

# Luke 1:26-38

*"The Servant of the Lord"*

**February 11, 2024**

## 1. Intro

### a. Last week...

i. Last week, we looked at the incredible event known throughout the history of the church as *The Annunciation*

1. This was the moment in time when the angel, Gabriel, was sent to a young virgin, Mary, to tell her that she would soon conceive a child in her womb, and this child would be the very Son of God

a. This child would be named Jesus, his name meaning "Yahweh IS salvation"

b. This child would be the Son of the Most High, and the he would be given the throne of his father, David

c. And he will reign over the house of Jacob, FOREVER!

2. We saw last week that this is a twofold reign

a. Jesus reigns now, today, as he reigns supremely as the head of the church

i. He is King, not just of the church that is advancing across the globe, but he is ALSO King right here in Sapulpa, OK, at Forest Hills Baptist Church

1. And if we would keep that truth anchored as the foundation of everything we do here in this church, then his name will truly be exalted in our midst

b. But his reign is also a reign that will FULLY be realized when he returns to this earth...

i. When he appears in the clouds and all his saints are gathered to him

ii. And we fall in line behind him, as our King rides on in glory to make war against all who stand in rebellion against his name

1. And in those days, EVERY knee will bow, and EVERY tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of the Father!

a. Jesus will reign over the house of Jacob FOREVER, and of his kingdom there will be NO end!

c. This was the amazing announcement that Gabriel brought to Mary

i. So how did Mary, a young girl maybe 16 or 17 years old, a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph... how did Mary respond to this mindblowing encounter and the message that came along with it?

1. For the answer to that questions, we'll turn to our passage for this week, Luke 1:26-38

## 2. Luke 1:26-38

a. <sup>26</sup>In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, <sup>27</sup>to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. <sup>28</sup>And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" <sup>29</sup>But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. <sup>30</sup>And the angel said to her, "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 call his name Jesus. <sup>32</sup>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, <sup>33</sup>and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." <sup>34</sup>And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" <sup>35</sup>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 borne will be called holy—the Son of God. <sup>36</sup>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. <sup>37</sup>For nothing will be impossible with God.” <sup>38</sup>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.

- b. I would say that, in light of everything she had just heard, Mary responded WELL, didn't she?
  - i. So let's take some time and look at what all was said in this passage
- c. The first thing we want to note is Gabriel's greeting to Mary
  - i. “Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!”
    1. This immediately begs the question... what did Gabriel mean by “favored one”?
      - a. We see Gabriel repeating this idea in verse 30, when he says to Mary, “you have found favor with God...”
        - i. So WHY was Mary favored by God?
        - ii. WHY did she find favor with God?
          1. Was it because, like Zechariah and Elizabeth, Mary was considered to be righteous before God?
          2. Or, was she favored simply because God, in His grace, freely bestowed His favor upon her?
        - iii. The answer is clear... YES!
          1. Friends, our introduction to Mary in the Gospels reveals to us a truth that is found all throughout the Scriptures
            - a. EVERY person on this earth – every man, woman, and child – is responsible for their own choices in this life
            - b. God looks upon the affections of our heart, and our choices that flow out of those affections, and He holds us fully responsible for every one of them
            - c. But at the same time, the Scriptures are clear, through His grace, and through the mysterious working of His Holy Spirit, God is bringing everything to happen just as He has preordained it
              - i. God works all things according to HIS purpose
              - ii. What God has determined, WILL be what happens
              - iii. For God is God, and God is SOVERIEGN over ALL things
          2. Is this a contradiction of ideas?
            - a. NO. It is simply a statement of fact, that where and how God's sovereignty and man's responsibility intertwine is a mystery to our finite minds
          3. So how do these things play out in Mary's life?
        - ii. Well, first, let's look at the words that Gabriel used in his greeting to Mary
          1. In verse 28, when Gabriel calls Mary “favored one,” he uses the Greek word *kecharitomene*
            - a. This word is defined as, “God extending HIMSELF to freely bestow grace”
              - i. So we see from the start that God is the Initiator of this favor
                1. HE is the One who extended Himself to Mary
                2. HE is the One who FREELY bestowed His grace and favor upon her

