

## Mary, the Servant of the Lord

Luke 1:26-38

December 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2019

Big idea: The God-Man would be born to a virgin shown favor by God in order to rescue and reign.

### Intro

Last Sunday we followed Zacharias and Elizabeth, two ordinary people used by God to prepare the preparer, John the Baptist. We skipped through Luke 1, hitting the parts of the narrative that focus on them. Their story closes in Luke 1. They never show back up.

This Sunday we turn to a more familiar character in the nativity scene, Mary. While she is the main character in this scene, though her experience we can't help but look past her to Jesus, *the* main character in the whole Bible. But let's not rush too quickly past her.

CS Lewis: One man from the whole earth (Abraham) is picked out. He is separated (miserably enough, we may suppose) from his natural surroundings, sent into a strange country, and made the ancestor of a nation who are to carry the knowledge of the true God. Within this nation there is further selection: some die in the desert, some remain behind in Babylon. There is further selection still. The process grows narrower and narrower, sharpens at last into one small bright point like the head of a spear. It is a Jewish girl at her prayers. All humanity (so far as concerns its redemption) has narrowed to that." (From *Miracles*, Chapter 14)

As we study her description, the words spoken to her by the angel Gabriel, her humble and obedient response, we learn about the humanity that Jesus came to save.

1. Gabriel approached an ***unlikely*** person. (1:26-29)
  - a. The angel, Gabriel, plays a large role in this story and angels play a large role in the earthly life of Jesus, including His birth and subsequent events, so it's worth briefly pausing to talk about them.
  - b. Wayne Grudem – Angels are created, spiritual beings with moral judgment and high intelligence, but without physical bodies.
    - i. Created, Not Immortal
      1. **Colossians 1:16** For by Him all things were created, *both* in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities-- all things have been created through Him and for Him.
    - ii. Spiritual beings so cannot therefore normally be seen unless God gives us special ability to see them.
      1. **Numbers 22:31** Then the LORD opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way with his drawn sword in his hand; and he bowed all the way to the ground.
    - iii. Intelligence and emotions
    - iv. Powerful but Not Omnipotent
      1. Destroy Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19)
    - v. Organized but little detail or concern to describe their organization
      1. **Psalms 89:7** A God greatly feared in the council of the holy ones, And awesome above all those who are around Him?

2. Gabriel is named here. Michael is named. Indications of some categories like archangel.
- vi. Good angels are described as ministering servants of God, Christ, and man.
    1. They ministered in relation to Christ by
      - a. Announcing His coming (Lk. 1:26-38; 2:9-14)
        - i. **Luke 1:26-31** Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth, <sup>27</sup> to a virgin . . . "Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. <sup>31</sup> "And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus.
      - b. Directing Mary and Joseph (Matt. 2:13-15, 19-21)
        - i. **Matthew 2:13** Now when they had gone, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up! Take the Child and His mother and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is going to search for the Child to destroy Him."
      - c. Ministering to Jesus after His temptation in the wilderness (Matt. 4:11)
        - i. **Matthew 4:11** Then the devil left Him; and behold, angels came and *began* to minister to Him.
      - d. Serving after His resurrection
        - i. **Matthew 28:1-2** Now after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first *day* of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave. <sup>2</sup> And behold, a severe earthquake had occurred, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it.
    - c. Just because they are present and active in densely packed ways in the life of Christ, doesn't mean we should expect to see them present and active in our lives in the same way.
      - i. Just because you can dig in places in south Africa and find diamonds doesn't mean you should expect to find diamonds in your backyard.
    - d. Gabriel came to Mary in the city of Nazareth in Galilee
      - i. The location is also unlikely.
      - ii. Only famous now because of Jesus. It wasn't famous in the 1<sup>st</sup> century. It was far to the north of Jerusalem, the center of cultural and religious life in Israel. It was surrounded by gentiles.
      - iii. Kent Hughes - Nazareth, a shoddy, corrupt halfway stop between the port cities of Tyre and Sidon, was overrun by Gentiles and Roman soldiers.
      - iv. Nathanael would say when hearing about Jesus in John 1 that He was from Nazareth, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?"
      - v. Comedian on Netflix from the small town of Ashton, Idaho performing in New York. Surprising!
    - e. The cultural perception would have seen Zacharias as a more likely hero of the faith. But God's perception is different. He seems to delight in using the unexpected.
    - f. Hughes - The greatest news ever proclaimed in Israel came to the humblest of its people!

