"You Never Know the Unexpected Places Where Love Finds Us."

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Last week I awakened around 5:30 am to get ready for work. After starting the day with coffee and prayer, I turned on the local news as background noise. A reporter caught my ear with this story:

 Last week in the local news a little boy was filmed in the early morning welcoming the UPS man as he delivered a package to the 5-year-old boy's home. The UPS man drops off the package, and, as he returns to his truck, he hears the boys voice behind him saying “Thaaaank You!” He turns around with a smile, sees the young boy and says “You're welcome.” The young boy says it again; then he says it again, "Thaaaank you, I love you." The UPS man says "Awwww.” The young boy then runs to the UPS man with his arms wide open. The UPS man scoops him up into a big hug and says, “I love you too.”

 A reporter having her camera man film the exchange asked the UPS man, "What did that moment feel like to you?"

He replies, "You never know the unexpected places where love will find us."

Enter Mary. She is visited by Gabriel, the angel, and this evokes an overwhelming feeling of fear. Gabriel, the angel calls her by name and says, “Do not be afraid.” Gabriel then explains the purpose of his presence:

31 You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called, “The Son of the Most High.” The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, 33 and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.

Gabriel’s visit would certainly count to me as a most unexpected encounter. Mary’s response to this visit makes me think about the place that she was in when she received this message.

First, she heard to the message that she was going to become pregnant. I don’t think I would be calm. My body would still be a tingle with surprise and fright, then I would be concerned about becoming pregnant when she knew that she was betrothed to Joseph, and then I would say, “Wait, what?”

Gabriel presented his message by saying, “Do not be afraid for you have found favor with God.” This suggests to me that Mary had a relationship with God demonstrated by the way she lived her life. After all a visit from an angel is a big deal! Not to mention giving birth to the Son of God! It’s a lot for a young girl, maybe in her teens or so, to take in.

Yet when this unexpected moment came to her, she responded by saying, “I am the Lord’s servant. May your word to me be fulfilled.”

One of the things I have learned from Eighth Day is the importance of meditation. I practice it daily, sometimes in the morning, in the middle of my workday, and at night. I find that when I show up to the meditation, it is peaceful and leaves me in a calm way of being. I find it most beneficial for the unexpected moments in my day when I encounter problems or hard tasks. I can face these times with a spirit of calm and clarity because I have prepared myself for such a time as this. I wonder if this is a similar place where Gabriel found Mary. Cultivating her inward journey and manifesting it in her outward journey?

And you might also ask, “What’s love got to do with it?” Mary is the human vessel through which the greatest love came to us all. I understand there are some who do not believe the details of her encounter. It’s ok. I’m sharing based on words and stories I have cultivated in my inward journey and on what I believe to be true.

Turning to David, a man after God’s own heart, an unexpected promise was given for a love that endures for all time and for all generations of his family. Like Mary, King David had a relationship with God that began when he was a young boy. He was a harpist who loved God and loved his law. God loved David because even with his victories and shortcomings, the ways of God were his very way of being.

In 2nd Samuel, God made a covenant with David when he had expressed a desire to build a house for the Ark of the covenant where God dwelled. Then God gave Nathan a message for David. And wait for it…

David, I’m gonna build you a house… 2 Samuel 7: 4-17

4 But that night the word of the Lord came to Nathan, saying:

5 “Go and tell my servant David, ‘This is what I say: Are you the one to build me a house to dwell in? 6 I have not dwelt in a house from the day I brought the Israelites up out of Egypt to this day. I have been moving from place to place with a tent as my dwelling. 7 Wherever I have moved with all the Israelites, did I ever say to any of their rulers whom I commanded to shepherd my people, Israel, “Why have you not built me a house of cedar?”’

8 “Now then, tell my servant David, ‘This is what the Lord Almighty says: I took you from the pasture, from tending the flock, and appointed you ruler over my people Israel. 9 I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have cut off all your enemies from before you. Now I will make your name great, like the names of the greatest men on earth. 10And I will provide a place for my people Israel and will plant them so that they can have a home of their own and no longer be disturbed. Wicked people will not oppress them anymore, as they did at the beginning 11and have done ever since the time I appointed judges over my people Israel. I will also give you rest from all your enemies.

“ ‘The Lord declares to you that the Lord himself will establish a house for you: 12When your days are over and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, your own flesh and blood, and I will establish his kingdom. 13He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. 14I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with a rod wielded by men, with floggings inflicted by human hands. 15But my love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. 16Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me.

17Nathan reported to David all the words of this entire revelation. (2 Samuel 7: 3-17).

These relationships are cemented in God’s deep love for Mary and David. What they both have in common is that they trusted God with every part of their life. God saw their love and their willingness to be in relationship resulting in a reciprocal love and promises of an enduring relationship for all time! Being in covenant with God is the greatest expression of love.

Where does God’s love find you today? In moments of deep listening or the gaze of a grandchild, son, or daughter. Is there a little boy across the street observing you and your service and running to you with open arms to say, “Thaaaank You, I love you!” Or do you see it in the kindness of a strangers?

I’d like to close by sharing two very short Tik Tok videos that remind me of how God’s precious gift of love shows up in the lives of ordinary people. God works through people in unexpected ways. I believe it an honor to be seen and loved by God. Wherever this may be.

Show Video

<https://youtu.be/NgaWfzR9sJ8?si=Ss9x-qyy_F8Ypko2>

God’s Love is a gift.

Emanuel, Emanuel, this name is Called Emanuel