

Mary did you know? Our God breaks in John ch 2 v 1 – 11 Jan 20th 2019

An admission

This Christmas just past I have really appreciated Christmas Carols in a way that I cannot remember previously.

I think there are 2 reasons for this new found appreciation.

The first reason is that I have sat, **just sat, and listened** to 2 choirs; Ledbury choral and Ledbury community choirs; one in church and one at our local theatre. A little joining in was encouraged but in the main it was just listening.

The other reason is that on one of those occasions I sat with those I know well who do not fully appreciate what God was about some 2000 years ago and subsequently. I listened to the words as one really **hearing them and understanding them for the first time** and prayed that those with me might be hearing and understanding them for themselves in that way. We may have heard many sermons over many years but the essential truths of what God is about are encapsulated in the whole range of Christmas carols.

One carol, fairly new to me, came with an amazing impact. The title 'Mary did you know?'

Some of the words are as follows:-

Mary, did you know that your baby boy will one day walk on water?
 that your baby boy has come to make you new
 that this child you've delivered will soon deliver you
 that your baby boy will give sight to a blind man?
 That your baby boy will calm a storm with his hand?
 That your baby boy has walked where angels trod?
 That when you kiss your little baby you kiss the face of God?
 The blind will see, the deaf will hear, the dead will live again
 That your baby boy is Lord of all creation? Will one day rule the
 nations? That the sleeping child you're holding is the great I AM?

Mary did you know?

These words have imprinted themselves on my mind since before Christmas. They still resonate. If we added another line it could be 'Mary did you know that your baby boy would turn water into wine?'

This is today's story, with which we are all so familiar. The written record of the story is attributed to John, the son of Zebedee, one of Jesus' closest disciples.

The 4 gospels tell one story **but how they do so** are all different; written for different readers, with different styles and emphases'. Each writer begins to tell the story of Jesus by linking him to the Old Testament. Mark goes back to Isaiah and the exile; Matthew to Abraham; Luke goes back to Adam. In his very first statements John uniquely and quite distinctively goes back even further, to the very beginning.

Back to God and to Jesus, the Word, who was with God and was God and through whom all things were made. John shows Jesus as the full expression of God – essentially all that God is and all that

He does – in all of God's being and in all of God's doing. And John the writer, together with another NT writer tells us that God speaks to us through Jesus and created the world through Jesus. Jesus is the exact imprint of God's very being and so Jesus is the reflection of God's glory – he shows us everything that is splendid and unique and glorious about all that God is and all that God does. In doing this John records and points us to 7 sayings and 7 signs given by Jesus.

Let's return to Mary. What **does** Mary know about 'her baby boy', now a man with a ministry and with a following of disciples?

We retrace the steps. Mary **what did you know?**

From the visits of the angel Gabriel she was told that God, the Holy Spirit, would bring her child to birth; that he would be holy, Son of God; that the Mighty One had done great things for her and for his people; that her baby was to be called Jesus, Saviour. She knew the worship of the baby by the shepherds and the wise men bearing gifts. We are told that Mary treasured the story of all that the shepherds had seen and heard and that she pondered them in her heart.

From Simeon, one of my most favourite biblical characters, she knew that in her baby Simeon had seen God's salvation; a revealing light for those way beyond her own people. Mary and Joseph were both amazed at what was being said about their baby. But then, to Mary, Simeon warns that her son will be misunderstood and contradicted and the pain to her would be like a sword thrust through her.

At this same time Mary knew that Anna, the very old prophetess, was not only thanking and praising God for this baby but telling everyone else what God was about. Fast forward.

Mary found it difficult to accept that her son, now 12 years old, had independently stayed at the Temple listening to and questioning the teachers there. But we read that he returned home with his parents, living obediently with them. Mary held these things dearly, deep within herself as he matured, blessed by both God and people.

Fast forward again as Mary, Jesus and his disciples were invited to a wedding celebration not too far from home. We know the story well; of the shortage of wine, a disgrace for the host of the wedding.