- i. Mary acknowledges this in 1:46-48
    - ii. 9 months later on Christmas Day, it was to poor, humble shepherd outcasts that the angels chorused their annunciation – glory to God in the highest.
    - iii. Essential spiritual fact – the Lord comes to needy people – those who realize that without him they cannot make it – those who acknowledge their weakness and spiritual lack. The incarnation, salvation, resurrection, and Christmas are not for the proud and self-sufficient – Mary is a model for those who experience the birth of the Savior in their lives.
  - g. She's a virgin betrothed to Joseph.
    - i. She is not merely a young maiden but she hasn't been with a man, which is why she wonders how the words will come true.
    - ii. Betrothal was stronger than our engagements today. It could only be broken by divorce or death, and if the fiancé dies then the remaining partner is considered a widow.
    - iii. Betrothals happened young, often soon after puberty, so it's likely that Mary is around 14.
    - iv. What would Mary's life have been like had this news not come to her?
      - 1. Likely that she would marry humbly, they would live in Nazareth, she would never travel farther than a few miles from her home, and would one day die in obscurity.
      - 2. Daniel Darling - And yet it is Mary who not only receives the first announcement of the Christ child, but who is chosen by God to bear the Son of God. This tells us something about Mary—her simple faith and her willingness to say yes to God—but it tells us more about Mary's God. We often think God works through extreme giftedness or among those who are wealthy and well connected. But the Christmas story reminds us that God moves in and among those whom society most often leaves behind, that the thread of redemption woven throughout Scripture winds its way through a lot of small towns and seemingly little lives.
  - h. Greetings, favored one!
    - i. This is where “hail Mary full of grace” comes from – derived from the Latin Vulgate. This gave rise to the idea of Mary being a dispenser of grace, resulting in prayers being offered to her.
    - ii. MacDonald – the angel did not worship Mary or pray to her; he simply greeted her. He did not say that she was full of grace but highly favored
    - iii. Mary was highly favored because she had received God's grace. She was blessed, even as she would say in her song in Luke 1:48 that from now on all generations would call her blessed, because of all the billions of women that have ever lived, she was the only one to carry God's Son.
  - i. She was perplexed and pondered this – she was a thoughtful young lady, Luke 2:19 said she treasured all these things told to her by the angels, and pondered them in her heart.
2. Gabriel announced a ***surprising*** birth. (1:30-33)
- a. She would conceive and bear a son – the child will be in her womb, it will be a normal carrying and delivery. What will be unique is the conception, nature, and identity of the Child.
    - i. ***The Child would be truly human. (v. 31a)***
      - 1. **Hebrews 2:14-17** Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also ***partook of the same***, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, <sup>15</sup> and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives. <sup>16</sup> For assuredly He does not give help to

angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham. <sup>17</sup> Therefore, ***He had to be made like His brethren in all things***, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

2. Illustration – Bruce Ware – *The Man Christ Jesus* – page 22 of a great king who wanted to understand the life of a beggar so he fully took on the limitations of a beggar. He was still king, that couldn't be taken away, but he voluntarily limited himself to the resources and lifestyle of a beggar.
  3. He was born, grew, and developed normally
  4. **Luke 2:6-7** While they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth. <sup>7</sup> And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.
    - a. He didn't come down from the sky or appear as a full grown man. He was born as a helpless, dependent infant.
    - b. "The little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes" – not necessarily true. He wouldn't have sinned even as a child, but I don't think babies are always sinning when they are crying. Once they get to be older and are showing defiance, that's different. But there is nothing wrong with a crying baby Jesus.
  5. **Luke 2:40, 52** The Child continued to grow and become strong, increasing in wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him. . . . And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.
    - a. "The fact that Jesus 'increased in wisdom' (Luke 2:52) says that he went through a learning process just as all other children do – he learned how to eat, how to talk, how to read and write, and how to be obedient to his parents. . . This ordinary learning process was a part of the genuine humanity of Christ."  
Wayne Grudem
  6. With the recent movie on Mister Rogers, a wonderful anecdote has been going around about him. He was known for his great empathy towards children. Some doctors asked him to write a manual to teach them how to talk to children. He asked an expert on child development to help him. She wrote a lengthy introduction that was probably full of the latest research. Mister Rogers crossed it out and wrote, "You were a child once, too."
    - a. Part of the reason it resonates with us so deeply that God truly became a child, is that we were a child once, too.
- b. He is to be named Jesus, because He will save his people from their sins.
- i. ***The Child would rescue us. (v. 31b)***
    1. **Matthew 1:21** "She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."
    2. Christmas and Easter are unbreakably linked.
    3. One reason the incarnation brings such joy is because it leads to substitution.
- c. He will be called Son of the Most High
- i. ***The Child would be the Son of God. (v. 32a)***

