

GLORY WE COULD NEVER IMAGINE

by Royal Hamel

The two young people would soon be married. Happiness flowed; and joy, like a gentle fragrance wafted into their thoughts many times a day. For like all such couples they anticipated keenly the fruitful, happy life awaiting them.

But massive change came hurtling their way. For the Father threw a cosmic curve ball planned from all eternity into carefully laid human plans. The fullness of time had arrived and the coming of God the Son was near at hand. Angel announcers heralded to Mary and Joseph the glorious news. Mary, made pregnant by the Holy Spirit, would bring forth the Son of God. History would be changed forever. And so would the lives of Mary and Joseph.

The announcement of Jesus' birth was gloriously good news for mankind. But, in the humble lives of Mary and Joseph there would have been some immediate downside. After all virgin births were not just rare, they were unheard of. Of course God may have miraculously protected the couple from malicious talkers. But it is highly probable that gossips and slanderers did what they always do.

God butted in without asking, if you will. He orchestrated events in the lives of two of his children in unprecedented ways. Their lives would certainly never be the same. But, there is no record of bitterness, no anger, no resentment and certainly no disappointment with God. Instead Mary says, "For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed. For He who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name."

It appears that Mary and Joseph willingly and graciously accepted God's invasive change of plans. More than that they embraced God's curve ball, and by so doing opened their own lives to great blessing.

I frequently encounter people who are embittered, angry or disappointed with God. They tell me that he broke into their comfortable world with pain, disaster or crushing loss. Some valiantly profess on one level that, "Well, sure God has a right to do with me what he wants." But on another level they are unhappy and deeply disappointed with the hand they were dealt. And they are quite confident that they would have arranged things better for themselves had they been in charge.

I think of a middle-aged man who had to give up a job in a nearby city so that he could be closer to his family. It was a good job and he didn't want to quit. But, he did the right thing, found another job closer to home and has been a blessing to his family. But, though five years have passed he is still angry that he had to leave that job and struggles with resentment towards God.

I think of a young man who loved a girl. In fact he had marriage on his mind. She had no desire for marriage at that time, and soon broke things off. He grieved for many months, not angry with God, but deeply troubled in spirit for his loss was great and his faith deeply shaken.

I think of a missionary mother who lost her young son in India. He died after a short battle with intense fever. She probably thought her Lord would heal him, after all she and her husband were seeking to do God's will in a hard place. But, he was not healed. Her loss was a very heavy burden indeed, and probably led to a severe mental condition that would afflict her for the rest of her life. I wonder if she had deep doubts about her faith, I wonder if she was able to reconcile her view of a loving Father with a God who didn't see fit to answer her deepest prayer?

The couple at Bethlehem caught the cosmic curve ball of God in their own personal lives. Glory came to them (and more importantly to the whole world) as they embraced their part in His story. Perhaps He desires to shed glory on our pathway too...perhaps it will come by change we would never have chosen.

To be sure Mary and Joseph, unlike us, had the special advantage of angelic pronouncements, and so they knew God's design behind the changes. Nevertheless, they who parented the Son are still models for us. For in the face of massive change, social humiliation, and disgrace, they chose to trust in God's good will. And, no resentment, nor disappointment marred their trust. May their simple faith in the goodness of God lead us all to fall on our knees before Him who is absolutely trustworthy. May we renounce fruitless, empty despair while clinging to the promise, "... God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God...".

For our heavenly Father married Mary and Joseph's personal story to His larger story. And by their glad embrace of the latter they lived in the presence of a Glory they could never have imagined.

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