

Sermon outline and notes prepared by:
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Luke 1:26-38 “The Great Announcement”

Intro. Ever since Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden, and then heard the promise of salvation through the seed of the woman, mankind has been looking for a Savior. This hope was made much more clear through God’s promises to the Jewish people. By the time of Mary & Joseph, the Jewish expectation of a coming Messiah had reached a climax in the hearts of the oppressed Jewish people. Many Jewish women were hoping they would give birth to the Messiah. This Sunday we will learn about the long-awaited announcement of the impending birth of the Messiah to Mary. The time was now here. So God sent an angel to give this important announcement.

There have been many great announcements in the history of man. Announcements have heralded the declaration of wars and the end of wars, the election of presidents and the death of presidents. At times an announcement would come that a prince has been born, or a king has died. But the greatest announcement of all time was the announcement that the Messiah was soon to be born. It has no parallel because the person who was announced has no parallel.

Now there are two main lessons that I see from our text. First, we will see some examples of the kind of persons God wants us to be. You need to compare your life to these fine examples. But the truth is, we are often not living as we should. We all sin, and fall short of doing the will of God. So I have good news. The second main lesson is that God has sent a Savior, through whom we can have forgiveness of sin.¹ And by faith in Him, we can overcome sin, and live the kind of lives that I will hold up for your consideration this morning.

So let’s follow the story of how Mary came to find out that she would give birth to the long-awaited Messiah. And as we consider the story, let’s see if we can discern the lessons that God has for us. Now the first character of the story focuses on:

I. THROUGH WHOM THE ANNOUNCEMENT CAME

Immediately in v. 26 we read of the angel Gabriel. Why was an angel involved in announcing the birth of the Messiah? It was by the temptation of an evil angel that man fell, and Paradise was lost; it was, therefore, most appropriate that a good angel was sent to announce the coming of the Restorer, through whom Paradise is regained. By the way, the word “angel” means “messenger.” God gave Gabriel a message to deliver to Mary.

So picture with me the scene in heaven, when God the Father informed His Son that it is time for Him to be born and to become a man (John 1:1, 14). The Son responds, “I am ready to do thy will, oh God.” The great moment for which all preceding generations have been waiting has finally arrived. The Messiah is about to appear. A woman had been chosen to give birth to the Messiah. According to the prophecies, the Messiah would be born of a virgin. The chosen woman must receive an announcement and an explanation of what was soon to take place.

¹ Consider warning the people that there are many supernatural occurrences in this story, and the skeptics will label them as “fairy tails” or “legends.” But point out Luke 1:1-4 to them. This is sober truth that Luke writes. Also, Luke was using the literary form of historical narrative and expected his readers to understand that he was recalling history. Once you believe God exists, then you should have no trouble believing in miracles. See v.37.

So God calls the angel Gabriel to His side to go and tell the woman what is about to happen to her. We first read about Gabriel in Dan. 8 & Dan. 9:21. He was previously sent to announce the birth of John the Baptist, the Messiah's forerunner. As he approached Mary, he probably looked very much like an ordinary man. Daniel called him "a man."

Now there are two lessons here about angels that fit into the thrust of my message today. First of all:

A. Angels Obey God. In v. 26 God gave the command to go to Mary, and in v. 28 we see the obedience of Gabriel. He did exactly what God commanded him to do, even though he was to announcement something that might not be received with belief.

This sheds light on the third petition of the Lord's Prayer: "Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Mt. 6:10). God's will is always done in heaven. He speaks, and the angels quickly obey. We should be like that. We ought to obey God as quickly and as readily as the angels of God obey Him. Do you always obey God as the angels do?

B. Angels Announced the Good News of Salvation – This is what he does in vv. 31-33. However, in our day, angels do not have this assignment. God commands believers to share the good news of the Savior's birth, life, death, and resurrection. We must announce the good news that salvation has come. During this Christmas season we ought to look for opportunities to bear witness to the real meaning of Christmas.

