

The Christmas Family

Mary

Luke 1:26-38

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Mary

Scripture

This Christmas I am taking a brief look at the three key human persons in “The Christmas Family”: Joseph, Mary, and Jesus.

This past Sunday we looked at Joseph. Tonight, we will look at Mary. And this coming Sunday we will look at Jesus.

So, let’s read about Mary in Luke 1:26-38:

²⁶ In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin’s name was Mary. ²⁸ And he came to her and said, “Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!” ²⁹ But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰ And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹ And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”

³⁴ And Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?”

³⁵ And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. ³⁶ And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. ³⁷ For nothing will be impossible with God.” ³⁸ And Mary said, “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her. (Luke 1:26-38)

Introduction

One British Bible commentator says that if you ask a newspaper editor what sort of stories will sell the most copies, three categories come swiftly to mind: infidelity, royalty, and religion. If they can be combined, so much the better. “POP STAR’S LOVE CHILD” is good; “PRINCESS HAS SECRET AFFAIR” is better; “KING’S SECRET NIGHT WITH NUN” is better still.

So when people read the story of Mary being visited by the angel Gabriel, who tells her that she is going to become pregnant with the Son of God, their minds easily jump in the way the newspapers have conditioned them to do. People have read into the story all sorts of things that aren’t there, and have failed to notice some of the really important things that are there.¹

There is much worthy of examination in the announcement of Jesus’ birth to Mary. However, this evening we will just focus on Mary’s reaction to the word from God.

Lesson

The actions of Mary in Luke 1:26-38 teach us how to respond to God’s word.

Let’s use the following outline:

1. Don’t Be Surprised When God Surprises You (1:26-33)
2. Absolutely Nothing Is Too Hard for God (1:34-37)
3. God Will Stop at Nothing to Accomplish His Will in Us (1:38)

I. Don’t Be Surprised When God Surprises You (1:26-33)

First, don’t be surprised when God surprises you.

¹ Tom Wright, *Luke for Everyone* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2004), 9.

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When Elizabeth, Mary's relative, was six-months pregnant, **the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be (1:26-29).** Gabriel told Mary that she was going to conceive and bear a son, whose name would be **Jesus** (cf. 1:30-33).

Mary was very surprised when the angel Gabriel visited her in Nazareth. In fact, we know that **"she was greatly troubled"** when Gabriel told her that she was going to give birth to the Son of God.

Two thousand years later, we still marvel that God chose a young teenager to be the mother of Jesus. We would think that it would make more sense for a more mature woman to be the mother of the Son of God. But God is a God full of surprises, and he loves to take ordinary people and ordinary things and use them in extraordinary ways.

That is in fact true throughout the Christmas story. The announcement of Jesus' birth was made to shepherds, not to kings. Jesus was born in a manger, not in a palace. Jesus was born to poor parents, not to wealthy parents. If we had tried to design the birth of the Son of God, we would have done it very differently. But, God is a God full of surprises.

Practically, this means that our God often works in unexpected ways. He loves to accomplish his purposes in ways that surprise us. You go about your daily business, and quite unexpectedly, you receive a phone call about an amazing opportunity. Or, you have given up hope about a reconciliation in a certain relationship, and suddenly, you receive a letter from that person asking to meet. Or, you have been praying about some matter, and God answers.

Don't be surprised when God surprises you.

II. Absolutely Nothing Is Too Hard for God (1:34-37)

Second, absolutely nothing is too hard for God.

Jeremy Basset tells the story about his 5-year-old niece, Olivia, and her best friend, Claire, who were participating in a nativity play at school. Claire was playing Mary, and Olivia was an angel. Before the show, a young boy was going around the dressing room repeating, “I’m a sheep, what are you?” Each child responded politely, including Olivia, who proudly declared that she was an angel.

The boy then turned to Claire, still struggling into her costume with her mother’s help, and repeated the question to her: “I’m a sheep, what are you?”

Claire simply said, “I’m Mary.”

Realizing he was face to face with a lead character, he felt he needed to justify his own role. “It’s hard being a sheep, you know,” he said with all the seriousness of a 5-year-old actor with a big part.

“Yes,” said Claire innocently, “but it’s also hard being a virgin, you know.”²

Indeed! Quite understandably, Mary knew that a virgin conception was not only hard; it was impossible. No one had ever heard of such a thing. That is why **Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?”**

And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For nothing will be impossible with God” (1:34-37).

Mary came to understand that what she saw as a problem was

² See <https://www.preachingtoday.com/illustrations/2001/december/13409.html>.

in fact God fulfilling a promise he had made millennia earlier to his people. She came to understand that there are no degrees of difficulties with God. God had created the sun and the moon and the stars and set them each in perfect orbit was able to do what he said he would do. She came to realize that if God could create babies using men and women, he could also create a baby without using a man.

You may hear this message with all kinds of worries and concerns and anxieties and problems. Remember that God is absolutely sovereign. He created the tiniest atom and the largest planet. He enabled Mary to conceive his only begotten Son so that he might be the Savior of sinners.

So, if you are worried or concerned or anxious about anything, remember that absolutely nothing is too hard for God.

III. God Will Stop at Nothing to Accomplish His Will in Us (1:38)

Finally, God will stop at nothing to accomplish his will in us.

Mary had quickly come to that place where she knew that God was about to do something extraordinary. She knew that she was his willing vessel through whom God was going bring about the birth of his Son. So, **Mary said, “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her (1:38).**

Years ago in Britain, researchers went door-to-door asking persons about their belief in God. One of their questions: “Do you believe in a God who intervenes in human history, who changes the course of affairs, who performs miracles, etc.?” When published, their study took its title from the response of one man who was seen as rather typical of those who responded. He answered, “No, I don’t believe in that God; I believe in the ordinary God.”³

³ See <https://www.preachingtoday.com/illustrations/2012/march/7031912.html>.

Friends, God is not ordinary. He is unique. He is sovereign. He is supreme. And he will stop at nothing to accomplish his will in us.

God's plan was to send his Son, Jesus Christ, to this world to save sinners. He chose Mary to be his mother. She became pregnant by the Holy Spirit. And about nine months after conception, she gave birth to a little boy, whom Mary and Joseph called Jesus. Jesus eventually grew up. He started preaching the good news of salvation. Eventually, he died on a cross at Calvary to pay the penalty for the sin of sinners like us. Three days later, God raised Jesus back to life again. And presently, Jesus is seated at the right of his Father in heaven waiting for his Father's command to return to earth to establish his new kingdom on earth.

Friends, that is the Christmas story. Believe that God will stop at nothing to accomplish his will in us.

Conclusion

Therefore, having analyzed life of Mary in Luke 1:26-38, let us trust God's word.

Elton Trueblood once said, "Faith is not belief without proof but trust without reservation."⁴ Some people say that they cannot believe in Jesus because they want proof. Proof of his virgin birth. Proof of his miracles. Proof of his resurrection. Friends, one cannot recreate historical events. One cannot get scientific proof for an historical event. There is nevertheless enough historical evidence to trust Jesus without reservation. The Bible teaches us that "there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

So, this Christmas, like Mary, trust God's word. Amen.

⁴ See <https://www.preachingtoday.com/illustrations/1997/may/3155.html>.

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The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church
is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ
and membership in his church family,
develop them to Christlike maturity,
equip them for their ministry in the church
and life mission in the world,
in order to magnify God's name.*

Sermons by Rev. Freddy Fritz

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1. www.tampabaypresbyterian.org/sermons.
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