- ii. The Apostle Paul echoes this free initiation of God's grace upon US, when he says in Ephesians 1:4-6
  - 1. *<sup>4</sup>He [God] chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love <sup>5</sup>he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, <sup>6</sup>to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.*
  - 2. When Paul says that God has blessed us in Christ with this incredible favor of adoption, he uses the same word Gabriel uses to describe Mary as "favored one"
    - a. WE have been chosen by God, because He willed it to be so
    - b. Mary was favored by God, because He willed it to be so
      - i. We see this in verse 28, and we also see it in verse 30
- 2. In verse 30, when Gabriel tells Mary that she has found favor with God, he uses the Greek word, *charin*
  - a. This word is defined as, "God freely extending Himself, reaching to people because He is disposed to bless them"
    - i. Sounds like what we just talked about, doesn't it?
      - 1. This is GOD, freely extending Himself
      - 2. This is GOD, reaching down to man, because HE is disposed to bless them
        - a. In Acts chapter 7, just before he becomes the first martyr in the church, Stephen uses this word, *charin*, twice in his monologue against the High Priest
        - b. In verses 9-10, Stephen says regarding Joseph,
          - i. *<sup>9</sup>And the patriarchs, jealous of Joseph, sold him into Egypt; but God was with him <sup>10</sup>and rescued him out of all his afflictions and gave him favor and wisdom before Pharaoh, king of Egypt, who made him ruler over Egypt and over all his household.*
          - ii. God freely extended Himself toward Joseph, and He gave Joseph FAVOR before Pharaoh
        - c. And in verses 45-46, Stephen says of David,
          - i. *<sup>45</sup>Our fathers in turn brought the Tabernacle in with Joshua when they dispossessed the nations that God drove out before our fathers. So it was until the days of David, <sup>46</sup>who found favor in the sight of God and asked to find a dwelling place for the God of Jacob.*
          - ii. God freely extended Himself toward David in making him King over Israel, and David was given FAVOR before God
- ii. God FREELY extended Himself toward Joseph and toward David
- iii. And God FREELY extended Himself toward Mary, reaching to her because HE was disposed to give her FAVOR

1. So it is VERY clear based upon the words that Gabriel used in his greeting: Mary was favored because God is GRACIOUS
  - a. So does that mean that Mary's own disposition had nothing to do with this favor?
    - i. Not at all!
- d. I believe that Luke includes the details of Zechariah and Elizabeth's story, not just to have more background on John the Baptist, but also so we can see the contrast between Mary and Zechariah, and Mary and Elizabeth
  - i. So first, let's contrast Mary's response with Zechariah's response
    1. If you remember from a few weeks ago, we talked about Zechariah's sin of unbelief
      - a. Again, Zechariah didn't just have a moment of doubt or uncertainty
        - i. He CHOSE to NOT believe the words that Gabriel said
        - ii. And in so doing, he CHOSE to not believe in the promises of God
    2. Now, when we see Mary's initial reaction, we might think that she is also heading down this same road, right?
      - a. In verse 34, Mary says, *"How will this be, since I am a virgin?"*
        - i. That sounds pretty similar to Zechariah's response in verse 18, doesn't it?
          1. *"How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years."*
        - ii. It's almost the same question, isn't it?
          1. So why did Zechariah get disciplined with 9 months of being deaf and mute, and Mary instead got words of comfort and explanation?
            - a. We find the answer down in verse 45
              - i. When Mary goes to visit her relative, Elizabeth, now 6 months pregnant with her son John, Elizabeth says to Mary in verse 45, *"Blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord!"*
      - b. Where unbelief resided in Zechariah's heart, Mary BELIEVED that what God had said WOULD BE FULFILLED!
        - i. So just in looking at these two separate encounters with the angel Gabriel, we could say that young Mary's righteousness EXCEEDED that of the old priest, Zechariah
          1. Where Zechariah sinned in his heart, Mary trusted God
    - ii. But I believe we are also meant to see the contrast between Mary's story and Elizabeth's story
      1. If you look back in verse 25, we find that Elizabeth's pregnancy was an exceedingly great blessing upon her life
        - a. For her entire married life, Elizabeth was unable to have children
          - i. In the culture of that day, it was believed that this was a sign that God was not pleased with you
          - ii. And so Elizabeth bore the reproach of her people, for DECADES
            1. But with the conception of John, Elizabeth's reproach was taken away

- a. Her family, and friends, and neighbors would now look upon her as blessed, for God had given her a child in her old age
  - 2. But this would not be Mary's story, would it?
    - a. For Mary's son would not be conceived through a legitimate union with Joseph after they had been married
      - i. Her son would be conceived by the Holy Spirit, while she was still a virgin... while she was still only engaged
      - ii. And in the Israelite culture, that would be unacceptable
        - 1. In Deuteronomy 22:20-21, we find the punishment that was to be given to any woman who had intimate relations with a man before she was married
          - a. *<sup>20</sup>If the thing is true, that evidence of virginity was not found in the young woman, <sup>21</sup>then they shall bring out the young woman to the door of her father's house, and the men of her city shall stone her to death with stones, because she has done an outrageous thing in Israel by whoring in her father's house. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.*
      - iii. Surely the reality of what Gabriel was saying to her was beginning to sink in for Mary
        - 1. NO ONE will believe that this child was conceived by the Holy Spirit
        - 2. NO ONE will believe that I have become pregnant because the power of the Most High has overshadowed me
        - 3. My words will be seen as outrageous
        - 4. I will be seen as evil
          - a. And the punishment for my perceived sin will be death by stoning
            - i. This is why Joseph wanted to divorce her quietly after he found out she was pregnant
            - ii. Matthew tells us in his Gospel that Joseph was a just man, and he was unwilling to put Mary to shame
            - iii. So he would save her from the punishment of death, but even still, had he gone on with the divorce, she would still bear the reproach of her people, wouldn't she?
            - iv. Whether Joseph married her or not, Mary would forever be looked at as one who broke the law of God
- 3. In the face of all of this, Mary WILLINGLY took on reproach
  - a. This brings much more significance to the rest of her words, doesn't it?
    - i. In her willingness to believe in God's promises, Mary would take on the scorn of her people
      - 1. And yet, in her humility and faithfulness, Mary said to Gabriel, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word."
      - 2. That is incredible faith, my friends.