II. TO WHOM THE ANNOUNCEMENT WAS MADE

Of course, we know the announcement was made to a young woman named Mary.² And what do we know about Mary? Since Jewish girls married young, it is likely that Mary was a teenager when the angel appeared to her, probably no more than fifteen years old. She lived in a fairly obscure village in Galilee called Nazareth (v. 26). Remember, Nathaniel said in John 1:46, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" On a more positive note, she was engaged to a man named Joseph, who was a descendant of King David. Now we assume that Mary was also of the house of David. The fact that she also traveled to Bethlehem to be registered (2:5) seems to confirm this. Furthermore, at the end of v. 32 we see that the child of Mary would be a descendant of David. And since Joseph was not the biological father of Jesus, Mary was the one who was the link between David and Jesus. Even so, Romans 1:3 says that God's Son Jesus Christ "was born of the seed of David according to the flesh." Likewise, 2 Timothy 2:8 says, "Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel." It was important that the Messiah be born to a descendant of King David, to fulfill the promises to David.

What else do we know about Mary? Why did God choose Mary to give birth to the Messiah. Well I am going to share with you 4 characteristics of Mary that can and should be true of each of us. First and foremost, she was:

A. A Recipient of God's Grace – Twice in this text, in vv. 28 & 30, a form of the word "grace" is found in reference to God's activity toward Mary.³ She was the object of divine favor.

² When it comes to Mary, people tend to go to one of two extremes. They either magnify her so much that Jesus takes second place (v.32), or they ignore her and fail to give her the esteem she deserves (v. 48).

³ The issue is God's gracious choice, not Mary's particular piety (cf. Gen 6:8); for unlike Luke 1:6, nothing is said directly about Mary's personal piety either before or after this verse.

Many court the favor of men; but what is really important is the favor of God. The good news is that grace refers to *unmerited* favor. It's just God's nature to be gracious. You don't have to earn God's favor. There is no one in this room that cannot be the recipient of God's favor, including His gift of salvation.

But surely there were other contributing factors regarding God's choice of Mary. Whoever God chose would need to be a fit mother for the Son of God. Young men, you need to choose a young woman of character to be the mother of your children. It's important. And so there are some factors that contributed to God's choice of Mary. God could use Mary because she was godly. Let me ask our young ladies here today, "Would God choose you for an important assignment?" It doesn't really matter how well dressed you are. It doesn't really matter how good looking you are. It doesn't really matter how cultured you are. What *really* matters is your character. I Sam 16:7 says, "Man looks at the outward appearance but the Lord looks at the heart."

Notice some of the aspects of her godly character that made her fit to bear & nurture God's Messiah:

B. A Humble Person - This relates to the point about God's grace. When you understand that God's favor is a gift of grace, and not a result of merit, then that promotes humility. Mary was certainly a humble woman. This expressed humility in several ways. For example, Mary was troubled by the greeting of the angel (vv. 29-30). Note that it was mainly *what* the angels said that troubled her. He said things about Mary that she did not expect to hear! Mary was not conscious of anything that either merited or promised such great things. She knew that she was but a young woman of lowly social position (vv. 48) and therefore could not understand how it was possible for her to be addressed in such lofty terms. In v. 52 she praises God for choosing a humble, lowly person like her. She said, "He has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted the lowly."

It is so important that we maintain a humble attitude, and reject pride. Psa. 138:6 says, "For though Jehovah is high, he has regard for the lowly" (KJV). Isa. 57:15 says, "I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit..." (KJV). Many of the chosen servants of God were people of humble birth. Gideon and David are two examples. If you want God to use you, you need to keep pride out of your life (cf. v. 51). God chose Mary of humble birth. Jesus Himself was of humble birth. And if you are of humble birth, you should be encouraged by the fact that God chose a common woman to give birth to His Son. God still chooses to work through common, humble people.

III. OF WHOM THE ANNOUNCEMENT WAS MADE

The most important part of my message today is not about Gabriel, nor about Mary, but about the Messiah. After, He is the main character of the Christmas story. If you pray to Mary, she can't save you from your sin. If you pray to Gabriel, or to one of the other angels, they can't save you. Only Jesus can save you from your sin. So let's see what the angel announced about Jesus here in our text. You are not an angel, and most are not as virtuous as Mary. But even Mary needed a Savior. And as we think about our Savior, let's see first of all:

A. His Name (v.31) - The Hebrew form of this name is Joshua, which means Jehovah saves. As to the name "Jesus", not in Luke but in Matthew this name is explained: "for he will save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21). Even His name points to the fact the Jesus was born to be the Savior.

