

Treasuring the Lessons inspired by Luke 2:15-19, John 2:1-5, and 19:25-27



Raymond sat alone in the back row of Garrett Community Church long after the Sunday service had ended. The room was quiet except for the faint hum of the air conditioner and the distant laughter of children playing outside.

In his hands was an old journal that had its pages filled with prayers, memories, and questions.

“I wonder if I’m really making a difference,” he whispered to himself.

As a teacher, mentor, and volunteer, Raymond spent most of his days encouraging others. Yet recently he had begun to wonder whether any of his efforts mattered.

Just then, his longtime friends Pearl and Flint walked into the sanctuary.

“You missed the fellowship lunch,” Pearl said with a smile as she sat beside him.

Flint pulled up a chair. “That usually means you’re thinking too hard.”

Raymond chuckled. “Maybe, have you ever felt like God was doing something important, but you couldn’t fully understand it?”

Pearl nodded. “All the time.”

“What brought this on?” Flint asked.

Raymond opened his journal. “I was reading Scripture this morning. First, the shepherds visiting Jesus after hearing the angels. Then Mary telling the servants at Cana to do whatever Jesus said. And finally, Mary standing at the cross while Jesus entrusted John to her care.”

Pearl smiled thoughtfully. “That’s quite a journey from a manger to a wedding to a cross.”

“Exactly,” Raymond said. “And Mary’s in all three moments, and she sees things others miss seeing.”

The First Lesson: Recognizing God's Work

A week later, Raymond was helping organize a neighborhood literacy event.

Attendance was low.

Only a handful of children had shown up.

As volunteers packed up tables, Raymond felt discouraged.

“All this work for so few people,” he sighed.

Pearl pointed toward a young girl sitting under a tree, deeply engaged in a book.

“You see one child,” Pearl said. “God might see the beginning of an entirely different story.”

Raymond watched the girl reading.

Suddenly he remembered the shepherds racing to Bethlehem after hearing the angels' message. Scripture said they told everyone what they had seen, while Mary treasured these things and pondered them in her heart.

“Maybe I've become too focused on results,” Raymond said quietly.

“Maybe,” Pearl replied. “Mary didn't know everything God was doing, yet she simply treasured what God revealed.”

Flint joined them playing his guitar in between carrying folding chairs.

“Sometimes,” he said, “the miracle isn't the crowd because everything in you has got to come out, and sometimes it's the one life changed.”

Raymond looked again at the young reader and smiled.

For the first time that day, he felt hopeful.

The Second Lesson: Trusting Jesus' Direction



A month later, Raymond faced a serious challenge.

Funding for an after-school tutoring program had unexpectedly fallen through.

Without financial support, dozens of students could lose access to extra academic help.

Raymond gathered with Pearl and Flint in a local coffee shop.

“I’ve made calls everywhere,” Raymond said. “Nothing is working.”

Pearl stirred her coffee thoughtfully.

“Do you remember Mary at the wedding in Cana?”

Raymond nodded.

“She saw the problem before anyone else,” Pearl said. “She knew the celebration would be ruined if they ran out of wine.”

“And what did she do?” Flint asked.

“She brought the need to Jesus.”

“Exactly,” Pearl replied. “And then she told the servants, ‘Do whatever He tells you.’”

Raymond leaned back.

“So, you’re saying I should keep trusting?”

“Not blindly,” Pearl said. “Faith isn’t pretending problems don’t exist...Faith is obeying even when you can’t see the solution.”

Flint grinned.

“Besides, we've seen God show up before.”

The next day Raymond received an unexpected phone call.

A retired business owner had heard about the tutoring program and wanted to provide a grant that would fund the initiative through the entire school year.

Raymond sat at his desk speechless.

Later he called his friends.

“It happened,” he said.

Pearl laughed. “Looks like someone followed Mary's advice.”

“Do whatever He tells you,” Flint added.

The Third Lesson: Remaining Faithful Through Pain

Several years passed.

Then came the season Raymond never expected.

His father became seriously ill.

Weeks turned into months of hospital visits and uncertainty.

One evening Raymond sat in the hospital chapel feeling exhausted and heartbroken.

Pearl and Flint quietly joined him.

“I don't understand this,” Raymond admitted. “I've prayed constantly, but everything still hurts.”

No one spoke for a moment.

Then Pearl said softly, “Mary stood at the foot of the cross.”

Raymond looked up.

“She couldn't stop the suffering,” Pearl continued. “She couldn't change the moment, but she remained faithful.”

Flint nodded.

“Jesus saw her there, and even while suffering Himself, He cared for her and entrusted her to John.”

Raymond stared at the chapel cross.

“So, faithfulness isn't always about fixing things?”

“No,” Pearl said gently. “Sometimes faithfulness is simply staying present when life breaks your heart.”

Tears filled Raymond's eyes.

For the first time in months, he stopped fighting his grief and simply allowed God to meet him there.

MOVING A HEADD



Years later, Raymond often reflected on those conversations.

One autumn afternoon he sat beneath a tree in a city park, watching children play while turning the pages of the same journal he had carried for years.

Pearl and Flint arrived carrying cups of hot cider.

“You're thinking again,” Flint teased.

“Always,” Raymond laughed.

“What about this time?” Pearl asked.

Raymond closed the journal.

“I've realized something. Mary teaches us how to walk with God.”

“How so?” Flint asked.

“She treasured God's work even when she didn't fully understand it... she trusted Jesus when others couldn't see the answer... and she remained faithful even in suffering.”

Pearl smiled.

“That's a life well lived.”

Raymond looked toward the sky as the afternoon sun painted golden colors across the horizon.

“You know,” he said, “God's greatest gifts often arrive as moments we don't fully understand at the time.”

“Like the shepherds discovering a Savior,” Pearl added.

“Like servants filling ordinary jars,” Flint said.

“Like a mother standing faithfully beside a cross,” Raymond finished.

The three friends sat quietly, grateful for the journey.