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Dear LW Brothers and Sisters,

Before I give you your "how to live the sermon" notes for this week I want to ask each of you to think about **whom you might bring to our Candlelight Service this Thursday eve**. Did you know that over **60%** of people who are invited to Christmas or Easter service by a friend will attend?! **THIS IS THE OPPORTUNITY** to invite that someone in your circle who doesn't have "a place to go" to worship this Christmas Eve.

Now for your notes 😊:

1. Please **pray**, asking God to open your mind and heart, then **reread Luke 1: 26-38**.
2. **Note carefully how the conversation between Mary and Angel Gabriel unfolds**. Mary knows what's "going on" with Elizabeth and Zechariah and their "miracle birth" but she has **no clue** how **dramatically** different HER situation will be until Gabriel "drops the bomb" in verse 35. It's not just that she will be having a special child, like Elizabeth and Zechariah. No, it won't be her and Joseph having the special baby -- it will be her and GOD!
3. **Mary Lesson One:** Learn to "**ponder the things of God in your heart**". Slow down long enough to have informal, conversational prayer-talks with God. Ask Him to guide your every thought. Turn to Him throughout the day. **Sometimes dare to just have a quiet time where you ask Him to fill your heart, then JUST LISTEN**. It's a hard thing for us to do in our busy way of thinking and living. Let me know if you need some resources/helps..
4. **Mary Lesson Two:** As did Mary, it's okay to ask God to help you understand what He is doing in your life when you're not sure. It's okay to ask for God's help. We can do so without doubting or testing Him. He knows the eternal "big picture" so sometimes He may not present you with a chrysal clear understanding of HIS ways -- **but trust HIM!**
5. **Mary Lesson Three:** Build on the two lessons above by then simply **surrendering to God -- as did Mary**. Ask Him to show you how He wants to use YOU then --GO WITH IT.

May the Lord bless, keep, and protect each and every one of you this week and ALL weeks to come in this New Year.

I CAN'T WAIT TO MEET THE FRIEND(S) YOU'LL BE BRINGING THIS THURSDAY NIGHT!! 😊

Pastor

Rev. Michael W. Birnbaum

Consider the following quotes about Mary from a surprising source: Martin Luther! The point of taking a look at this is to see that its okay to “honor” Mary and appreciate her example of faith, obedience , and intimacy with God.

“[She is the] highest woman and the noblest gem in Christianity after Christ. ..She is nobility, wisdom, and holiness personified. We can never honor her enough. Still, honor and praise must be given to her in such a way as to injure neither Christ nor the Scriptures.”

“She is more than Eve or Sarah, blessed above all nobility, wisdom, and sanctity.”

“One should honor Mary as she herself wished and as she expressed it in the Magnificat. She praised God for his deeds. How then can we praise her? The true honor of Mary is the honor of God, the praise of God’s grace.. .Mary is nothing for the sake of herself, but for the sake of Christ...Mary does not wish that we come to her, but to God.”

Would you like to know who is responsible for all those praises of Mary?

Martin Luther.