

The Servant's Heart

by Pastor Kurt Hoover

Litany adapted from Mary's Son (Luke 1)

Pastor: "My soul magnifies the Lord,

All: and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

Pastor: for he who is mighty has done great things for me

All: and holy is his name.

Pastor: And his mercy is for those who fear him

All: from generation to generation.

Pastor: He has shown strength with his arm;

All: he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts;

Pastor: We worship You Lord in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen

Acts 1:12-14 ¹² Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away. ¹³ And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James. ¹⁴ All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.

Luke 1:34-38 ³⁴ And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"

³⁵ And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. ³⁶ And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. ³⁷ For nothing will be impossible with God." ³⁸ And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

Luke 8:1-3, 19-21 Soon afterward he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with him, ² and also some women who had

been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, ³ and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's household manager, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means.

¹⁹ Then his mother and his brothers came to him, but they could not reach him because of the crowd. ²⁰ And he was told, "Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, desiring to see you." ²¹ But he answered them, "My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it."

HS: *And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word."*

Audience: Caleb, Liz, Julia, Insight group, ...Holidays, Garrett,

Focus: *Servant*

Function: *listener will be present for others... not worried about others perception*

Servant

Mary – the whole picture

The women – firsthand accounts (may have been easier to get their perspective)

Servant – Presence (not about me)

And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." – Luke 1:38

This statement by a teenage girl is arguably the most significant confession in the Bible.

You could convince me the desperate father who says – *'I believe, help my unbelief,'* is just as significant.

There are probably some Old Testament promises that point to Jesus and the promised Kingdom that are more expansive and descriptive – they might give us a bigger picture of what God has promised for you and I to enjoy in this Holy Spirit driven life.

But if you want to crystalize it down to the key confession that we in the church often find our selves saying in response to God's mercy and God's astonishing and surprising shaping of our lives. This is what it means to have faith. This is the confession that needs no life experience, elite scholarly wisdom, expert knowledge or training.

God says this is what I have promised. This will be. This is true. This is your reality. This is your identity. You are not your mistakes; you are my creation. You are not the sum of your accomplishment; you have been a vessel for my light the whole time.

God speaks and when Faith is created a confession of that faith is drawn out of us. We give words to the trust and peace that has just been renewed in us. Often it is a simple, 'yes.' Or thank God. Or God is good. It can be tears or the warm fuzzies, or a tingle on the back of the neck. The Vegas nerve kicking in a response deeper than words as your spirit and The Holy Spirit of God's presence connect.

God speaks and when faith is created we confess that Trust that was just created. We gives words to the experience God has just made happen.

And arguably one of the highpoints of the Bible is the glimpse that Luke gives us of a teenage mother giving words to the trust God has just created in her.

God says – you will be my vessel to bear my light to the world for nothing is impossible for God.

And Mary said, “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.” -Luke 1:38

Luke gives us such a gift. The faith of a child visually and clearly described. Luke also gives us the gift of what the *service* looked like. When Mary’s said let your words govern my hope and my feelings and my direction for life. Inspire me, use me Lord! Luke gives us glimpses of what she just signed up for.

And we like Luke and Like Mary – we have signed up for this same service. Guided and shaped by not bread alone, but by ever word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. We have signed up to be inspired by words and situations and needs that we have no control over.

When we experience our personal confessions – the apostles creed, a song, holy communion, prayers, blessing... When we experience our personal confessions, God is shaping the same faith and trust in us that says – Oh Wow, I guess I am a servant too, let your words inspire and move my life.

In faith you are a servant of God fully present, not longer worried about your performance or others’ perceptions... you are available for God’s inspiration through words that make us leap into action for the sake of others.

God says – you will be my vessel to bear my light to the world for nothing is impossible for God. And we say, Yes where else would I go for you have the words of eternal life (John 6:68). (another good confession)

Luke gives us this gift of seeing the *servants* heart play out. We get to see Mary at the cross. We get to see this odd moment in Luke 8... which begins by lifting up other women. We get to see this odd moment where Jesus kind of rebuffs his familial obligations for His *service* to God. Speaking words that inspire action.

We get to see Mary in the temple and Jerusalem searching for a child. We get to see Mary in the upper room with the disciples praying and fasting. We can be assured she was there to experience the resurrected Jesus enter the room, through locked doors, breathing life back into their sacred and faithless hearts.

And I love that Luke tells us about the women. Two obscure women Joanna and Susanna. Mary Magdalene and others. Here is what this tells me. As Luke interviewed others for firsthand accounts he interviewed no less than 4 women, who he names.

We are almost certain he already had Mark's account. Possibly a master document involving many of the disciples agreeing on what experiences it was most important to record. He may have got a chance to interview some of the disciples but at this point God has purposely spread them through out the world for their service of sharing words that create faith. The good news of what God has done for humanity in Jesus Christ.

So who did he interview. The women. When Luke shares his experience of Jesus Christ he is not only sharing what shaped his life, but in each of his accounts he is intentionally capturing what the women and others saw. He is striving for that full perspective. And not only do we get that in the Gospel which captures all the details of Jesus life. We get that perspective in the book of Acts as he captures the work of the Holy Spirit to create what we now know as the church and missions... and really the sense of

community that came out of the Holy Spirit movement known as the way.

Let me conclude by making one final observation about our service to God that springs out of confession, out of our faith.

What makes you and I a servant of God has very little to do with how we think God ought to use us in the world. You are not on a quest to find God's perfect will for your life and the gifts He has given you.

When God speaks you are set free to leap into inspiration by words. You are set free to be present in the moment and shaped by words of hope and words of forgiveness. You are free to respond to cries for help and the beastly lies of the proud and manipulative. You are set free to listen to that voice inside of you that rebukes and affirms, comfort and testifies.

IN fact, it just may be the extent to which you would like to control your *service* to God, that you are most limiting that light which shines with in you.

When God creates your personal faith in Him. When you move from your agenda to trusting whatever might come next your way... When you are truly present not worried about your performance or the perceptions of others – you can be certain that God is at work in and through you.

Jesus Christ is here now. God has spoken. You will be His vessel to bear His light to the world, for nothing is impossible for God.

And we respond, say it with me - "*Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.*" -*Luke 1:38*



James Tissot (Nantes, France, 1836–1902, Chenecey–Buillon, France). *The Magnificat* (*Le magnificat*), 1886–1894. Opaque watercolor over graphite on gray wove paper, Brooklyn Museum.