

SERMON TITLE: Making Sense of Christmas
SCRIPTURE: Luke 1

DATE: December 19, 2021
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Deep inside all of us, there is a desire to make sense of all the events of our lives, especially the bad things that happen to us. We want to know how bad things fit into our plan for our lives, and if you are a believer, how they fit into God's plan for our lives. That desire is actually the image of God in us—the thumbprint of God in us. It's the image of God in us that says, "There is a plan, a purpose for our lives, even though we don't always know what it is or how all the pieces fit together. Nevertheless, God is always active, always working his plan together for our highest good and his greater glory. All this collides with the Christmas story we find in Luke 1. The Christmas story is the pre-eminent example of God breaking into the seeming randomness of life, the chaos of life, the meaningless of life. God breaks into this broken, fallen world and shows us that He has a plan and a purpose for history and for our lives that he is bringing to pass. And, today, we will see how this all plays out in Mary's life and in our lives today.

Community Group Questions

1. What are the kinds of things you typically say to yourself when you experience unexpected bad news or some tragic event in your life to help you make sense of it? ...What do you say to others when something bad happens to them?
2. Why do we feel we need to know and explain how everything fits together in our lives?
3. When something happens in your life that doesn't make sense, how do you respond to it? ...How do you pray about it? ...How do you deal with it? ...Have you ever had something happen to you that really shook your faith?
4. As you think about the angel's announcement to Mary—if you were Mary—how might you have understood Gabriel's opening line, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you! ...You have found favor with God." ...What might you expect your life to be like after receiving that news? ...
5. How does being, "God's favored one" fit with all the bad things that happened to Mary after the angel left and she went on with her life? ...What were the bad things that happened to Mary? ...How do you make sense of them in light of Mary being "the favored one of God?"
6. How does the Christmas story help make sense of what doesn't make sense?
7. How does what Paul wrote in Ephesians 1:11 tie in with Mary and the Christmas story and us today?
8. How does Mary's testimony of faith—"I am the Lord's servant, let it be to me according to your word"—help keep her faith intact when what was done to her must have been very hard to understand?
9. How would that prayer of submission to God's word and God's will, help keep your faith in tact when unexpected, seemingly senseless things happen in your life?
10. "Real faith is the faith that moves us to trust God even when it doesn't seem like God is moving?" ...Explain that so a child can understand it. ...