

Scripture Reading

A Reading from the Gospel according to Matthew (Matthew 1:18-21)

This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, She was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph Her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose Her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce Her quietly. But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in Her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a Son, and you are to give Him the name Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins." The Gospel of the Lord. R. Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ.

Reflection ~ God acts mightily for those who place their trust in Him

Mary kept quiet about Her condition and trusted in God (cf. Matthew 1). When the pregnancy of Mary could no longer be concealed from Joseph Her betrothed, Mary did not try to defend Herself and justify Her situation. Though She was troubled by the unspoken anxiety of Joseph, Mary kept Her calm and trusted in God. If Joseph in his anger and jealousy, exposed Her to public shame, she could be stoned to death for adultery. Instead of giving in to the human impulse of rising up in self-defence, Mary simply kept quiet and trusted in God. In response God acted mightily, in a way that only God can act. With no concrete evidence in favour of Mary, only God can convince Joseph beyond a shadow of doubt of what really happened. If Mary had acted impulsively in self-defence, God could not have intervened in such a miraculous way.

Daniel said to King Nebuchadnezzar: "Even if our God will not save us, we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up." (cf. Daniel 3:18). Daniel and His Jewish young friends were threatened by the pagan Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar to be thrown into the fiery furnace for refusing to worship the gold statue that he set up. But Daniel told the pagan king that even if God will not save them from the fiery death threatened by the king, they would not worship the golden statue. This enraged the king further who ordered the furnace be heated up 7 times hotter so that even the soldiers who led the 3 Jewish youths into the furnace were burnt to death (cf. Daniel 3:19-22). However, Daniel and his friends emerged the next day without smelling of fire or having a single hair burnt! (cf. Daniel 3:27).

Abraham obeyed God unhesitatingly even when asked to sacrifice his son, Isaac! (cf. Genesis 22). Abraham must be feeling extremely troubled when God asked him to sacrifice Isaac. Isaac was much loved as he was born when Abraham was 100. Nevertheless, Abraham obeyed without a murmur what God asked him to do. When he was about to sacrifice Isaac on the mountain, an angel of the Lord stopped him (cf. Genesis 22:11-12). Abraham passed the test set by God. As a result, God showered great blessings on Abraham with the promise that through him and his descendants, all nations would be blessed (cf. Genesis 22:17-18).

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight (Proverbs 3:5-6). Mary, Daniel and Abraham simply did what was asked of them or what they knew to be the right thing. They never questioned God's intentions and were prepared to let God be God. They never required that God save them when they put all their trust in Him. Their trust and faith were unconditional. Daniel and his friends were prepared to become martyrs if God did not save them from the fiery deaths. Abraham was mentally prepared for the death of Isaac when he reasoned that God could resurrect the dead (cf. Hebrews 11:19). Mary was at peace after saying Her 'yes' to Archangel Gabriel on God's request to be the mother of the Saviour. Straight after the encounter with the angel, She made preparations to visit Her elderly Cousin Elizabeth to help her in her state of advanced pregnancy.

Conversation with Jesus

Precious Lord, trust is a fruit of faith and love. Without trust, faith remains unproven and useless. Thus, You send trials and tribulations to strengthen our faith by giving us the opportunities to place all our trust in You. Complete trust in You enables us to carry out God's will without fearing its consequences. Unconditional trust in God allows God to bring in His divine power to intervene and act in the situation. You are unencumbered and You can act mightily because of our steadfast faith. You promise that those who hope in You will not be disappointed (cf. Isaiah 49:23) and, peace to those who trust in You (cf. Isaiah 26:3). Trust in God gives You much glory because it demonstrates our faith in and love for You, and allows You to act mightily as only God can. Mary, Mother of Salvation, give to all Your poor children a great measure of Your unconditional trust in Your Son. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus. www.twohearts.hk