

God's ways are not our ways. I've been giving some thought to the position that Mary was in after her remarkable visitation when the Angel Gabriel informed her that she would, as a virgin, conceive the son of God and give birth to salvation for the world. That was big news, but there was no earthly fan fare, no recognition or rejoicing by others, (with one exception later), and only a message to her from heaven and acceptance by her of the honor.

Joseph also had a visitation of the angel and placed himself in a unique and holy position of believing what had occurred within Mary and protecting that promise and child. Still there was no acknowledgment at all from others. In time he was accused of having impregnated her before they were married. Yet in heaven both Mary and Joseph are highly regarded and have rewards beyond what we can imagine upon this earth I am sure.

Even as the child grew in Mary's womb there weren't many noticeable benefits for carrying the Son of God. In fact they ended up homeless for a time and couldn't even have the child born in normal surroundings. If they had been looking for approval from men they would have been sorely disappointed. Had they been looking for temporal benefits for having accepted the calling of God on their lives they would have been discouraged.

Certainly the shepherds coming unannounced with their fantastic story of angels was a unique encouragement. Much later the Magi arrived with a remarkable tale of following the King's star from a far off country arriving with tribute for a King. But if Joseph and Mary were expecting these things there is no indication in scripture.

It wasn't long after the Magi came that they were on the road again eluding a murderous King's bloody legions supernaturally warned.

Think seriously of the place they were in by carrying the call of God out in their lives. The price they paid for obedience. God hasn't changed one bit since that day. He still asks us to obey, but we have a strong misunderstanding of the rewards of obedience to God. The rewards are not always immediately apparent. They are not always through men. Mankind does not always believe your calling and rarely may understand it. Truth be told, you may not fully understand it. Often the blessings of God seem as a threat to others and this makes you look as a threat to them.

Mary and Joseph had something which has become rare in our day. It was called the Fear of the Lord. The belief that obedience is its own reward. This strengthened them to go on in obedience accomplishing something that was much bigger than themselves by not expecting temporal commendations They accepted them when they came, but were not deterred or directed by their absence when they did not.

Was it odd that when the angel came to Mary with the "good news" that the Bible records that she was troubled? Why wouldn't she be. She was counting the cost of

obedience. Certainly there were blessings, but these were not as immediate or as apparent as the trials of obedience to a calling that was not apparent to most others.

If we are going to allow the Lord to accomplish spiritual things in our lives we must likewise learn obedience for the sake of loving God. If we will do that we will be rewarded if we stay on course and do not lose heart. The greatest of rewards are not always immediate, but they are ultimate.

Luke 1:28, 29

And having come in, the angel said to her, "Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!" But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was.