1. Fully God and Fully man

d. The Lord will give Him the throne of His father David

i. Matthew 1 and Luke 3 Mary and Joseph are both from the family line of David – He has royal blood and God’s promise to David in 2 Samuel 7 that He will establish the kingdom of David’s descendant.

ii. ***The Child will be the long-awaited King, the Messiah. (vv. 32b-33)***

3. Gabriel explained the ***miraculous*** means. (1:34-37)

a. Mary’s question seems different than Zacharias’ question.

i. He seemed to doubt God’s ability to have Elizabeth bear a son, which is why Gabriel struck him mute. Mary seems genuinely curious. She wondered how this will take place – she is unmarried and so had not been intimate with Joseph.

b. There’s a difference between believing in God’s promises in a general sense, and believing that they could actually be true and happen in your life.

i. You could imagine a faithful Jewish person in the 1<sup>st</sup> century saying, “Will God send the Messiah? Sure, someday. Could *this* be the Messiah? Could God be sending the Messiah *this way*? Nah.”

ii. Just like you might believe that God forgives sins, but struggle to believe He forgives *your sins*. Or you might believe that God can change people but struggle to believe He can change *you* or *your spouse*.

c. Holy Spirit/power of the Most High, come upon/overshadow

i. Parallelism in v 35

ii. Overshadow carries the sense of the holy, powerful presence of God, as in the description of the cloud that “covered” the tabernacle when the tent was filled with the glory of God. Used in the accounts of the transfiguration to describe the overshadowing of the cloud.

d. You may have heard people say the word for “virgin” in Isaiah 7:14 could simply be a young woman of marriageable age, not necessarily that she had never been intimate with a man. That’s true as far as the possible meanings of the word go, but the NT makes it very clear what *kind* of a virgin she was. She had not been with a man.

e. Elizabeth’s pregnancy is announced to Mary as a sign to assure her that what the angel said was true. Mary hadn’t seen Elizabeth yet and so didn’t know the news.

f. Nothing will be impossible with God.

4. Mary was a willing ***servant*** of the Lord. (1:38)

a. Mary is an example of belief and discipleship.

b. What was Mary saying yes to?

i. Bearing the shame of an unwed pregnancy at a time when this carried incredible social stigma knowing people would likely mock her explanation for the pregnancy?

1. 18 years ago in a class at ISU the room full of people were mocking this, saying surely it was just her excuse for why she was pregnant and unmarried.

ii. Would her family believe her? Would Joseph stay with her?

1. Daniel Darling – We know the end of the story, but Mary did not.
  - a. Mary was saying yes to a lifetime of roller-coaster emotions. She'd see Him feed multitudes, raise people from the dead, and walk on water. But she'd also see Him be mocked, jeered, and taunted, even at times by His family and hometown friends. Mary would have to hold Him close and ... would have to let Him go. She'd feed Him and clothe Him and rock Him to sleep. She'd see Him push away and grow into manhood. She'd be rebuked by Him at a wedding.
  - b. So this is what Mary was saying yes to. And yet she said yes. Yes, I will do it, Lord. Mary may have trembled when she uttered those words. And yet she didn't have a choice. She gave the same answer all true believers give when visited by God. If this is really true, if the baby in her womb was the Messiah who would save her and all who believe from their sins, then of course she had to say yes.

5. What should be our response?

- a. Receive Jesus as He really is.
  - i. Fully God and fully Man?
  - ii. The only Savior?
  - iii. Oswald Sanders on the humility of Christ

Because we children of Adam want to become great,

He became small.

Because we will not stoop,

He humbled Himself.

Because we want to rule,

He came to serve.

- b. Like Mary, give to God an open-ended "yes."
  - i. We don't know what obedience will cost us.



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