

Love Is . . . Courageous

2 Samuel 7:1–11; Luke 1:26–38

There is a particular kind of courage we admire easily: bold speeches, decisive action, visible bravery. But Scripture often points us to a quieter, deeper courage—the courage to trust, to consent, to let go of our preferred plans and receive God’s unexpected future. Today’s texts confront us with that kind of courage. Not the courage to build something impressive for God, but the courage to let God do something new in us.

David’s Good Idea—and God’s Better One

Our reading from Second Samuel begins with a scene that feels settled, even comfortable. King David is at rest. The ark of God has been brought to Jerusalem. The enemies have been subdued. David now lives in a house of cedar—a symbol of stability, permanence, success.

And then David has what seems like an excellent religious idea. He says to the prophet Nathan, *“Look, I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent.”* In other words: *I’m doing well, and God deserves better accommodations.* This is piety we recognize. It is generous. It is sincere. It is also entirely David’s initiative.

At first Nathan affirms the plan. But that night, God interrupts. God sends Nathan back—not to praise David’s ambition, but to redirect it entirely.

God’s response is striking. God does not scold David, but neither does God accept David’s proposal. Instead, God reminds David of who God is and what God has already done: *I took you from the pasture. I have been with you wherever you went. I have cut off your enemies. I gave you rest.*

And then comes the reversal at the heart of this passage: *“Are you the one to build me a house?”* God says, in effect, *You are not the builder here. I am.*

God refuses David’s plan to build a house for God and instead promises to build a “house” for David—not a building, but a future, a lineage, a people shaped by God’s covenantal love.

This moment requires courage from David, though we often miss that. It takes courage to relinquish a good religious idea. It takes courage to accept that God’s purposes may unfold differently than we imagine. It takes courage to trust that God’s faithfulness does not depend on our grand gestures, but on God’s own promise.

Love, in this story, is courageous because it refuses control. God’s love for David is not anxious, not grasping, not dependent on David’s accomplishments. God’s love is free enough to say no—and faithful enough to promise a future anyway.

Mary's Risky Yes

If David's story teaches us about the courage to release control, Mary's story teaches us about the courage to consent.

When the angel Gabriel appears to Mary in Luke's Gospel, there is nothing settled or comfortable about her life. She is young. She is not powerful. She is not secure. She is not living in a house of cedar. She is living in a world where pregnancy outside marriage carries real danger—social, economic, and possibly physical.

The angel greets her with words that are both reassuring and unsettling: "*Greetings, favored one. The Lord is with you.*" Luke tells us Mary is perplexed. She does not respond with instant devotion. She wonders what kind of greeting this might be.

Then comes the announcement: she will bear a child who will be called Son of the Most High, whose reign will have no end.

Mary asks a question—not a defiant one, but an honest one: "*How can this be?*" Her question is not punished. It is honored. God is not threatened by her need to understand.

And yet, when the explanation comes, it does not remove the risk. There is no guarantee of safety. No assurance that everything will be easy. Only this promise: "*Nothing will be impossible with God.*"

Mary's response is one of the most courageous sentences in Scripture: "*Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.*"

This is not passive submission. It is active trust. Mary does not say, "*I understand.*" She says, "*I am willing.*" She does not say, "*I am ready.*" She says, "*I am available.*"

Love, here, is courageous because it says yes without knowing all the consequences.

Courage Is Not Certainty

Both David and Mary teach us something essential: courage is not certainty. Courage is faith practiced under conditions of uncertainty.

David must accept that God's presence is not confined to buildings, projects, or achievements. Mary must accept that God's future will unfold in her body, her reputation, her vulnerability.

In both cases, God's love moves ahead of human planning. God's love disrupts settled assumptions. God's love invites participation rather than control.

This matters for us, because we often confuse courage with confidence. We imagine that faithful people should feel sure, steady, and unafraid. But Scripture tells a different story. Faithful people are often confused, unsettled, and afraid—and courageous anyway.

Courage, in biblical terms, is not the absence of fear. It is the decision to trust God's promise more than our fear.

The Courage to Be Carried by God

Notice one more parallel between these stories. In Second Samuel, God reminds David that God has been the one doing the carrying all along: *"I took you... I have been with you... I gave you rest."*

In Luke's Gospel, the angel tells Mary that the Holy Spirit will overshadow her—that God will do the work she cannot do herself.

In both cases, courage emerges not from human strength, but from divine initiative. God's love is courageous first. God risks relationship. God entrusts the future to flawed people. God chooses not to remain distant or self-protective.

This is perhaps the most unsettling truth of all: God's love is courageous enough to be vulnerable. God risks rejection, misunderstanding, and suffering in order to dwell with humanity.

What Courage Looks Like Now

So what does it mean for us, here and now, to say *"Love is courageous"*?

It may mean relinquishing a plan we were sure God needed us to accomplish.

It may mean trusting that God is already at work beyond our control.

It may mean saying yes to a calling that stretches us beyond comfort or clarity.

It may mean asking honest questions and then choosing trust anyway.

For congregations, courage may look like resisting nostalgia and trusting God's future.

For individuals, courage may look like offering availability rather than certainty.

For the church, courage may look like believing that God still dwells among us—not in monuments, but in people.

The good news of these texts is that God does not ask for heroic strength. God asks for trustful openness. God builds the house. God brings forth the future. God supplies the faithfulness that love requires.

Conclusion

David wanted to do something great for God. Mary allowed God to do something new in her. Both encounters reveal a truth at the heart of the gospel:

Love is courageous—not because it is fearless, but because it trusts God's promise more than human control.

May we have the courage to release our plans when God calls us into a deeper trust.
May we have the courage to say yes when God invites us into an unknown future.
And may we remember, always, that the God who calls us forward is the same God who carries us all the way.

Amen.