

[00:00:00] <music>

Annie: Hi Friends! Happy Mother's Day. I'm Annie F. Downs. Welcome to this bonus Mother's Day episode for you today on That Sounds Fun. I'm so happy to be here with you today.

First of all, Happy Mother's Day to my Mom. Happy Mother's Day to my sister. Happy Mother's Day to so many of my friends who are raising my MiniBFFs. I am so so thankful. Happy Mother's Day to all the women who are mothering me in ministry and mentorship and friendship. I'm just really grateful today for the women around me who are mothering in a thousand ways.

I know Mother's Day has a lot of really complicated feelings for some of us. Whether it is joyful and tender or hopeful or maybe a little hopeless, I want to invite you to listen in for the next 15-ish minutes. I recently got to interview Dr. Nijay Gupta on Episode 464 of the That Sounds Fun podcast and you loved it. Y'all loved it. Y'all shared that show like crazy and told me in every way and told Nijay in every way how much you enjoyed what you learned and how on our mind-blown emoji scale this was high. I know. Y'all gotta go back and listen if you haven't yet.

Nijay's book, *Tell Her Story*, is a beautiful piece of work on how women lead taught administered all throughout scripture, and particularly a lot in the Gospels. As we talked about the women all throughout the Bible, we decided to save our conversation about Mary the mother of Jesus for today. There are some super interesting Easter eggs that really stand out about her, not just Mary as the mother of Jesus, but Mary as the disciple of Jesus.

What can we learn from the way she lived? And what do we see in this relationship between a mother and her son but also a mother and her Savior? It is so fascinating. And as you can imagine, as you remember from Nijay last time, lots of mind-blown emojis coming. So here is my short conversation for you on this Mother's Day about Mary the mother of Jesus with Dr. Nijay Gupta.

Dr. Nijay Gupta, welcome back. Happy Mother's Day to all of our friends listening. Thank you for coming and having just a quick conversation about Jesus' mom.

Dr. Gupta: My pleasure. Happy Mother's Day to my wife and my beloved mother.

Annie: Yes, same to my mother. Okay, I just wanted to separate Mary. Our friends can go back and listen to you last week as we talked about your whole book, *Tell Her Story*. But I thought, let's just talk about Mary on Mother's Day. She is such an interesting character that you found some deeper things about, some Easter eggs about that I think whether you're a mother or not... I'm not a traditional mother but I

love reading what you sought out and found about Mother Mary. So what are some things that stand out to you about her?

Dr. Gupta: One of my favorite texts in the whole of the Bible is Luke 1:46-55, which is traditionally called the Magnificat, sometimes called Mary's Song of Praise. So Mary's pregnant, and she is committed to doing this. And she's a young person. I have a 16-year-old daughter.

Annie: Oh, right?

Dr. Gupta: So I know that age. And I just can't imagine my daughter not only being pregnant but being pregnant with Jesus. And she sees her cousin and she belts out this song in the Judean hill country. And if I were to sing a song like this, it would probably be I'm so excited about what's going to happen in the future, especially with me, over this child.

Annie: Uh-huh, right.

Dr. Gupta: But she sings a song about Israel and she sings a song about the world. The depth of this young woman is incredible. She sings a theological song about what God is going to do. The only comparative I have... I don't know if you remember. I think we're about the same age. I think you remember the movie... It was an animated movie about Israel, the Exodus. What am I thinking? What's that movie? There can be miracle.

Annie: That's exactly right. *Prince of Egypt*.

Dr. Gupta: *Prince of Egypt*. And I think about what they would sing as they were liberated from slavery. And Mary sings that kind of song. So the precocious, intelligent, almost prophetic... I think in one article I use the word scribal. She had like the scribes. She has this theological intelligence, where she sings the song that God's gonna pull down rulers from the thrones. She knows already God is going to turn the world upside down with this child.

So you can just feel the whole hopes of the people of God well up and shoot like a geyser through this 15, 16-year-old young girl who knows that something big is going to happen here. Some things that are amazing about this is God chose her, right?

Annie: Yeah.

Dr. Gupta: Paul says at the right time this happened. And Joseph disappears. He dies.

Annie: He never says anything. My dad the other day was like, "Do you realize Joseph never says a single word?"

Dr. Gupta: He disappears after those early scenes when Jesus is 12 or whatever. So think about this. According to Deuteronomy 6, who teaches Jewish children the word of God? Their parents. Their parents do. They go to synagogue, they learn from a teacher, but day by day, when you wake up, when you lie down, when you go about, you're learning. So when he's 20, 25, 28, 29, right, choosing his Birkenstocks for the ministry, it's Mary that He's talking to.