- a. And that is why Matthew Henry RIGHTLY said in his commentary on this passage,
            - i. “Though we are not to pray TO Mary, yet we ought to praise God FOR her.”
            - ii. For she had been given the honor that Jewish mothers had so long desired
            - iii. But with that honor, would also come reproach
3. There is certainly much we can learn from Mary’s response, and much we can apply
  - a. But I do think it is important, in light of Matthew Henry’s quote, to take a bit of a rabbit trail and ask the question, “Why DON’T we pray to Mary?”
    - i. This has been the standard practice for millions of professing Christians, for many centuries, within the world of Roman Catholicism
      - 1. But how did that come to be?
        - a. Church historian, Michael Reeves, has helpfully pointed out that there are two parts to this story
          - i. Very early on in church history, theologians looked at the passage found in Romans 5:12-21
            - 1. In this passage, Paul talks about how sin came into the world through one man, Adam, and our justification and righteousness came through the last Adam, our Lord Jesus Christ
              - a. This is wonderful truth for us to hold on to
              - b. But then these theologians began to ask, “Well what about Eve?”
                - i. She was the first one to eat of the forbidden fruit, right?
                - ii. So if there is a second Adam who has redeemed us from the sin of the first Adam, shouldn’t there ALSO be a second Eve, who redeems us from the sin of the first Eve?
                - iii. This was the question they wrestled with, and the answer they believed made the most sense was that the second Eve... should be Mary
- ii. This belief would take root within the Roman Catholic church very early on, that Mary was a sort of “co-partner” with Jesus in the work of salvation
  - 1. But that belief even continues today, as even as recently as 1997, Pope John Paul II affirmed in a statement that Mary is the “New Eve, who cooperates with Jesus in the saving event of redemption”
- iii. So the first foundation that was laid for the belief that we should pray to Mary came in a desire to reconcile the question, “What about Eve’s sin?”
- b. The second part to this story would come later on in the history of the church, as the church entered into the medieval ages from roughly the 500’s to the 1500’s
  - i. During this time, the knowledge of God declined

1. Since the Bible was only available in Latin, the knowledge of the Word of God became reserved for only the clergy and the religious elite
  - a. As the hierarchy within the church grew, so also did the belief that Jesus was no longer accessible to us
    - i. Christ was in heaven, far from us
    - ii. He was no longer the compassionate and faithful Savior who died for us – he was now someone different, someone detached from our world
    - iii. And therefore, who were we to think that WE could pray to HIM?
  - ii. I love how Michael Reeves, who is British, explains it:
    1. He says, “So the thought grew, ‘Well, if I can’t approach Christ, I will approach his mum, who will put in a good word for me to Christ.’”
      - a. Who better to talk to Jesus on our behalf than his “mum,” right?
    - iii. And the argument continues... when we’re in need, or when we’re sick, or when something hard is going on in our lives, don’t we go to our friends and ask THEM to pray for us?
      1. So again, if Mary is in heaven, and she is a sort of “co-redeemer” alongside Jesus, why wouldn’t we ask HER to pray for us as well?
        - a. If the prayers of our Christian brothers and sisters here on earth are of such benefit, wouldn’t the prayers of the saints in heaven be of MORE benefit?
          - i. ESPECIALLY the prayers of Jesus’ mother?
  - ii. So you see that, while we would not agree with our Roman Catholic friends on this issue, there certainly is some logic in their argument, isn’t there?
    1. But at the end of the day, we only need to ask one question:
      - a. What does the BIBLE say about praying to Mary?
      - b. What does the BIBLE say about her being a co-redeemer to redeem us from the sins of Eve?
      - c. What does the BIBLE say about Jesus being cold and distant and inaccessible to us – so much so that we need to ask his mom to go to him on our behalf?
        - i. And the answer is very simple...
          1. The Bible says absolutely nothing about any of those things
          2. In fact, it says very much the opposite
            - a. In Acts 4:11-12, Peter says, *“<sup>11</sup>This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. <sup>12</sup>And there is salvation in no one else, for there is NO OTHER NAME under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”*
              - i. Jesus is the ONLY name that redeems us from our sins
              - ii. He has no need for a “co-redeemer”
              - iii. His sacrifice upon the cross FULLY paid the price demanded for our sins

b. And in Hebrews 4:15-16, we read, *“<sup>15</sup>For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. <sup>16</sup>Let us then WITH CONFIDENCE draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”*

