

The Songs of Christmas

ADVENT: Day 3

"MARY, DID YOU KNOW?"

*Mary did you know that your baby boy would one day walk on water?
Mary did you know that your baby boy would save our sons and daughters?
Did you know that your baby boy has come to make you new?
This child that you've delivered, will soon deliver you*

Do you know this modern-day Christmas classic? If not, I encourage you to listen to it before reading further. And be sure to have some tissues close by.

If you know the song, think back to the first time you ever heard it or saw it performed. What was your reaction? What did it make you think of? How did it deepen your worship or expand your appreciation for the miracle of Christmas?

The first time I ever heard "Mary, Did You Know?" was during a worship service. When the vocalist finished, I looked around the sanctuary to see dozens of people blotting tears from their eyes—just as I was.

By simply changing the perspective of the song, as if it had been written to Mary, the mother of Jesus, the songwriter had caused us all to consider the Christmas story in a new and startling way.

The story behind the song

Many people may know Mark Lowry as a popular Christian comedian who began his career in the late 1980s. Still others may know him as a member of the Gaither Vocal Band. But his most well-known creative act may be co-writing the lyrics to "Mary, Did You Know?"

In 1984, Lowry was asked to write a Christmas play, so he sat down with pen and paper and imagined Mary holding her newborn baby. He thought about all the things the baby Jesus would do once he became a man. Eventually, the words became a poem. In 1991, the poem became a powerful song.

Lowry said that he "started thinking and wondering if Mary realized the power, authority and majesty that she cradled in her arms that first Christmas. I wondered if she realized those little hands were the same hands that scooped out oceans and formed rivers. I just tried to put into words the unfathomable. I started thinking of the

questions I would have for her if I were to sit down and have coffee with Mary. You know, "What was it like raising God? What did you know? What didn't you know?" Hundreds of musical artists have since performed "Mary, Did You Know?", proving its enduring popularity as a modern Christmas classic.

Looking back so we can look forward

Every new mom holds her baby and wonders about the life her child will have when he or she is grown. Mary knew her baby was special because God was his only Father. Mary knew she held a miracle in her arms, but I don't think she could have imagined all the miracles her baby would do when he grew to be a man. It's comparatively easy for us to read the Bible and nod our assent: Fed five thousand? Sure! Walked on water? Of course! Raised from the dead? Absolutely.

But do what the song encourages you to do: place yourself in Mary's shoes *before* any of that happened. Then imagine how her joy, her faith, and her trust increased as she saw her son—God's only Son—do incredible works throughout his life.

God entrusted Jesus to Mary, and Mary believed the angel's words to her in Luke 1:37: "For nothing will be impossible with God."

May we echo Mary's response this Christmas: "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38)

"The Songs Tell the Story"
An Advent Devotional By: Janet Denison