



RESCUE IS COMING

LUKE 1:26-38

**This is an edit of 2018's second sermon in the "His Name Will Be" series.

Open to Luke 1. Missed a week of Advent, but don't worry. Christmas can be challenging for a preacher. Hard to not want to be cute at Christmas and spice things up so people don't get bored with the same story. But we don't need a fresh take—we need to say the same glorious Jesus. And so we'll be covering a lot of the same material. Disney+ over Thanksgiving: we watched the Rescuers—they rescued a girl. One of the reasons we don't get tired of Christmas. We love stories about rescue. Why? It's the story we're a part of. **Pray.**

"In the sixth month 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."

We've got a visit from angel here named Gabriel. He's one of two angels whose names we know in Scripture, the other one being Michael (and technically Abbadon in Rev. 9:11). Gabriel is never identified as an archangel—Michael is (1 Thess. 4:16, Jude 1:9) And Gabriel appears to three people throughout Scripture. His first appearance is to Daniel in Daniel chapter 8 when he is helping him understand a vision, Zechariah the Father of John the Baptist just a few verses before this and now to Mary...

Now the text says that Mary was betrothed to a man named Joseph. What does it mean that she was betrothed? The closest thing we have today is engagement, but engagement is far less binding than betrothal. Betrothal was the first step in the two-step Jewish marriage process. It was a legal pledge where a man and a woman formally and publicly pledged to be married and the Bride's father received a bride price—essentially compensation for the fact that their family was losing a household helper. At this point the bride was legally bound to the groom and was referred to as his wife. And about a year later, the actual marriage ceremony would take place and they would consummate the marriage.

But when it comes to this story, it's very important that we realize that the second part of the marriage process—the consummation—has not happened yet. The text makes it clear that that this woman was a virgin. And this really sets the stage for the miraculous nature of the announcement that's about to take place.

28 "And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!"

Now before we continue with the narrative we have to pause and chat for a second—most people don't know that massive significance this verse has played in the history of the church. This is a Protestant church and you may or may not know that Catholics and Protestants have very different views when it comes to Mary, or as they would call her "The Blessed Mother". And I want to look at this for just a second because the way that Rome has interpreted this phrase has had a massive effect on Catholic doctrine and even pop culture when it comes to Mary and it's based in large measure on this verse...

The Bible was originally written in Greek and Hebrew and in the 4th century a guy named Jerome translated the Bible into Latin. And it's the Latin Bible that the Catholic Church adopted in the 16th century. Why is this a problem? Well, it's actually a decent translation but Jerome made an error on this verse and his error will live on in Catholic doctrine forever. Where your Bibles say, "Greetings, O favored one" Jerome translated it, "Hail Mary full of grace." It's this combined with vs. 42 (...blessed are you among women) that serves as the ground for roman Catholic Mariology. Specifically, vs 28 and 42 are the grounds for the Catholic Hail Mary (and you thought it was just a football play), the third prayer in the Catholic Rosary. And it's been popularized even in the protestant world through, "Ave Maria".

Now it's a beautiful song, but it communicates the Catholic doctrine that Mary can give grace to people; that Mary is a dispenser of God's grace. But it's simply not true. Not only is that a mistranslation, but even "full of grace" was correct it doesn't mean that Mary can dispense God's grace. How do we know that? Acts 6 says that Stephen was, "full of grace" and he was actually performing signs and wonders and we never led to believe that we should be coming to him for mercy. And I suspect that many of you have never prayed to Mary and this may seem like a foreign concept to you, but some of you have a Catholic background and you may even have firsthand experience here, just know that we come to God and God alone for grace and because only He gives grace only he is worthy of our praise...

Now having said all of that, it's still worth noting that being the mother of the Messiah is an unbelievable privilege that no one else will ever get. God has certainly shown her unique favor and blessing and it's right to recognize that. And yet as the angel announces this to Mary, she's doesn't rejoice immediately. She's perplexed. The text says, **But she was greatly troubled at the saying and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be.** This is understandable. It's not every day that an angel talks to you.

And the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.' Now many of us have heard this story and we just accept it, but if you put yourself in her shoes, moms in the room would be upset. Gabriel ruined he gender reveal party! Like would you be disappointed if someone told you what you were going to name your kid? Can he be Christopher? No it's Jesus and it's a transliteration of Hebrew word meaning to save or to rescue...why?

He continues, **"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, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."** It's right here that Mary learns that she is going to give birth to a king whose reign will last forever...It's not accident that vs. 27 says that Joseph was of the house of David. This is nothing less than the fulfillment of the Promise that God made to David hundreds of years ago.

2 Sam. 7:12-13, **12 When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever."** Isa. 9:7 **"Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore."** And if you're an Israelite you're longing for that Davidic King to come so it could be like the good ole days, and this angel has come to announce to a Jewish teenager in an obscure city, that that Davidic King is coming and he's coming into the world through her...

Now again I love Mary's reaction, now that the angel has explained things, we expect Mary to cheer, and say something like, "Wow that's amazing I'm so honored" but she's concerned about the logistics! How's this going to work—I'm a virgin? (vs 34).

And I want to pause here because it is difficult to overstate the importance of the fact that at the time Mary conceives she is a virgin— The text says it twice in vs 27, and then Mary calls herself a virgin in vs. 34. Jesus had no human father. The Bible never refers to Joseph as Jesus' father or Jesus as Joseph's son. Jesus's Father was God the Father through the agency of the Spirit. "If the virgin birth of Jesus is untrue, then the story of Jesus changes greatly; we would have a sexually promiscuous young woman lying about God's miraculous hand in the birth of her son, raising that son to declare he was God, and then joining his religion. But if Mary is nothing more than a sinful con artist then neither she nor her son Jesus should be trusted. Because both the clear teachings of Scripture about the beginning of Jesus' earthly life and the character of his mother are at stake, we must contend for the virgin birth of Jesus Christ." (Driscoll) And this is crucial because we need to understand that God is writing himself into his own story. He's entering into the fabric of the world he created. As fully man and fully God—not half and half—the only kind of person who could save the world—someone who came from outside of it. Don't miss it: the virgin birth teaches us that humanity couldn't produce its own rescuer (David Mathis).

