

Dec 3, 2017

## The Miracle of the Way Luke 1:26-56

This morning, I want us to examine the Christmas story from Mary's perspective. I want us to consider what it must have been like for her to encounter God's incredulous plan: *to be the virgin in whom the God-man would be conceived, to be the womb in whom the God-man would be en-fleshed, & to be the woman thru whom the God-man would be born.*

But I would caution us this morning: *just because this is a familiar story doesn't mean that it is not remarkable and entirely beyond compare!* It is the wonder of Mary's faith that conquered: the fear of an unexpected angelic visit, the fear of an unimaginable plan for salvation, and the fear of an unbelievable explanation for her condition. It is Mary's belief & trust in God that overcomes all fear and results in the humble exultation of praise to God for *the miracle of the way* of His salvation.

Against tradition, human reason, popular opinion, & even the precedent of God's law, Mary believes God & His good plan! **We cannot share her experience** (*b/c incarnation is a one-time event*) – **we must learn to share the depth of her faith in God!**

### READ: Luke 1:26-55 (NLT)

25-28 Mary & Elizabeth are related; thus, Jesus & John are too

- Mary is betrothed = promised in marriage to Joseph
- Mary is a virgin - here the word is used = *parthenos*
- “Greetings, (you) favored with grace!”***

29-33) Angel visits are always surprising & always fearful!

- Father gave to Jesus a human body – ***“a body to offer”***
- A body ***“to do your will”*** in loving obedience/R.
- A body to offer as a sacrifice for forgiveness
- A body plagued with Adam's fallenness; no sin!
- Son of the Most High
- The eternal King to reign on David's throne

34-38 Mary's question is different than Zachariah's last week

- She is sincere in her wonderment: *virgin AND pregnant?*
- 37) ***“For nothing is impossible with God”***
- God works a “familiar” miracle but in a unique way

-Isaac & John were also miraculous conceptions –  
*but God did not father them!*

- “the baby will be holy”*** – b/c His Father is holy (identity)
- Immaculately conceived applies only to Jesus, not Mary

God's unprecedented miracle thrusts Mary into human crisis!

- under His law, she will be worthy of death by stoning
- under His grace, she will be worthy of praise forever

*\*When God instructs, we must do what He says even if it is not easily reconciled with His written word or previous patterns*

And who will ever believe her claim to be a pregnant virgin?

- What will her parents think? Joseph? Community?*
- How much will her reputation suffer? Gossip!!!*
- How difficult is God's way (spiritual, emotional physical)*
- How humble are the beginnings of the King of Glory!*

38-45) Mary's response to Gabriel seems unflinching! ***So be it!***

- As if Mary cannot be bothered by what others may think!
- Mary visits pregnant Elizabeth; filled temporarily w/ HS
- Prophecy: “God has blessed you above all women”
- \*\*Mary is blessed because God chose her & she believed!!**

46-55) ***Read Mary's Song of Praise together – The Magnificat!***

I never spent much time reading thru Mary's praise song, but we recently got some bad news about an incident at home. The minute I hung up the phone, I began reading The Magnificat and was immediately lifted out of my circumstance to consider hers. ***We will never face anything as self-compromising/condemning as her unexplainable, immaculate pregnancy.*** But, despite the certain onslaught of naysayers & gossip, Mary's willing, grateful praise to our good & glorious God simply will not be suppressed!

We, like Mary, must learn to give God the praise He's due beyond or despite the hardships that obeying Him may bring us!

### INVITATION TO RESPOND PERSONALLY:

- 1) Are you holding back the praise God is due based on your view of a situation?***
- 2) Release your anxiety, fear & judgment by praising anyway?***

## **WORSHIP IN MEDITATION: Hebrews 10:5,8-10 (NLT)**

**5) That is why, when Christ came into the world, he said to God, “You did not want animal sacrifices or sin offerings. But you have given me a body to offer. 8) First, Christ said, “You did not want animal sacrifices or sin offerings or burnt offerings or other offerings for sin, nor were you pleased with them” (though they are required by the law of Moses). 9) Then he said, “Look, I have come to do your will.” He cancels the first covenant in order to put the second into effect. 10) For God’s will was for us to be made holy by the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all time.**

This morning, we’ll focus on the reason that God came as a man in the Son, Jesus Christ. This is called the incarnation, which simply translated means “God in flesh!” There are at least 5 reasons for God to become a man:

- 1) Man (Adam) broke the covenant with God; Jesus restored it
- 2) Man forfeited the keys to death/hell; Jesus won them back
- 3) Man was created to convey God’s will on earth; Jesus did it
- 4) Man was created to know God intimately; Jesus revealed Him
- 5) God is eternal & cannot die; Jesus became mortal for sacrifice

Through the next couple of sermons, the stories of Mary, Joseph and Jesus will provide various perspectives on these 5 criteria. My hope – confident expectation – is that our hearts and minds will be refreshed in the reality of this one fact: that God would stop at nothing to bring us back to Himself the only way He could: thru the miracle of becoming The man, Jesus Christ!

Sermon in a Sentence: **The Miracle of the Way**

## **WORSHIP WITH CHILDREN:**

I want to tell you a story – a parable, really – about a man and some birds! One Christmas eve, this man’s family went to church while he stayed home. He didn’t really believe that God had become a man known as Jesus Christ; he just couldn’t understand why God would do such a crazy thing!

After his family left, the snow started to fall harder and harder. The man was making a fire in the fireplace when he heard a thud at the window; then another and another. He looked out the window to see what had happened, but the storm had become a blizzard! He couldn’t see anything! So he put on a coat and his boots and went outside to investigate!

He found a flock of birds hurt and huddled in the snow. He felt sorry for them; they were freezing to death! He thought if he could just get them to the barn, they would be safe and warm; they could wait out the storm there.

But getting them to the safety of the barn proved to be harder than he expected! He tried every way he could think of to get them into the barn: he tried to call them thru the open barn doors; turned the barn lights on; made a trail of bread crumbs to the barn; tried to shoo them in – but everything he tried only frightened the birds and made their situation worse!

He thought to himself, ***“If I could just become one of them, then I could lead them to safety! I could communicate with them, show them the way, and they wouldn’t be afraid of me – they’d follow me to their own salvation!”***

Just then, the man heard the church bells ringing in Christmas morning, and he sank to his knees whispering, “Now I understand, Lord; now I see why you had to do it!”

God became a person to save people! If He’d wanted to save camels, He would have become a \_\_\_\_! If God wanted to save fish, He’d have become a \_\_\_\_! But God wanted save babies, children, teenagers & grown ups...so He became a baby, a child, a teen, and a grown up! *And who is this God who became a man?*

## **LUKE 1:26-55 (NLT)**

**26)** *In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a village in Galilee, **27)** to a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David. **28)** Gabriel appeared to her and said, "Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you!"*

**29)** *Confused and disturbed, Mary tried to think what the angel could mean. **30)** "Don't be afraid, Mary," the angel told her, "for you have found favor with God! **31)** You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. **32)** He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. **33)** And he will reign over Israel forever; his Kingdom will never end!"*

**34)** *Mary asked the angel, "But how can this happen? I am a virgin." **35)** The angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the baby to be born will be holy, and he will be called the Son of God. **36)** What's more, your relative Elizabeth has become pregnant in her old age! People used to say she was barren, but she has conceived a son and is now in her sixth month. **37)** For nothing is impossible with God." **38)** Mary responded, "I am the Lord's servant. May everything you have said about me come true." And then the angel left her.*

**39)** *A few days later Mary hurried to the hill country of Judea, to the town **40)** where Zechariah lived. She entered the house and greeted Elizabeth. **41)** At the sound of Mary's greeting, Elizabeth's child leaped within her, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. **42)** Elizabeth gave a glad cry and exclaimed to Mary, "God has blessed you above all women, and your child is blessed. **43)** Why am I so honored, that the mother of my Lord should visit me? **44)** When I heard your greeting, the baby in my womb jumped for joy. **45)** You are blessed because you believed that the Lord would do what he said."*

**46)** *Mary responded, "Oh, how my soul praises the Lord. **47)** How my spirit rejoices in God my Savior! **48)** For he took notice of his*

*lowly servant girl, and from now on all generations will call me blessed. **49)** For the Mighty One is holy, and he has done great things for me. **50)** He shows mercy from generation to generation to all who fear him. **51)** His mighty arm has done tremendous things! He has scattered the proud and haughty ones. **52)** He has brought down princes from their thrones and exalted the humble. **53)** He has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away with empty hands. **54)** He has helped his servant Israel and remembered to be merciful. **55)** For he made this promise to our ancestors, to Abraham and his children forever."*