



Main Street Congregational Church

145 Main Street, Amesbury MA 01913

December 24, 2024 - Mary Knew

Mary Knew

I was 40 when I heard "Mary Did You Know" for the first time. It grabbed me by the heart then as it grabs me by the heart now. A gifted, beloved soloist takes me away. Me, being me, is both washed over by the notes but also analytically assessing the lyrics.

So tonight I introduce my monkey, over thinking brain to the mystery and miracle of Christmas Eve . I hope I can do it in a way that allows the intermingling of awe with thought.

That we can have awe without divorcing ourselves from the real world in which we live.

That's the heart of the Christmas story isn't it? Sacred love taking on flesh and being born into the mess of the world. Life nurtured in the womb of an unwed exiled peasant teen. Jesus born from human flesh complete with labor pains in a feeding trough surrounded by livestock and all that brings.

The heart of the story is the love of God and the willingness of the Holy One to enter fully into the world. Taking on flesh and starting out as a totally vulnerable infant in an occupied land. All this earthiness. All this humanness. A baby born in the way babies are born. Having been nurtured in Mary's womb and pushed into the world contraction after contraction. I have never experienced giving birth but I have it from trusted sources that it's not a small thing. Mary had never given birth but I have a hunch she knew what it would entail.

The heart of the the Christmas story is what God does, how God enters into the messy and broken world, how God offers a new way to be in what is and that way is the love and justice of Jesus.

The heart of the story is what God does and we can trust what God did and does. And/ but, if we are paying attention we see really quickly that God chooses to have humans be very much a part of doing what God does. This is so much a part of the Christmas story - the shepherds, the angels, the magi, Herod, Joseph and Mary. God breaks into the world depending on the actions of humans. Some push back against the God way (Herod) and others join in. And so it continues to this day. Some join in the Christmas and God was of being in the world and some resist or seek to squelch it.

These past days I have been thinking a lot about Mary. I have been hearing Danny in my head asking, did you know? And I have been answering for her. Yes. Mary knew. Mary knew that she was being invited into a world changing story. Mary knew that what she was doing was risky. Mary knew that empire would resist the love and justice her child would bring. Mary knew that God entering the world would mean change in the world - change that would heal, disrupt, attend to the needs of those on the margins. Mary knew the powerful would be threatened and flex their violent muscles. Mary knew a new world order was taking shape and her son would initiate it.

Mary, a peasant, unwed, displaced woman, knew the risk and the power of saying yes and joining in God's way. She said yes. She invites us to do the same. And the same God who supported her through her life is here with us to support and guide us. Amen.

Joan MacPherson
Main Street Congregational UCC
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