- i. My friends, we can approach the throne of grace with absolute confidence, knowing that Jesus sympathizes with our every weakness
- ii. He is not distant
- iii. He is not detached
- iv. We can go to him FREELY, with no need for the mediation of an earthly priest, and no need for the mediation of ANY of the saints in heaven, including Mary

ii. So we do not pray to Mary, but we most definitely ought to praise God FOR Mary!

4. So what do we learn from Mary’s response to Gabriel? How do WE apply the things that this young Jewish girl from Nazareth teaches us?

a. The first and most important thing we learn from Mary is that we must believe what Gabriel said to her in verse 37: *“NOTHING will be impossible with God”*

i. NOTHING!

1. Can God heal the cancer within your bones? You bet He can!
2. Can God restore a broken marriage that seems like its on a straight path to divorce? Absolutely He can!
3. Can God provide for all your financial needs, even when you don’t know where you’re going to get the money for next month’s bills? Without a doubt He can do that!
4. Can God save your family member, or your friend, or your coworker, who wants NOTHING to do with Him, and detests any talk whatsoever about Christ? Yes, He can.

a. For NOTHING is impossible with God

- i. Just think about the very context of our passage for this morning
- ii. We touched on this last week, but how incredibly silly is it that an entire faith is based on the belief that Mary became pregnant through the Holy Spirit?!
  1. But we believe that wholeheartedly, don’t we?
  2. So if we have faith in something so unfathomable as the Virgin Conception, why would we NOT have faith that God can do anything else He desires?
- iii. Now, WILL God heal us from cancer?
- iv. WILL He restore our broken marriage?
- v. WILL He make sure we have all the money we need in our bank accounts?
- vi. WILL He save our loved ones?
  1. That is for Him to decide, isn’t it?
  2. The question for US is, “Do we believe God is who He says He is?”

- ii. Just think about all that must have been going on in Mary's mind in just these few short moments...
    - 1. I am about to be pregnant with the Messiah we have waited for for centuries
    - 2. My son will be given the throne of David, forever
    - 3. Oh, and this won't happen through Joseph, but through the power of the Holy Spirit
    - 4. And as a result of this setup, I'll most likely be mocked and scorned by everyone I know, for NO ONE will believe THAT story
      - a. Mary desperately needed a word of comfort in that moment, didn't she?
        - i. And so Gabriel gives her the best possible answer in ANY situation:
          - 1. NOTHING will be impossible with God
          - 2. And as Elizabeth attested to in verse 45, Mary BELIEVED this was true
            - a. Brothers and sisters in Christ, do WE believe that is true?
              - i. Imagine the peace that would be ours if we did believe that with our whole hearts!
              - ii. Imagine the rest and comfort our souls would experience if we grabbed onto this one truth as Mary did!
            - 3. NOTHING is impossible with God
- b. The second thing we learn from Mary is found in her attitude toward herself
  - i. How easy it would have been in that moment to get puffed up with pride
  - ii. How easy would it have been to think, "How awesome am I, that I have been chosen to be the mother of the Messiah?!"
    - 1. But that's not how Mary responded, was it?
      - a. "Behold, I am the SERVANT of the Lord..."
        - i. Some translations read, "I am the handmaiden of the Lord"
        - ii. The literal meaning is, "I am the slave of the Lord"
  - iii. This should be the response of EVERY follower of Jesus Christ
    - 1. My friends, we are ALL slaves, whether you are a Christian or not
      - a. This is why the argument over our free will is NOT as cut-and-dry as we would like for it to be
        - i. Yes, man has been given free will to choose in this life
          - 1. But the Bible says that we are slaves to our sin
          - 2. Our affections, and the desires of our hearts, are bent toward sin
          - 3. We have the freedom to do whatever we choose, but the problem is that we will always ultimately choose sin
            - a. For we are slaves to our sin
            - b. ALL of us
        - ii. Which is why we needed someone to redeem us
          - 1. In the Scriptures, this language of redemption is the idea of purchasing a slave off of the slave blocks
            - a. There is nothing we can do to free ourselves
            - b. There is nothing we can do to loosen our shackles
          - 2. SOMEONE ELSE must purchase our freedom
    - 2. And that is EXACTLY what Christ has done!
      - a. In Acts 20:28, Paul sent for the elders of the church in Ephesus, and he challenged them with these words:

