

Promise Kept
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Allen Power

Luke 1:26-38

Big Idea: God's amazing promise to a seemingly ordinary girl was the preview of His amazing grace to ordinary people like us. Her response is a lesson for everyone.

Luke 1:26–38 (ESV)

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.

- We have all the critical facts because Luke (a doctor by training) was thorough in his research. Some believe he interviewed Mary herself.
- The story begins in Nazareth, an insignificant little village in Galilee. The people in Judah looked down on this "Podunk" town.

- Thirty years later when Jesus was calling the twelve, Nathaniel would famously ask, “*Can anything good come out of Nazareth (John 1:46)?*”
- Mary was a young virgin (a key fact), no more than 15 years old.
- 700 years before, the prophet Isaiah was inspired by God to write: ¹⁴ Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. (Is 7:14 ESV)
- Mary was engaged to Joseph who was a descendant of King David (another key fact.) Isaiah had also prophesied about this.
- “[A]pparently both of them were poor (Lev. 12:8; Luke 2:24).”ⁱ
- **Why would God choose to send His Son to earth to two “nobodys” in “nowheresville?” Why not a rich, royal, prominent family?**
- The angel Gabriel was a special emissary of God. Earlier in 1:19 he described himself as one who “*stands in the presence of God.*”
- Gabriel told Mary she was “highly favored” and God was with her.
- Mary was understandably shocked and scared, but Gabriel calmed her with these words, “*Do not be afraid...you have found favor with God.*”
- Then Gabriel delivered the full message: 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.*”
- Mary responded logically asking: “How can this be since I’m a virgin?”
- “It’s supernatural, Mary! A supernatural conception for a supernatural Savior, all accomplished by the supernatural power of God’s Holy Spirit.”
- “And while we’re on the subject of miracles, Mary, your relative Elizabeth is expecting too!” I can hear Mary, “Elizabeth, the one old enough for assisted living? THAT Elizabeth?”
- Gabriel responded simply (v. 37): “*...nothing will be impossible with God.*”

- Wow, so much for Mary to absorb and process. “How can this be? What will my family think? What will Joseph think? What will people say? The biggest question of all: Why me? Why would God choose an ordinary person like me for such an extraordinary job?” We can only imagine what was going through her mind because none of that is in the text.
 - Mary’s response in verse 38 is both admirable and amazing: *“I am the servant of the Lord, let it be to me according to your word.”*
 - No argument, no negotiating, just YES. Enough said, and the angel departed; message delivered; mission accomplished.
 - Warren Wiersbe writes: *“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 (Lk 1:32), or they ignore her and fail to give her the esteem she deserves (Lk 1:48). Elizabeth, filled with the Spirit, called her “the mother of my Lord” (Lk 1:43); and that is reason enough to honor her.”ⁱⁱ*
 - When I read this familiar text I also see Mary as a teacher for you and me.
 - That’s because God’s amazing promise to this seemingly ordinary girl was the preview of His amazing grace to ordinary people like us.
 - Her response to God’s calling is a lesson for everyone.
 - Look at the parallels of Mary’s interaction with Gabriel and God’s offer of salvation to mankind.
1. “Mary was an ordinary person whom God chose to use in His redemptive plan.”ⁱⁱⁱ God’s grace is for every person no matter his or her status. In scripture it appears He really loves to use “ordinary” people (fishermen, shepherds, carpenters, tentmakers, tax collectors, even prostitutes.)
 2. “God took the initiative in providing the way of salvation. He sent Gabriel to Mary to announce the coming of the promised Savior. God takes the initiative today through the conviction of the Holy Spirit.”^{iv}
 - Mary wasn’t applying for the job of mother to the Messiah. God reached down to her personally and individually. Through his Holy Spirit, God is reaching down to mankind with His offer of salvation through Jesus.

3. Mary did not earn this place in God's plan. "The selection originated in God's gracious choice, not Mary's individual piety. Nothing is made of Mary's personal virtue either before or after this verse."^v
4. Mary asked, "How will this be, since I am a virgin (v.34)?"
 - When we understand the message of the gospel, the fact that Jesus died to save us, and the concept of God's grace, we might ask: "How can this be since I am so sinful?" "How can I be worthy of all this?"
 - The answer to our question parallel's Gabriel's answer to Mary: *"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you."* God transforms lives supernaturally by His own Spirit and His power.
 - We might object, "I'm too messed up!" Nothing is impossible with God.
5. A final example: Mary's response to God should be our response to God.
 - ETB Lesson Commentary: *"Mary responded in willing obedience with a humble commitment to serve God. She identified herself as the servant of the Lord. The term emphasized absolute submission. A servant was devoid of all personal rights. Her sole purpose for existence was to carry out the wishes of her master. For a very young teenage girl, this commitment required substantial faith in God. It risked humiliation before her family and community. Moreover, it jeopardized her future with Joseph. Yet she nevertheless submitted to God's disclosure. Having obtained this response to God's message, Gabriel departed. Believers are to respond to God's truth with obedience and humility."*^{vi}
 - What a great example this young Jewish girl is to us today.

So, What's the Takeaway?

- Mary conceived so that we might receive. God's amazing promise to a seemingly ordinary girl was the preview of His amazing grace to ordinary people like us. Her response is a lesson for everyone.
- In verses 47-55 of Luke 1 Mary sings a song, "The Magnificat." We won't read it now; you can read it on your own. But here are two key lines:

- *“My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant...his mercy is for those who fear him.”*
- Like Mary, God looks at the “humble estate” of every person. God’s grace is available to everyone no matter our station in life.
- He makes the first move and initiates the relationship. We can’t earn it by good behavior; we must simply accept His free gift of salvation.
- Her interaction with Gabriel was a wonderful example of how we should all respond to His offer of mercy and grace: *“Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.”^{vii}* May we respond that way.

ⁱ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). [*The Bible exposition commentary*](#) (Vol. 1, p. 172). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

ⁱⁱ *ibid*

ⁱⁱⁱ Explore the Bible Leaders Guide – Lifeway 2018

^{iv} *ibid*

^v *ibid*

^{vi} *ibid*

^{vii} [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Lk 1:38). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.