Now what's interesting is in this time and culture, if your father dies, normally another relative, male relative is going to step in and Father you. It's like an uncle or a grandparent. But when we read the gospels, it's just Mary.

And it would be really normal for Mary to just stay home and Jesus is doing his itinerant thing, and she's just gonna send a letter and check in every now and again. You know, how are you eating? Are you getting enough sleep? You know, like my mom does. But she pops up every now and again in these stories. The wedding of Cana, right? She comes knocking and saying, "Let me in," and He says, "These are my mother's and my brothers." I think that story tells us that this is an invitation for her to be a disciple, not just to be a mother. She stays mother, but to be a disciple as well.

And then she's there at the cross. There's this beautiful statue in Rome called Pietà, and it's a statue of Mary holding the dead body of Jesus.

Annie: Wow.

Dr. Gupta: It's a very somber statue, and I encourage everyone to look it up. I could spend hours just looking at that picture. When my youngest daughter was 15 months old, she was diagnosed with cancer. She's cancer free by God's grace now. But she had cancer, and it was the hardest thing that we ever did is journey through that with her. And as parents, mother and father of a child with cancer, you know, we don't "cancer kills people". Right? She was 15 months old and God saved her. But I know what it's like to worry. And I couldn't imagine anything worse than seeing your child suffer. You know, horrific traumatic suffering. And Mary had to witness that. John tells us she was there at the cross watching this happen.

Annie: And He's only 30, and she's at most 50. Probably not even.

Dr. Gupta: She's very young. She's our age.

Annie: She's our age. Right. Right. Watching her adult son be crucified.

Dr. Gupta: Right?

Annie: Yeah.

Dr. Gupta: And they didn't have their fist back then.

Annie: Right, right.

Dr. Gupta: And she's there. And this is what's brilliant. I didn't really fully understand this till I researched for my book, *Tell Her Story*. She's there at Pentecost.

Annie: I didn't realize that either until you put even the piece of art there.

Dr. Gupta: The picture there. There are these beautiful art depictions from the medieval period and that in the Baroque period that have Mary—and this is actually in the book of Acts—has Mary there in the room where Pentecost happens. These painters will put her in the center and put six disciples on her right, six disciples on her left, I think for two reasons. One is Jesus ascended. She's kind of the family rep.

Annie: Yeah, right.

Dr. Gupta: But two, more importantly, if Luke wrote both the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts, then this is kind of a callback to Luke 1 where the angel tells her, "The Holy Spirit will overshadow you" when she's pregnant. Right?

Annie: Yes.

Dr. Gupta: And then here in the book of Acts, the Holy Spirit comes again with the giving of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost over the church. So she's there-

Annie: Oh, my gosh, right.

Dr. Gupta: ...as a representative that the same God that brought the Messiah at the birth of the Messiah is the same God the birth of the church.

Annie: Oh my gosh.

Dr. Gupta: Keep on hoping. Keep on... Mother's Day means so much more than just celebrating mothers. It's celebrating the gospel.

Annie: How did Luke get Mary's song? Do you think Mary sang it again? Do you think it was a song people knew? How did Luke have that to write down?

Dr. Gupta: You know, all I can think of is Mary was brilliant. In order to say the things that she said, you know, she's... I don't know. You know, I love musicals and often there's an introductory musical piece that will be kind of a guide for the rest of the musical, a hermeneutical key the rest of the musical. And the Magnificat plays the role of a hermeneutical key.

Annie: Wow.

Dr. Gupta: You're expected to spend the rest of the gospel figuring out how what she says is fulfilled.

Annie: Oh, dude. That's all I'm gonna read today. I'm just gonna go back and read that over and over again.

Dr. Gupta: I don't know if she could write or whatever but I'm wondering, you don't just belt that out on the spot what she does and Luke 1. I'm imagining she's journaling or whatever the equivalent her time was journaling. She's reading scripture or she's memorized scripture or she's talking to rabbis, whatever she's doing—and this is actually thought through—and she sings this, I think it's somehow as a culmination of her reflection.

Annie: Yes.

Dr. Gupta: I would love to study—I haven't done this format—I'd love to study how Jesus' own teaching is shaped by her teaching.

Annie: Oh, by that song. Yeah. Oh, gosh, that is... Will you write that one?

Dr. Gupta: It's powerful.

Annie: That is unbelievable to think about is her constant influence. What about the parts where... I notice whenever we do the Let's Read the Gospels and we've run past this where people say, Your mother and your brothers are waiting out here for you, Jesus, and He doesn't make time for them. I mean, every mom has experienced that. What do you think is going on there?

Dr. Gupta: I think this happens throughout the Gospel where Jesus constantly does this thing where he says, I'm acting beyond our expectations and norms. You know, I'm doing things differently. In the Gospel of John, there's these weird things where people say, Hey, you need to go to this thing. He's like, "No, I'm not gonna go." And then they leave and He's like, "I'm gonna go now," only for the reason he just doesn't want to do.

Annie: That's right. And when they were like, "Don't go to Jerusalem," he's like, "Yes, I am."

Dr. Gupta: "It's not my timing." So He does this. Right?

Annie: Right.

Dr. Gupta: He does this to marry actually in the wedding of Cana.

Annie: Yeah, yeah,

Dr. Gupta: "Hey, you need to go do something about this." He's like, "It's not my time. I'll do it anyway because you're my mom. You know, I owe you a few things." But I think He does these things to shake up our sense of where God is and what He's doing. But I think there's something at the very heart of Christianity, and this relates to Mother's Day. We want to celebrate our biological mothers, for sure. But one thing that Jesus does in that scene is He says, "When you enter the world of the gospel, family means all those people who share one faith through Jesus Christ."

So Paul will say this about "hey, you only have one father." He says this about Onesimus: "I became a father to Onesimus" in Philemon. And same thing with mothers, right? Just as you'd said earlier, mothering has... Many different kinds of people can play mothering roles. Even Paul uses motherly language for his own ministry where he talks about rebirthing the Galatian church in the right way.

Annie: Yes. Yes. Wow.

Dr. Gupta: So I think one thing He's doing with His own family is He's saying, You don't get a free ticket in the kingdom of God just because we share blood. He's saying to His own family, everybody has to start over with following Jesus. That would be hard for His mother.

Annie: Yeah, yeah.

Dr. Gupta: But that is the challenge of discipleship.

Annie: Why did Jesus turn over "mother, this is your son; son, this is your mother," between John and Mary from the cross when Jesus had living siblings?

Dr. Gupta: The questions about His family are complex. But what we learned from the Gospel of John is, Jesus had this very intimate relationship with John. You know, this language of laying at the bosom. The old English translations, laying at the bosom

of Jesus. You know, I have siblings, and I have friends and some of my friends are closer to me than my siblings.

Annie: Yeah, of course.

Dr. Gupta: I think what I take away from that text, I think, John 19 is, in His dying moment He was thinking about His Father in heaven, why have you forsaken me and He's thinking about His mother on Earth. That's what we can say is... He's got three breaths left, and with two of them He wants to say, I want to make sure mom's taken care of.

Annie: That's beautiful. What a gift! It is a sweet thing to see that modeled for me as a non-traditional mom, to see a ministry mother model in her. And beautifully we get to see it throughout the Bible. But I've always also enjoyed reading and watching her in my mind be traditional mother and ministry mother to so many. That's really cool.

[00:14:05] <music>

Annie: Oh, you guys, wasn't Mary brilliant? I just love... The book goes into it even deeper than Nijay did with us. So it's absolutely worth the read. But man, what an incredibly cool conversation to think about today.

And no matter what season you're in, whether you're an adoptive mom or hoping to be a mom, grieving a mom, listening right now with your mom or missing your mom, or there are kids running in and out between your legs and around the kitchen counter because you're moming right now, I hope this conversation reminds you that whether you're a mother physically or mothering through ministry, your life and your work and your impact really matters.

Like Nijay said, I wonder what we learned from Jesus that He learned from His mother. Oh my gosh, I cannot quit thinking about that. If you haven't listened to Episode 464 with Nijay, go back and listen. It is tagged in the show notes below. And go get your copy of his book *Tell Her Story* so you can read about Deborah and Phoebe and Priscilla and Mary Magdalene, and all the women who helped spread the gospel from Genesis to Revelation.

And if you're just now looking for a gift for your mom, yikes, but good, this book is a great one. Okay, you guys, why don't you go out today, ask your mom or a mom that you know and love, what sounds fun to her? And for all the women in your life that are mothering, whether they're partnering with you in mothering your children, or whether they're mothering a ministry alongside you, or whether they're mothering your children in their classrooms, today's a great day to reach out and

celebrate other moms in your life as well, other people who are mothering. And all you moms out there I hope you feel super loved. All the women and all the ways you're mothering I hope you feel super loved and seen today.

If you need anything else from me, you know I'm embarrassingly easy to find. Annie F. Downs on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook. All the places you may need me, that's how you can find me. And I think that's it for me today, friends. Go out or stay home and do something that sounds fun to you. I will do the same.

Today what sounds fun to me, since we are not doing Mother's Day with my family this weekend, I'm gonna pop around and see a bunch of my mom friends and tell them how amazing I think they are in what they do and how grateful I am for my MiniBFFs. So that's what sounds fun to me today is a little tour of homes with all my best friends. I cannot wait. Y'all have a great Sunday. And we will see you back here tomorrow with Shane Claiborne.