

Title: Good News to a Young Girl
Text: Luke 1.26-38
Theme: Responding to God's faithfulness
Series: Advent 2008 #2
Prop Stmtt We must respond to God's faithfulness with a persevering faith.

I would like to have all of the girls aged 13-16 to stand. The text that I am about to read with all of us, is particularly personal for you. This text is the story of the conversation that Gabriel has with Mary, at which time he tells her that she is going to be the mother of the Messiah. Mary, was not yet married, but she was pledged to be married to a man named Joseph. In those days, it was very common for a girl at the age of 13-14 to be pledged, and then by 15-16 to be married. Typically, the girl did not have a great deal of say in the matter, but her dad did.

Now, getting married, involved two distinct steps: First of all, there was the engagement. Engagement was not some romantic dinner, followed by a sunset ride in a row boat, where just as the sun was disappearing into the west, a sea gull drops a diamond ring into the hand of your prince, who then on bended knee, without falling out of the boat, asks you to marry him. It really didn't work that way at all. Engagement involved a formal agreement which was initiated by a father (not your own) who was attempting to find a wife for his son. The next most important person involved in the process was the father of the bride (your dad). Now, the father of the son would often consult his son's opinion about the girl, but the girl's opinion on the boy would not necessarily be asked. The father of the son, would have to pay the father of the girl a purchase price, because when you left your home, your dad lost a worker, and the other home gained a worker. Once the payment was made then a written agreement would be signed or an oath would be taken by the son, and you would be engaged. The engagement was legally binding, and could not be broken except through divorce (Matt 1:19), and you would be then viewed as husband and wife (Matt 1:19-20, 24), although not actually married yet. Again, most girls were pledged at around 13 and married by 15. Mary was pledge, but not yet married when this event took place.

Read text:

In Church history, Mary tends to be deified, or in reaction to that, ignored. What further complicates matters, is that there are related religious traditions that are promoted about Mary that are just not true. This has clouded a number of other issues. For example, based on Mary's statement in v.34, some of you were taught that Mary was a perpetual virgin. In fact, some of you were taught that Mary herself was born of a virgin. Not only does the text NOT say that, and the gospels record that Mary had other children, but this whole teaching leaves people with the impression that sex is somehow sort of dirty, and that people who take a vow of celibacy are more holy than others. That is so unfortunate that that message has been taught through the years, it just not true. But, in reaction to that, Protestants have often been silent about Mary and that is not right either. Mary's reaction to the news that she is going to be the mother of the Messiah reveals the heart of

a young girl who is already immersed in the Word of God and absolutely confident in the promises of God. We will study that aspect in more detail next Sunday.

Today, we are focusing on Luke 1.26-38 and there is so much in this text. Gabriel's personal appearance and announcement to Mary is the setting for all of these truths that deal with Christ as the coming king to fulfill the promise given to David, the coming Savior to fulfill the promise given to Israel and the world, the uniqueness of the birth of Christ which has salvific implications, the power of God's Spirit, and the absolute certainty of God's Word and power, all of which are summarized in Gabriel's statement in v.37, "For nothing is impossible with God." That is a promise that Mary needed as an anchor, not only in these 9 months of pregnancy as she had to encounter and deal with the response of Joseph and other family and community members. But her role did not end when she delivered Christ. She, even though a mother, became a disciple. And like the others, she watched him die. We do not trust the Lord today so that we do not have to trust him tomorrow. Trusting in his promises now, prepares us for greater times of trust. As much as she had to trust the promises of God regarding his birth, she would have to trust God even more regarding his death. This 13-14 year old girl provides a pattern that every single one of us needs to follow.

(31-33; 35-37;42-45)	(34; 38) (39-40)	(46-55)
<u>Revelation</u> brings a	<u>Response</u> that produces a	<u>Result</u>
(God's Promise)	(Trusting Obedience)	(Joyful Worship)

I will come back to this next Sunday. But for now, let's take a look at this passage. Keep in mind that the first 80 verses of this book (chapter 1) is the background that sets the stage for the birth of the most incredible person in the history of the world. His birth, his ministry, his death, his resurrection are incredible. So, naturally, the events that are described in these verses are themselves rather amazing and very interesting. In fact, even the way God brings Christ into the world illustrates how God works His plan in ways that are so different than what we normally expect.

Last Sunday we looked at verses 5-25, which deal with the appearance of Gabriel to the priest Zechariah, telling him that he and his wife, in spite of their advanced age, are going to have a son. Now, verses 26-38 deal with another appearance of Gabriel, this time, to a young girl telling her that she is going to have a son as well. Luke places these stories next to each other to prepare us for what is going to come. The opening phrase of v.26 makes it clear that the reader is supposed to view these accounts in relationship with each other. Seen together, they give us plenty of similarities and contrasts that are helpful to observe in order to help us understand what the big idea of the text is.

Similarities: (of 5-25 with 26-38)

- Gabriel appears to both
- Gabriel quotes the OT
- Both are afraid
- Both are given announcements

Both are told about a birth
Both births are unusual
Both births are fulfilling promises
Both conclude with responses of faith

Contrast

Old man vs. young girl

Father vs. Mother

Married vs. Pledged

Levi vs. Judah (descendent of David)

Jerusalem vs. Nazareth

Temple vs. home (maybe?) the settings are different in that the temple is ornate, big, famous and important, while the setting of Mary is very scant on information. Nazareth is very small, non-descript, backward, and seemingly insignificant. However, what she is told is so much more!

Normal means of conception vs. virgin birth (unusual vs. unheard of)

Doubt vs. Faith

When you put all of this together, we see two things: 1) we see how God keeps His promises exactly as he said he would, but not in the way that anyone could have ever expected and 2) we see how people are called to respond to God's faithfulness with a persevering faith of their own. There are three things from this text that support that.

1. **God chooses the most unlikely people to accomplish His plan.** (26-28)

All through Scripture you see this pattern. God establishes his plan. God's plan is driven by grace. God makes promises based on his plan. God carries out his promises. And in so doing, God amazes us with how He does it. Over and over, God chooses the most unlikely people to accomplish His plan. This is a pattern that is so clear from the OT, and it continues on here with the birth of His Son. God chooses Mary.

A. **She was a girl.**

Young girls did not have much stature in the world during the days in which the NT was written. And yet, here is a young girl, who is visited by a messenger from God. This messenger was a supernatural being, known as an angel. This angel is only one of two good angels named in the Bible. Gabriel stands in the presence of God, and now, he is having a conversation with a 13-14 year old girl whom the important and powerful of her day would not even know she existed. God does! And Gabriel told her that she was highly favored and that the Lord was with her. Not only that...

B. **She was from the wrong place.**

a. Galilee (map)

Matthew 4.15 – “Galilee of the Gentiles”

If you were from Galilee, you may have been a Jew, but you were considered by many not to be Jewish enough. Galilee was the northern section of Israel and was the portion that was always vulnerable to invasion from the north. There was much pagan influence in that region which caused the Jews in the south to despise them and view them as being inferior. A Galilean was an ugly step-sibling to the rest of the Jews. If that wasn't bad enough, Mary was from Nazareth.

b. Nazareth (poor)

Especially high on the despised list was people from Nazareth. (John 1.45-46) When Philip told Nathanael that he thought that he had discovered the Messiah and that the Messiah was from Nazareth, Nathanael's response reflected the sentiments of his time when he said, in essence – You've got to be kidding me! Can anything good come from that city? Illus. Russia – Georgia, Ukraine; India - Pakistan

C. She was a virgin.

a. Pledged (but not married)

How is a girl who is not married, going to be the mother of the Messiah? Even if you were making up this story, you wouldn't come up with this! But, God doesn't do things the way we think He will. God takes Isaiah's prophecy (7.14) which appears to be referring to Isaiah's soon to be wife, and shows that this prophecy has an ultimate fulfillment in Christ! Which leads us to the second point.

2. God chooses the most unlikely means to accomplish His plan. (29-33)

A. God uses a Virgin birth (because)

Yes, a virgin birth was an unusual and naturally impossible manner for a child to enter the world. But God uses this, because His Son was first of all, supernatural. Before He was Jesus, He was Lord. When the Lord was born as Jesus, the supernatural Creator, clothed Himself with the physical robe of His own creation. He was not from this earth, which is why he had no earthly father, but he experienced all aspects of life, without sin, which is why he did have an earthly mother. At the time, Mary did not understand all of that. Her concept of the Messiah was like that of the Jews of her day. But God was doing something that was so much bigger. He was...

B. God is providing a God/man Redeemer.

Gabriel brought good news to a young girl: she would become the mother of the promised Messiah whom she would name *Jesus* (“Jehovah is salvation”; Matt. 1:21). Gabriel affirms the deity and the humanity of Christ by calling announcing that he would have the throne of his father David and at the same time, he would be the Son of the Most

High. So, as Mary's son, He would be human; and as Son of the Highest (Luke 1:32), He would be the Son of God (Luke 1:35). "For unto us a Child is born (speaking of his human nature) unto us a Son is given (speaking of his divine nature)" (Isa. 9:6).

Gabriel also states that in inheriting David's throne, he will reign over Israel forever! If we interpret what Gabriel said in verses 30–31 in a literal manner, then we should also interpret what he said in verses 32–33 in a literal fashion too. He was referring to God's covenant with David (2 Sam. 7) and His kingdom promises to the people of Israel (Isa. 9:1–7; 11–12; 61; 66; Jer. 33).

- Reign over the house of Jacob forever
- His kingdom will never end

Jesus came to earth to be the Savior of the world, but He also came to fulfill the promises God made to the Jewish people (Rom. 15:14). Today, Jesus is enthroned as king in heaven (Acts 2:29–36), but Christ is not yet on *David's* throne. One day Jesus will return and establish His righteous kingdom on earth, and then these promises will be fulfilled. But, here Gabriel tells Mary all that she needs to know, but he does not tell her all that there is to know. There is so much more that God is going to do. And the life, ministry and death of Christ would become the occasion for God's plan to go worldwide with the Gentiles. God does things that are so much bigger than we think. So, instead of telling us everything, he gives us what we need for that day.

3. **Nothing is Impossible with God!** (34-38)

This statement, "For nothing is impossible with God" summarizes this section. Even though Luke mentions 3x that Mary is a virgin, the emphasis is not on her virginity (as important as that is) as much as the emphasis is on the power of God to bring about a conception without a natural father in such a way that the child would still be a legal descendant who would be in the line of David.

Flow of text – question, explanation, response

It seems clear from Mary's response that she understands Gabriel to mean that she is going to conceive right away before she is formally married to Joseph.

Question - Mary knew *what* would happen, but she did not know *how* it would happen. Her question in Luke 1:34 was not an evidence of unbelief (cf. Luke 1:18); rather, it was an expression of faith. She believed the promise, but she did not understand the performance. How could a virgin give birth to a child? Mary is not expressing a vow of perpetual virginity.

Explanation - First, Gabriel explained that this would be a miracle. The man, to whom she was pledged, would not be the father of the child even though Jesus would be legally identified as the son of Joseph (Luke 3:23; 4:22; John 1:45; 6:42). It is possible that some people thought that Mary had been unfaithful to Joseph and that Jesus was the result of

her unfaithfulness (John 8:41). This was probably part of the pain that Mary had to bear for the rest of her life, that Simeon prophesied about in Luke 2:35. Gabriel was careful to point out that the Baby would be a “holy one” and would not share in the sinful human nature of man. Jesus knew no sin (2 Cor. 5:21), He did no sin (1 Peter 2:22), and He had no sin (1 John 3:5). His body was prepared for Him by the Spirit of God (Heb. 10:5) who “overshadowed” Mary. That word, “overshadowed” is used in reference to the presence of God in the holy of holies in the tabernacle and temple (Ex. 40:35). So, in that sense, Mary’s womb became a holy of holies for the Son of God! Gabriel then gave Mary some encouragement, both as evidence of God’s promise, but also evidence of God’s care to give her some comfort from a relative. Her relative (though old) Elizabeth was pregnant, proving that “with God nothing shall be impossible.” God gave a similar word to Abraham when He announced the birth of Isaac (Gen. 18:14). That our God can do anything is the witness of many, including Job (Job 42:2), Jeremiah (Jer. 32:17), and even our Lord Jesus (Matt. 19:26). What are you supposed to do with that? Mary believed!

In this we are given a glimpse of the power of God and the character of God’s servant – Mary. She models faith and humility. And yet the hero of this passage is God!! God has heard. God has remembered. God is responding and He is doing it in a way that fulfills all of his promises in a way that no one could have ever imagined.

God will tell you what you need to know. God will usually not tell you everything. God’s plan makes no sense to the world. God’s plan is in conflict with the world’s system.

If God can provide a Savior like this; if God can overcome the obvious challenges like this; if God can handle these enormous obstacles and fulfill all of these problems, He can work out whatever I am facing. That is an even greater comfort as we see that...

Conclusion:

Everything that God does, He does perfectly.

This is true of Elizabeth and of Mary. This is true of John and of Jesus. Both births were difficult to understand. But the conception of John prepared the way for the conception of Christ. Gabriel used what happened to Zechariah and Elizabeth to pave the way for what was going to happen to Mary.

Their births reflected their lives and ministries. John’s life was unusual and unique. Christ’s was miraculous. John would be great in the sight of the Lord, Christ would be the fulfillment of great. John is called the “prophet of the Most High” (1.76). Jesus is the “Son of the Most High.”(1.32) The good news to the young girl is greater than the good news to the old man. But the good news comes at a cost. Even the people that God chooses as the principle players in the birth of His Son all are marked to some degree what He epitomizes with his life and death. Following God’s Promises carries a high price. You pay the price of ridicule, misunderstanding, rejection, and persecution. But following God’s promises provides you with a seat right in the center of what God is doing, even though we don’t see it all at once.

The higher the price, the greater the cost. The greater the cost, the greater the joy.