

Luke 1: 26 – 38: THE ANNUNCIATION



March 25 is the Feast of the Annunciation, when we remember how the Angel Gabriel came to Mary to announce that she was the one chosen to be the mother of the Saviour. When I think of that story the words of Mary's reply always come into my mind, as I first learned them from the Authorised Version: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to Thy word."

With those words Mary accepted the will of God for her, in faith and obedience. They remind me of words spoken, more than three decades later, by her Son, as he prayed in Gethsemane: "Not my will, but Thine, be done." He had taught His disciples to pray, "Thy will be done," and now He Himself surrendered, in perfect obedience, to His Father's will.

Charles Wesley had Mary's words in mind when he wrote these challenging words:

Behold the servant of the Lord! I wait
Thy guiding eye to feel
To hear and keep Thy every word,
To prove and do Thy perfect will,
Joyful from my own works to cease,
Glad to fulfil all righteousness.

Wesley loved to use Scripture in his hymns, of course, and the final line of that verse also echoes words from the Authorised Version: Matthew 3: 12, the words of Jesus to John when He came to him to be baptized: "Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." Here again, we see Jesus submitting to His Father's will.

When we pray "Thy will be done," let us always remember that God's will for us is that we should know and experience His perfect love. That does not mean that life will always be easy. It does mean that God will bring us through whatever we may have to face, to share His final victory. Mary, as the mother of Jesus, would experience great pain and sorrow, but she would also know the joy of His resurrection, and the coming of God's Spirit to His Church.

A prayer:

*God most high, whose handmaid bore the Word made flesh:
we thank You that you visit us with Your Holy Spirit and overshadow us with Your power;
strengthen us to walk with Mary the joyful path of obedience
and so to bring forth the fruits of holiness;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN*

Rev. John Barnett

Image: The Annunciation, Piero della Francesca 1415 - 1492