The angel says that the Holy Spirit is going to come upon her and overshadow her—basically it's going to be a miracle and you know the proof that I'm not even kidding, your relative Elizabeth who's barren, yea I told her 6 months ago that she would have a son named John and she's 6 months pregnant. vs. 37, "For nothing will be impossible with God. 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.....She's still a little confused...Now when she learns that her relative is pregnant they get together and talk about their pregnancies bc things were different back then...

And when she got there is important, "41 And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, 42 and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! 43 And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? 44 For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. 45 And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord."

This is what Mary needed. Then is when it clicked and where it all came together for Mary and when she realizes that the Lord himself is going to be born to her, she explodes in praise in what is called the Magnificat. Let me just give you a taste, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation."

This is only in Luke and he gives more space to Mary's response to all of this than any of the other Gospel authors and I believe it's because he wants us to consider and learn from her response. And so as we look at it, I think it leads us to ask 3 questions...questions that are important for us personally as individuals and collectively as a church...

Are you blown away with the thought that God would rescue and use you?

Mary is blown away to know she is going to be used as a unique vessel to carry out God's plan of redemption. And it's important that you don't miss her self-evaluation in vs. 48 where she says "for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant." She realizes that she is not a deserving candidate for this position. Like, it would make plenty of sense for the King of the Universe be born to the emperor or some rich family, not some Jewish teenager who isn't even married yet. The text says in vs. 30 that Mary found favor with God but there's not even of hint that Mary has earned or deserves this privilege—God has

given his favor by sheer grace and that's one of the reasons she is so shocked. It doesn't make sense that God would use her. And it makes me ask the question, have we lost our sense of wonder when it comes to the favor and love God has shown us by grace?

We hear so much that Jesus did come that we often neglect the wonder of the fact that he would come. Of course Jesus would save me. I'm gifted, I'm talented, I'm kind, I can see why God would want me on his team." But if this is us, then we have overestimated ourselves and we are on dangerous ground.

Keller "If someone asks you if you're a Christian, you should not say, "Of course". There should be no "of course-ness" about it. It would be more appropriate to say "yes I am, that's a miracle. Me! A Christian! Who would have ever thought it? Yet he did it and I am His." It doesn't make sense that I'm a Christian, who would have ever thought that my heart would be captured by anything other than myself, and my quest for personal achievement. Why? Because someone rescued me from myself.—what do you need to be rescued from? Busyness? Achievement? 49"For he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name." Oh friends, stand in awe of the grace you have received...

Do we realize the power available to us in Christ?

After explaining to Mary that she's going to conceive as a virgin Gabriel caps it off with, "For nothing will be impossible with God." That that statement takes on new significance when you consider who it's coming from. Flip back with me to verse 18, and here Zechariah John the Baptist's father is doubting the angel's message that they're going to have a son vs. 18, "How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years." (Note men—he doesn't call his wife old) And listen to the first ten words out of his mouth vs. 19, "I am Gabriel, I stand in the presence of God..." This angel stands in the presence of God so when he gets to Mary and the last words out of his mouth are, "For nothing will be impossible with God" it's coming from someone who has a unique knowledge of God's power because he stands in his presence And he's saying, "I know this whole virgin birth thing may sound impossible, but take it from someone who stands in his presence, He can do anything—things that you could never even dream of—this is nothing. You should have been there when he made the world. He just spoke and billions of stars were formed. Trust me when I say, nothing is impossible with God."

You say Chase the probability of joy and life being restored in my marriage because of all the things that have happened is about the probability of a virgin conceiving—then it is so possible with God. Chase the probability of me beating that anger, that crippling fear and worry, that greed that lust is about the probability of a virgin conceiving, I'd say, "It's so possible with God."

And I include that phrase, "with God" intentionally because that's the key and that power is available to all of us—certainly Mary is unique in that she's Jesus's mother, but it would be a huge mistake to think that Christ's dwelling within Mary is a privilege reserved only for her. In Col. 1:27 Paul says that the mystery of the Gospel is Christ in you, the hope of glory! Isa. 7 said that child would be called Immanuel which means 'God with us.' And he's still with us. You get GOD! He has unzipped us and placed himself inside of us so that his power is available to us and his glory and strength can be displayed in our failures, and weaknesses, and struggles. Ps. 23: He's with us in the valley. Some of us need to be rescued from the idea that there is something better than that.

Will we follow the Lord at all costs?

You look at Mary's response of faith here vs. 38, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." Now this obedience is amazing when you consider the potential cost for Mary.

Her reputation could, in all likelihood be completely destroyed. While sex and pregnancy is common in our culture it's hard to express how taboo it was in this culture. Everyone would think that they either had sex before they were married, or that she cheated on Joseph and got pregnant with another dude. Because of this virgin birth—in her small hometown of Nazareth—she could forever be that girl who you warn your sons about. Not only that but she risked losing economic security in being abandoned by Joseph, which is what he was going to do until the angel showed up and told him the story. And it's understandable right? Who would believe that? And she's even giving up control of naming her own kid. And yet despite severe social, relational, perhaps economical consequences her response to God's will for her is, "Let it be to me according to your word." If that's God's will, bring it on. When it comes to Mary her life is a blank check. It's a blank check for God to write for whatever he wants. Can we say the same about ourselves?