B. His Nature - This child would have a unique nature, for He would have a unique role in the Salvation of the world. He would be:

1. Human - V. 31 says, “And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son....” Since He is born of a woman, He would be fully human. He did not just appear in human form, as in the case of angels. Rather, He was born of human flesh. This is possible for we were created in the image of God. Only a man could make atonement for the sins of other men.

2. Divine - His divinity is seen in the titles of two verses. In v.32 he is called the Son of the Highest,⁴ and in v.35 He is called the Son of God. This is a person who is absolutely and completely God. How could a child, born of a woman, also be divine? Notice the “therefore” here in v.35. As a result of the creative work of God in bringing about conception, this child would be the Son of God, not the son of Joseph.

Now why was it important that the Messiah be Divine? First of all, that is the only way He would be a sinless sacrifice. Notice in v.35 that the child is called “holy”. He did not receive a sin nature, and He remained sinless.⁵ We are told in the Book of Leviticus that the birth of a child caused a woman to be unclean because she brought a sinner into the world. In Psalm 51:5 David said, “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me” (KJV). The union of man and woman can only produce a child with a sin nature. But Mary is told that she is not bringing a sinner into the world; He is holy. The Virgin Birth was the only way God could get that “holy thing” into the human family. The Spirit of God “overshadowed” Mary. That word (*episkiazo*) is applied to the presence of God in the holy of holies in the Jewish tabernacle and temple (Ex. 40:35; ck. LXX). Mary’s womb became a holy of holies for the Son of God! We have three witness to the sinlessness of Jesus. Paul said He knew no sin (2 Cor. 5:21). Peter said He did no sin (I Peter 2:22). And John said He had no sin (I John 3:5). Therefore, when He died on that cross, He did not die for His sins, but for the sins of the world. No sinful being could reconcile man to God. Such would only die for their own sins. Secondly, since He was divine, He was the conqueror of death. Isa. 9:6 says that the Messiah would be called “the mighty God.” Only God can conquer death. Scientists can research and experiment all they want to, but only God can conquer death. This explains why it is said of Him, “And He shall be great” (v.32).

C. His Greatness (v.32a) – This greatness contrasts with the rest of humanity, which is not great. There is also a contrast in Luke’s account between the anticipated greatness of John, and the greatness of Jesus. Luke showed that whereas John was great, Jesus is greater still. This is shown in several ways. John was “great in the sight of the Lord” (1:15), but Jesus is “great” (1:32), and His greatness is unqualified. Whereas John is later described as “a prophet of the Most High” (1:76), Jesus is the “Son of the Most High” (1:32). Whereas John's birth was miraculous and had OT parallels. Jesus' birth was even more miraculous. Whereas John's task was to prepare for the Coming One (1:17, 76-79), Jesus is the Coming One.

I’m glad that the Messiah was to be great. We need a great Savior, for the problems of this world are very great. We need a great Savior, because our needs are great. We need a great Savior, because our enemies, Satan and death, are great. For everyone who has great sin, be encouraged! We have a great Savior! And Jesus Christ is the greatest of all great ones.

⁴ Stein: “Most High” is a circumlocution for God (Luke 1:35, 76; 6:35; Acts 7:48).

⁵ However, Stein says, “In light of 2:23 the term ‘holy’ is best interpreted as designating not a particular ethical quality (as in Acts 3:14) so much as indicating that the Son of God was to be dedicated or set aside for a unique, divine purpose.”

But few would have expected greatness from the son of Mary. As we have already observed, she was of humble birth. For 30 years He lived in obscurity. And when He began to minister among the people, we began to see that the prophecy would come true. He was great indeed. Thousands came to hear Him preach and teach, and to behold His miracles. Yet, in fulfillment of Isa. 53, He was later despised and rejected of men. Few remained faithful to Him. Finally, He was crucified as a common criminal. It appeared that He had totally lost His greatness. But the story did not end at the cross! Jesus Himself said, "He that would be great among you, let him be your servant." Jesus had a servant spirit. He was willing to travel the way of humility, poverty, and even death. But that was followed by a victorious resurrection and exaltation (Phil. 2:5-11; Isa. 53:11-12). Christ has indeed become great. He conquered death. He has been exalted to the right hand of God the Father. He has reconciled men to God and brought forgiveness to millions. The Pharisees asked, "Who can forgive sin, but God?" Jesus can, because He is the God-man. He is known by billions. Indeed, He became great as the angel has said. In His Second Coming to earth the greatness of Jesus will become fully known and manifest. Oh, that He were praised by every creature that has breath! But even so, the tongues of men and angels could not tell all His greatness.

D. His Lordship - Vv. 32b-33 says, "The Lord God will give 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." Clearly Jesus' role as Israel's Messiah are in view here. There is many prophecies in the OT that the Messiah would receive the throne of David (e.g. 2 Sam. 7:11b-13, 16; Isa. 9:6, 7). Jesus could qualify because, according to His human nature, He was a descendent of David.

1. His Earthly Reign Was Rejected (Lk. 19:14; Jn. 19:15b) - The Pharisees rejected Him saying, "We have no King but Caesar." But this was no problem, for according to the prophecies, it is the Lord, not the people that will give Him His throne. Praise God, Jesus doesn't have to politic and compromise to win an election. God gave Him His throne.

2. His Heavenly Reign Must Now Be Accepted – In Lk. 17:21 Jesus said, "The kingdom of God [in its current form] is within you." When God's power is manifested in a service or a place, there you have the kingdom of God. In Jn. 18:36 Jesus said to Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world." Yet, He went on to say to him, "You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world..." Peter affirmed in Acts 2:36, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." Have you yielded your life to Jesus as Savior and Lord? Acknowledging and submitting to the Lordship of Jesus is so important that Rom. 10:9 says, "that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." Jesus is reigning over the hearts and lives of millions of Christians in this world.

3. He Will Come Again to Rule and to Reign on Earth - If we interpret literally what Gabriel said in verses 30-31, then we should also interpret literally what he said in verses 32-33. The virgin's womb is literal and the throne of David is literal. He shall literally reign over the house of Jacob and of His kingdom there shall be no end. Are you ready? Earthly kingdoms come and go, but the kingdom of Christ shall never end! The eternal rule of the Davidic kingship is taught in 2 Sam 7:13, 16; Pss. 89:4,29; 132:12; Isa 9:7, but in this verse it is the final Davidic King, the Messiah, who will reign forever. Compare also Dan 7:13-14, where one "like a son of man" is given an everlasting kingdom.

IV. THE APPROPRIATE RESPONSE TO THIS ANNOUNCEMENT

Mary's response in our text is the same kind of response we should have.

A. Have Faith in the Promised Messiah - As v.45 indicates, Mary was blessed because she believed.⁶ But you might say, "What about her question in v. 34? These are not words of doubt, but simply inquiry. She was bewildered and mystified as to how this could happen. How could a virgin give birth to a child? She believed the promise, but she did not understand the performance. "I believe this will happen, but how will it happen?" In vv. 35-37 the angel strengthens Mary's faith first by explanation of the process. Gabriel explained that this would be a miracle, the work of the Holy Spirit of God. When he says, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you," This is an example of synonymous parallelism. Secondly, it was a further encouragement to her faith to be told that her cousin Elizabeth, though advanced in years, was with child. The mighty work God has done in John the Baptist's conception would be surpassed by an even greater miracle in the virginal conception of Jesus, God's Son. From the point of view of earthly thinking, the message Gabriel brought was even more unbelievable than the one given to Zechariah. Zechariah did not believe, but Mary did. Finally, in v. 37 what the angel said should have strengthened her faith even more, "For with God nothing will be impossible." This reminds me of what the Lord said to Abraham concerning Sarah giving birth at an old age, "Is anything too hard for the LORD?" (Gen. 18.14). In fact, this very child of Mary would one day say, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible" (Matt. 19:26). So in faith she said in v. 38, "Let it be to me according to your word." That's faith! She believed the Word of God.

Now if you are to experience the blessings of God upon your life, you need to read and listen to God's Word, and believe it! Are you a woman of faith? Are you a man of faith? Do you believe the promises of God found in this book?

B. Be Obedient to God's Will – Think with me about two areas of her obedience. First of all, notice one evidence of her past obedience. If you read vv. 46-55, you can find many reference to the Old Testament. Mary has a good knowledge and understanding of the OT. She was obedient to the requirement to read and memorize the Word of God. Even so, you need to be obedient in this area of your walk with God. Colossians 3:16 contains an important command, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom..." You need to read God's Word daily. You need to be faithful to attend Sunday School and the worship services, so you can learn more of God's Word. Another area of her past obedience had to do with sexual morality. Luke emphasized that Mary was a virgin. Two times in v. 27 she is called a virgin. It should be remembered that Luke was a doctor and he gives the most extended account of the Virgin Birth. She followed the OT laws concerning sexual morality, such as is found in Dt. 22, & Ex. 22:16. She followed the example of Joseph, who refused to lie with Potiphar's wife, and instead chose to keep himself morally clean (Gen. 39:7ff). The New Testament is even more explicit on this issue. And God still looks with disfavor on those who lack enough self-control to refrain from sexual immorality. Too many young people lose the blessings of God because they get in too big of a hurry. Young people, there may be some who will ridicule you if you remain a virgin until marriage, but God will be pleased with you.

Not only do we see her past obedience, but also her present obedience in v.38, "Let it be to me according to your word." Here is the climax of the story as far as Mary is concerned. Here we

⁶ She was blessed *among* women, not *above* women. Actually, these words are not found in our best Greek manuscripts.

see Mary's unqualified submission to God's will.⁷ Furthermore, notice that she called herself a "handmaid" (doul h), which was the lowest kind of female servant, actually a slave. She belonged totally to the Lord (Rom. 12:1-2). She was willing to submit to the Lord, and bear the Christ child, even though it could easily involve ridicule, or even something worse (Dt. 22:23ff), since she would be accused by people of immorality. And the process of giving birth is no easy matter, especially in the old days! But the angel assured her that God was with her (v. 28b), and nothing is to be despaired of, not the performance of any service, though ever so great, if we have God with us. What an example for us to follow! Oh, that we all had such a spirit of submission as she had, that we might be willing to place ourselves absolutely at God's disposal, for Him to do with us as He pleased! We must, as Mary here, guide our desires by the Word of God, and say "Let it be to me according to thy Word."

Conclusion: Appeal to the lost to accept Jesus as He is revealed in point III.

Sources: Stephen Felker (*Devotional Notes on the Entire Bible*); Virtus E. Gideon, *Luke: A Study Guide Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1967); William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Luke* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978); J. Vernon McGee, *Thru The Bible*, Vol. 4 (Pasadena, CA: Thru The Bible Radio, 1983); Matthew Henry *Unabridged Commentary* (on Online Bible); Larry Pierce, *Online Bible* [CD-ROM] (Ontario: Timnathserah Inc., 1996); Charles H. Spurgeon, *Spurgeon's Expository Encyclopedia*, Vol. 12 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House), 443-433; Spurgeon (25G.41, pp.115ff); Robert H. Stein, *The New American Commentary: Luke* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992); Warren W. Wiersbe, "Be" Series: *New Testament Volumes 1 & 2, Luke* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1989); Dr. Ed Young (a few notes from his sermon on this text). Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982).

ABOUT THESE SERMON NOTES

This document has not been transcribed from an audio recording, but is the result of the sermon preparation process. Most outlines are original to the author, but much of the content of the notes are taken from commentaries, other sermons, and Bible study aids (see sources above). Sermons are preached without notes, and thus the content of the "live" sermon is in the author's own words. To get an audio recording of this message, you may send \$1 for each audio cassette tape ordered, plus \$3 shipping & handling for each order mailed in. Up to 2 messages come on each cassette. Make checks payable to Swift Creek Baptist Church, P.O. Box 235, Colonial Heights, VA 23834.

⁷ The name "Mary" is based on the Hebrew name Miriam, the sister of Moses. The name means "rebellion," but Mary was anything but rebellious to the Lord!