

A God with a Mother | Midweek if Lent 4 | John 19:25–27
Pastor Nick Shults | St. Mark Lutheran Church | Sunnyvale, CA

Could Mary, those thirty-some years ago, have imagined it would turn out this way?

When she was a pregnant yet unwed girl, with nothing but an off-the-wall story about having conceived by the Holy Spirit, could she possibly have had this moment in mind?

When she rode into Bethlehem with Joseph to be counted for the census, did she envision this? When she treasured up in her heart all the things the shepherds and angels said about her Son, did she know that his final moments would look like this?

When they brought their forty-day-old baby to the temple for the rites of presentation and her own purification, and the white-haired Simeon added the footnote to his prophecy, “a sword will pierce through your own soul also,” is this how she thought that would play out?

Could she have known that being “The Mother of God” would be so excruciatingly painful?

Certainly, the implied answer to these questions is, ‘no’. She could not have imagined such an unexpected end to the story. For God has become incarnate in *her womb*. Why, then, would it have to end like this? With her Son hanging from the cross?

To be sure, nothing about this story is expected. For us to even say that “God has a Mother” implies that in Jesus something incredibly surprising has taken place. To say that the fetus growing in Mary’s womb, the busy toddler, the growing adolescent was *God*, is to confess something utterly surprising. Something that we couldn’t even have imagined if we had tried.

For God enters into this world, into His very own creation, in a surprising way...through a woman. Through the *womb* of a woman. Born into the world as every other human being on the planet. This simple confession, though, changes everything. To say that God had a Mother...to say that Jesus was born into this world, to say that God has entered into His very own creation, is to say that the unexpected has happened both for Mary and for us.

Of course, God is the God of the unexpected, isn’t He? As we saw last Wednesday, though God had warned Adam and Eve about eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, He graciously provides them with covering to hide their sin and shame. God’s gracious provision is nothing if not unexpected.

When Abraham and Sarah finally conceived a child, God unexpectedly asks Abraham to do the unthinkable - to sacrifice his son Isaac on an altar. But once again, God provides a gracious way out.

And when, in the fullness of time, the Bible says, which is to say when God's appointed time came to invade the world, He does so not with angel armies to tear down and destroy, but in the person of Jesus who comes to forgive and renew. So it's not that far fetched to say that God enters our lives in unexpected ways, too.

For me it was a church youth leader who wanted to teach me to play the guitar.

For one man I met during my time at seminary, God found his lost soul in jail. I was privileged to be one of a group of people who witnessed his baptism in the county jail.

Maybe for you, God found you in the ordinary, humdrum of daily life and unexpectedly called you to live an ordinary, humdrum life with Him.

Or maybe God found you while you were covered in sin...but cleaned you up anyway.

Maybe God rescued you from sure and certain death.

Yes, God is the God of the unexpected, isn't He?

Certainly, Mary could not have imagined, all those years before hand, that she would be sitting at the foot of the cross. And perhaps neither could we have imaged that we would either. But we know that that's not even the end of the story. God, who continually surprises us, didn't end the story at the cross and crucifixion.

No, the story ends with the ultimate surprise of resurrection and new life. The story ends not in death but in life. The story ends with forgiveness. Because Mary is truly the Mother of God. Jesus, God in the flesh. And God is truly the Savior of sinners. He is the man, your Brother, your flesh, who alone can offer Himself on the cross for the forgiveness of your sins. He is the one who is the first-fruits of the resurrection. Showing us in no uncertain terms what our future is, too.

Mary never could have expected this. Nor could you. This man is God. This God is man dying for you. Behold the man. Behold your Savior. Behold your salvation. Behold your God. Amen.