

What God's First Promise to Mary Can Teach Us About Silencing Satan's Lies

A dream can catch you by surprise. It usually comes in a way you never expected. With Mary, it came in a word or a group of words from an angel. And among the first of them was an affirmation: "The Lord is with you!" (Luke 1:28c).

Each time I read this story of the dream-delivering angel visiting Mary, I sense some of the shock she must have felt. By this point in time, Mary must have been minding her own business, doing what all good Jewish girls did, getting ready to be married, getting ready to watch one of her (and every other girl's) childhood dreams come true: a wedding—when, bam!—out of the blue, an angel startles her soul with one word: "Greetings! (Luke 1:28b).

Yikes.

Hmmm ... "Greetings!" That sounds like the same word used in military draft letters from Uncle Sam, doesn't it? They begin with "Greetings," too. Such warm salutations are often followed by sobering requirements.

From all appearances, Mary's life was moving ahead and steadily progressing, as were the lives of many other teenage Jewesses. By all accounts, she seems to have been raised in a fine family with God-fearing parents—her own faith evidenced that fact. And, like most young women her age, Mary was preparing to launch into life—into her own life. All her plans were moving ahead much as she had probably hoped. She had been courted and won by a respected suitor, Joseph.

Mary's father must have been delighted to have her marrying a carpenter, for his was a trade in constant demand. His work

would keep him close to home and would provide for her needs and, as they got older, maybe even some of her parents'. The plans for their marriage and their lives together were certainly all falling into place. I imagine they had already decided where they would live. The dimensions of their hopes and dreams were probably falling into quite pleasant places.

But then God showed up.

He came in a way Mary never would have expected. And, with his first word, "Greetings," her life was forever changed. When the angel said "Greetings," in essence it was God saying hello. And when God said hello to Mary, it meant she would have to say good-bye to several things. In order for her to say hello to God's will, Mary would soon have to say:

- Good-bye to her own ideas of what her future would hold.
- Good-bye to being the master of her own destiny.
- Good-bye to most things familiar and comfortable.
- Good-bye to controlling the thoughts and opinions people would have of her. You see, that's what dreams do. They will greet you, and then require something of you. They bring a great big hello into your life; but they also will require some good-byes.

Mary certainly must have had her breath taken away when she looked up and saw an angel with a God-sized voice saying, "Greetings!" Wouldn't you? But as the shock filled her soul, did you notice what the angel said next?

"The Lord is with you!" (Luke 1:28c).

Ahhhh—that must have been so good for her to hear. Wouldn't you love to have an angel speak those words over your soul?

What a reassurance it must have been to hear those words, especially at such a moment as this. A completely unexpected invasion from heaven into her life must have placed her emotions somewhere between outright fear and utter shock. But

can you imagine a more comforting sentence?

“The Lord is with you!”

Is there any truth more precious to a soul than this one? Could anything possibly be more affirming?

Unfortunately, among the dream-killers in our lives are the false notions we have about God, about the way He sees us and even the way He feels towards us. Sometimes we “hear” other words, words in our minds, words that play in our memories, words that wear and war on our souls, words God has never said, words such as:

- “The Lord is against you!”
- “The Lord is far away from you!”
- “The Lord is overlooking you!”

Have you heard those words before?

I have.

“The Lord is against you!” Have you felt this one recently? It is one of the favorites of the enemy of our souls, the ole’ dream killer himself. If he can cause you to question how God feels about you, then he can begin to dismantle the dream—and your confidence and peace along with it. Unless you believe that God is *for* you and *with* you, you will struggle to even believe that the dream in your soul is a gift *from* him. A distorted view of God will discourage your faith.

“The Lord is far away from you!” Have you heard that one whispered in your mind before? The dream killer also knows if God is distant in your thinking, the dream will be distant, as well. If God is out of reach, so will be the dream he has given you. He will try hard to get you to believe the lie that God is far away from you.

“The Lord is overlooking you!” Have you felt that way before? Recently? Perhaps the toughest knot to get unwound in our

souls is self-pity. This happens when we have our eyes more on what God is doing for others than on God Himself. We are more riveted on our circumstances than on His character. When the God-given dream seems delayed, we are instantly tempted to look at others who seem to be experiencing dreams come true. And, as we make the mistake of comparing ourselves (and our stories) to others, discouragement rushes in and diminishes our hopes. And a doubtful view of God destroys our faith.

Dreams are important; that's certain. A God-given dream is significant in His eyes—and should be in ours, as well. And yet there is something more important to Him than the dream or vision He wants to fulfill through my life and yours. It was so important that it was the first news release the angel proclaimed to Mary that day. No, the first order of business was not the dream, the vision or even the plan God was revealing. The first thing out of the angel's mouth after he said hello was not about an assignment or new mission; it was about a relationship—not Mary's responsibility to the world, but God's relationship with her. Before He called upon her to do anything, he first wanted to remind her He was with her. That in itself is miraculous. That alone is a dream come true—the best of all dreams, is it not?

On this day, before the “dream” (the Christ child) would ever take its first breath, Mary needed to know this: “The Lord is with you.”

A God-given dream can be shocking and surprising. But there is one thing much more amazing: the God of dreams and visions wants to share in a relationship with you.

And that is the greatest dream of all. {eo}

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