

December 13, 2015

## SURRENDER

Luke 1:26-38 Galatians 4:4-7

Mary gave herself to God's purpose for her. She surrendered. She surrendered a future she had been imagining where, as Joseph's wife, she would have naturally conceived children, raising them in Nazareth, watching them grow, teaching them how to behave, how to play, how to cook and clean – if there were any girls, or, watching them learn how to work – if there were any boys; she very likely imagined her relationship with Joseph, and how he would love her and she would love him – all very typical comforts of a simple lifestyle together. But now, she was experiencing anything but "typical."

The Angel told her she would have a son. At first, she couldn't let the idea sink in – she hadn't been with Joseph yet. But the Angel said it would be God's Son, the Holy Spirit would cause the conception, it would "overshadow" her; the child would be holy, the Son of God!

And then the Angel said something that not only gave Mary confidence, but that has given confidence and hope to people ever since: "Nothing will be impossible with God!" Please, note, that it does not say that "nothing will be impossible," but that "Nothing will be impossible with God!" We need to give recognition to the reality that it is not the ideas that we can think up on our own that are not impossible, but the things that God thinks – that is what can happen!

But as Mary absorbed this glorious truth, and as she began to realize that God would be with her, and, that she had found favor with God, she simply said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord. Let it be with me according to Your Word!" Surrender. Mary's example is a wonderful gift to all of us. By faith, we become able to say the same thing. We become able to do things that are far greater than we might have expected. With God, nothing will be impossible! God will even adopt us!

Galatians 4:4-7 – *When the fullness of time had come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, in order to redeem those who were under the Law, so that we might receive adoption as sons and daughters!*

It was the perfect time, in God's mind, for God to send His Son. Jesus was born of a woman, Mary; born under the Law – a Jew! Jesus, as God's Son is fully divine and fully human, just as each of us has DNA from our mothers and DNA from our fathers, we are identifiable as related to both... completely!

But God's purpose in the incarnation includes our *adoption*! I believe the idea of adoption is a glorious one, a blessed one. It is a gift the parents give to the child they adopt. And God wants us! God wants all of us to be His children. God would be happy for us to join His family!

Here's a story of adoption that reflects, I believe, the idea of a faithful adoption...

Between 1854 and 1929 about two hundred thousand orphans and abandoned children in eastern cities were placed on westbound trains and shipped across the United States in search of homes and families. Many of the children had lost their parents in epidemics. Others were children of down-on-their-luck immigrants. Some were orphaned by the Civil War, others by alcohol abuse.

But they all needed homes. Loaded on trains in groups of thirty or forty, they stopped in rural areas for viewings. The children were lined up on the platform like livestock at an auction. Potential parents asked questions, evaluated health and even examined teeth. If selected, the children went to their new homes. If not, they got back on the train.

The Orphan Train.

Lee Nailling remembered the experience. He had been living at the Jefferson County Orphan Home for two years when he, as an eight-year-old, was taken with his two younger brothers to a train station in New York City. Things got worse before they got better. He and his two brothers were taken

to several towns. On the sixth day, someone in a small Texas town adopted one brother. Then a family selected Lee and his other brother. But soon Lee was sent to another home, the home of a farming family, but...he had never been on a farm.

The city boy didn't know not to open the doors of the chick's cages. When Lee did, the angry farmer sent him away. In a succession of sad events, Lee's mother had died; he had lost his father, had ridden a train from New York to Texas, had been separated from his two brothers, and had been kicked out of two homes. His little eight-year-old heart was about to break. Finally, he was taken to the home of a tall man and a short, plump woman. During the first supper, Lee said nothing. He went to bed making plans to run away. The next morning they seated him at a breakfast of biscuits and gravy. When he reached for one, well, I'll let him tell you what happened.

"Mrs. Nailling stopped me, 'Not until we've said grace,' she explained. I watched as they bowed their heads. Mrs. Nailling began speaking softly to 'our Father,' thanking Him for the food and the beautiful day. I knew enough about God to know that the woman's 'our Father' was the same one who was in the 'our Father who art in heaven...' prayer that visiting preachers had recited over us at the orphanage. But I couldn't understand why she was talking to Him as though He were sitting here with us waiting for His share of the biscuits. I began to squirm in my chair.

"Then Mrs. Nailling thanked God 'for the privilege of raising a son.' I stared as she began to smile. She was calling *me* a privilege. And Mr. Nailling must have agreed with her, because he was beginning to smile too. For the first time since I'd boarded the train, I began to relax. A strange, warm feeling began to fill my aloneness and I looked at the empty chair next to me. Maybe, in some mysterious way, 'our Father' was seated there, and was listening to the next softly-spoken words: 'Help us make the right choices as we guide him, and help him make the right choices too.'

"'Dig in, son,' the man's voice startled me. I hadn't even noticed the 'Amen.' My mind had stopped at the 'choices' part. As I heaped my plate I thought about that. Hate and anger and running away had seemed to be my only choices, but maybe there were others. This Mr. Nailling didn't seem so bad, and this thing about having an 'our Father' to talk to shook me up a little. I ate in silence.

"After breakfast, as they walked me to the barbershop for a haircut, we stopped at each of the six houses on the way. Each time, the Naillings introduced me as 'our new son.' As we left the last house, I knew that at first light the next day I would not be running away. There was a home-ness there that I'd never known before. At least I could give in a try.

"And there was something else. Although I didn't know where Papa was, or how I could write to him, I had the strong feeling that I had found not one but two fathers, and I could talk to both of them. And that's the way it turned out." (From *Grace*, Max Lucado, pp. 117-124; Excerpt from "Orphan Train" by Lee Nailling is reproduced from *Guideposts*.)

God, likewise, wants to present us to the rest of the world as His new sons and daughters.

Think of the wonderful gift the Naillings gave to Lee. This is the same gift God is giving to us. Our faith in Christ is our adoption, and God wants everyone to know that, with Jesus, we are His blessed children!

But... we need to surrender. Like Lee, we need to choose, to make the right choices, to surrender to the new picture of God's family. We are adopted. And, we need to say, "*Here am I.... Let it be with me according to Your Word!*"