “How are you doing with your vocational plans?” (instead of what’s your favorite subject), they prayed for her, and encouraged her, and promised even more prayer.

We learn two things from this near interaction between Mary and Jesus. That even with so great a calling, and so overwhelming a work of being the actual bearer of the Savior of the World in the womb, this Mary, in joy and humble obedience knowing there is a big picture, still at certain moments in her life let another voice distract her into a fleeting desire to keep Jesus all to herself. Let’s say more than selfishness, more like a desire to protect based on what she COULD see, And some selfishness. Confusing signals, and sounding much like the Garden of Eden doesn’t it. No wonder the early Church fathers had no problem making the connections between Eve and Mary.

How is that helpful? I’ll tell you.

To know even the Virgin Mother had her moments of weakness, and yet maintained her calling, by god’s grace. Jesus never released her from being his mother, not until he, from the cross, put her into the safety of the apostle John’s home. And that is part of our own failsafe. But even more so, and connected to our failsafe and hers, we learn that **God looks** at each one of us and He sees not just the momentary—even though he knows of all our travails, and he knows all that we have gone through, and he knows all that we need right here, right now, and he is aware of our sins and disobedience --- God looks at us and sees what He desires for us to accomplish and to simply BE for his sake, his glory, his kingdom. Something we can rejoice in, even if we cannot yet see it.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

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