Mary became aware of the situation. She made a simple statement to Jesus, but with some 30 years of knowing her son. 'They have no wine'. With the celebrations extending over days rather than hours she knew that running out of wine was not just a family inconvenience but a disaster and a social disgrace which might be remembered for years. The need is brought to Jesus' attention. To our ears Jesus' response may jar somewhat. We read 'Dear woman, why do you involve me? My time has not yet come'. A response, almost a dismissal, saying 'What's this got to do with you and with me?' But Mary knew her son; her reaction a simple one of trust. She found the servants and confidently told them 'Do whatever he tells you'.

You know how the story continues. Jesus told the servants to fill the large stone jars – usually used for ritual washing – with water, which they did, and to the brim, seemingly without question.

By the time the water is drawn out of the jars and taken to the Master of Ceremonies it is excellent wine, about which the MC is particularly complimentary, amazed at the quality of what he was tasting. But the extraordinary event impacts these new disciples of Jesus; they believed in him.

John, the writer, makes 2 statements.

Firstly, that this is the first of the 7 miracle signs of Jesus which he records. Here was Jesus, taking the ordinary, everyday fundamental stuff of life and transforming it. Eugene Peterson, pastor and theologian says 'The 7 signs show Jesus continuing the creation work of God in Genesis' and Secondly, that the happenings of this story revealed Jesus' glory. To re-iterate an earlier statement: **Jesus is the exact imprint of God's very being and so Jesus is the reflection of God's glory - he shows us everything that is splendid and unique and glorious about all that God is and all that God does.** John's wants us to know Jesus as all that God is in the 7 x IAM titles and in all that God does in the 7 x miraculous signs.

This series of services is entitled '**Our God breaks in**'.

With the birth of Jesus God breaks into our time line, into history as we know it.

How amazing that God broke into the lives of ordinary, everyday people – Mary, Joseph, shepherds, astronomers, Simeon, Anna, John and the other disciples.

'Mary, did you know?' is where we started. Mary knew and trusted her son so well. She put the problem of the wine shortage into his hands, knowing he would deal with it. The same question might be asked of us 'Did you know – do we know – that Jesus is the face of God (as has been said) 'the best photo of God we will ever see'). Do we know the Jesus who has come to deliver us from all that is past, to make us new? That he calms storms? That, in spite of appearances, he rules the nations?

To quote 'The 7 signs show Jesus continuing the creation work of God in Genesis'; God is still at work in his creation and isn't just a Maintenance Engineer. He is still performing miracle signs that point to him, revealing not only his glory but his greatness and goodness, particularly towards us. He is still changing the water of our lives into wine, breaking into the old and making it new. We sometimes sing: 'I am a new creation, no more in condemnation'. For me, that has been a miracle as God has used his Word to break into my thinking and therefore my being and my doing.

There are times in all our lives when we long for and look for God to break in as Mary did at this wedding. How many, longing for a breakthrough have picked up a Gideon testament in a hotel room or a prison and not been disappointed? How many, living in places in the world where bibles are totally forbidden are longing for God to break in. For many, he is breaking in as the person of Jesus comes in dreams and visions. How many are experiencing God's intervention as they tune in to forbidden radio stations with the message of Jesus beamed into totally hostile situations. In spite of all the suffering how many stories came out from behind the Iron Curtain of God breaking in to seemingly impossible situations for God's people? How many have cause to praise God for his intervention in Liberia, Kenya, Chad, Madagascar, South Sudan and many other places where the pilots and planes of Missionary Aviation Fellowship have brought exactly the practical and spiritual help needed? How many will have a reason to rejoice that Bibles have been printed and distributed in China in recent years – all the more vital as the persecution of Christian believers in China has once again become a reality. God breaking in with provision for his people.

Even as I write we have had an answer to prayer – God breaking into a situation for one of the friends who listened to those carols with me. With the coming of the Christians against Poverty to this area how many at the end of their rope will find God breaking in to their situation?

I could go on, but time does not permit.

I wonder if you have a situation that needs entrusting to our heavenly Father?

Did you know? God is still breaking into the ordinary, everyday, fundamental stuff of life and transforming it. Amen

The recording of the carol 'Mary did you know?' is by an acappella group Pentatonix, found on youtube.