



ADVENT: THE COMING OF FAITH

Luke 1:26-38
December 4, 2022

Be sure you have read through the passage before discussing the questions with your small group. Also, you can watch or rewatch the sermon by going to <http://switzerlandcommunitychurch.org>

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. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. 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. 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."

And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"

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. 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. 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.

– Luke 1:26-38, ESV

ADVENT 2022: THE COMING OF FAITH

If hope is the longing for salvation then faith is how we live when we know our hope will not be stopped.

Last week, we talked about the coming of hope, that with the announcement of the coming Savior, hope came to the world that spoke to both our eternal life and also to our daily life. We saw the Angel Gabriel appear to Zechariah and announce the miracle of a conception to a couple that had been unable to have children, living in cultural shame in the process. As the story progresses through the Gospel of Luke, six months have gone by with Zechariah hiding Elizabeth. The announcement of Good News is far from over though.

The Angel Gabriel appeared to Mary, a young girl engaged to a fine man named Joseph. Back in that day, engagement would be different than our understanding. Engagement was more formalized and a committed relationship between them. Hence why as Joseph found out about her pregnancy sought to divorce her quietly.

In the story of Zechariah, he questioned Gabriel in a matter that demanded an explanation that he felt owed. Mary, though, Mary responded differently. While they both asked questions, Mary's question had been one in utter amazement. Both Zechariah and Mary had been presented with hope. Zechariah responded with doubt but Mary responded in faith. With the coming of Jesus Christ, faith came to the world. He validated our hopes in a future and greater tomorrow both in the immediate sense and in the eternal sense.

Advent, being the season of looking towards Christ's second coming by looking at His first coming, sees the coming of faith as Jesus takes on flesh. The transcendent God becomes immanent drawing close to us and taking on real tangible flesh, to be with His people. *Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.* Faith builds itself on the foundation of hope. The two work hand in hand with one another. You cannot have hope without faith and you cannot have faith without hope. Both come in tandem through the coming of Jesus Christ and will be finally consummated in His second coming. ***If hope is the longing for salvation then faith is how we live when we know our hope will not be stopped.***

THE OBJECT OF OUR FAITH

- *Luke 1:31-33 And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. 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."*
- Throughout the introduction of Mary to the reader/hearer of Luke, you get the impression that Mary is not really anybody of particular significance. She isn't well known. She didn't have the shame of being childless as she was relatively young still. Her family lineage isn't mentioned. She hasn't done anything substantial or of note that the audience would have known. She is just... Mary.

- Yet, the angel greets her with a greeting that she is highly favored. She is blessed and chosen by God through no merit of her own but fully and completely by the grace of God.
- In fact, it is Joseph's family line that is mentioned. Joseph is of the line of David, the line of Kings. God is not coming as a priest over the temple, but as a King over the people of God and over the world.
 - And before you get to the argument that Joseph is just His adopted father so that lineage would not count towards Jesus allow me to give you two counterpoints
 - First, that's not how adoption works. When adopted the child has all the rights and privileges of a biological son. Anyone who has adopted a child does not differentiate between them.
 - Second, even if the first isn't true, then okay, let's appeal to the Father with Jesus Christ as the Son of God, the King of Kings over all creation and over all heaven and earth.
- The point that is being made abundantly clear in this narrative is that Jesus is coming is one of divine Kingship that bursts forth into the world at the right moment.
- Kingship Language given by Gabriel
 - Great
 - Son of the Most High
 - Throne of His Father David
 - Reign Over the House of Jack
 - No end to His Kingdom
- The trust is fully in the Lord to save His people in His time and in His way. He is the King over all creation.
- Our faith, then, is not in our ability to do anything significant but in the eternal reign of Christ over all creation and over all the world.
- *Psalm 20:7-8 Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God. They collapse and fall, but we rise and stand upright.*
- There is a subtle distinction that we have to be cautious of in our faith. The coming of Faith in Jesus Christ is fully and completely in His divine Kingship. Our temptation will always be to try and insert ourselves into the equation as if our works contribute to the salvific nature.
 - "Jesus is my copilot." No. Get out of the cockpit. At best, we are the kid who gets the pilot wings from looking in the cockpit before the flight takes off.
 - Faith involves letting Jesus have His full reign and control over every aspect of our life.
 - Faith establishes Jesus Christ as King and Lord over all of who we are.

I put no stock in my ability to arrive at righteousness on my own. Yet, as we put our faith in Jesus Christ, as we build our life on the assured hope that comes from the work of Jesus Christ. He becomes incarnate and secures our victory on our behalf even though we had been dead in our sin. He brings the dead to life. He calls life into being. He does the impossible.

NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE

- *Luke 1:35-37 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. 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. For nothing will be impossible with God."*
- Gabriel continues to reveal the purpose and the execution of God's plan to Mary. Her relative, Elizabeth in her old age was already pregnant, in the sixth month of pregnancy.
 - Elizabeth would have been a known relative.
 - But, as you will recall, Zechariah had been hiding Elizabeth away from people, not revealing her pregnancy to others.
 - Her miracle would likely not have been known to Mary at this time.
 - Gabriel, then, is revealing information to Mary that she would have known could not be done by the ability of Zechariah and Elizabeth and had the only explanation that it would be by the will of God.
 - It would have been impossible, yet here we are.
 - And yet, this is miracle of Elizabeth's pregnancy is
- God does the impossible. In this narrative he runs the gamut of both reasons for someone to be unable to bear a child from being a virgin to being too old. And yet. God did.
- He is a God who does the impossible with the ease that you and I breathe. He work miracles in our daily life and on our eternity.
 - For some to say the age of miracles has passed is an abrogation and a denial of miracle of salvation that sees the dead come to life. God still works miracles even today.
- Faith though, doesn't demand the sign and explanation that Zechariah demanded but stands firm in the truth that God is able to do everything and immeasurably more.
- Faith stands in knowing that God gives and God takes for His glory, not our understanding. But that whether it be rain or shine, blessed be the name of the Lord.
- For Mary, the impossible was not just that she would conceived a child by the power of the Holy Spirit and not the power of man.
- *Matthew 19:23-26 And Jesus said to his disciples, "Truly, I say to you, only with difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God." When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished, saying, "Who then can be saved?" But Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."*
 - Faith comes by the work of God who establishes the truth of creation in His being and His ability, not ours.
 - No amount of richness, no amount of status, no amount of self-idolatry can produce the salvation that can only be produced by the work of Jesus Christ.
 - Mankind, being dead in our sin has been raised to life by the work of Christ on the cross.

- The greatest miracle that has ever been done throughout the history of mankind is that the dead come alive in Jesus Christ and when he comes again, He will rescue His people to Himself.
- Our role, then, is not to strive to earn approval, but to walk in faith, knowing that God goes before us and that He is both good and able.
- What would happen to our prayer life if we genuinely believed that God does the impossible?
 - We would pour out our hearts, earnestly seeking the Lord, while standing on the assured hope that no matter what happens, God is good and He has already saved me from my sins.
 - We would make God the first priority and the first we run to in times of need.

Nothing is impossible for the God of the universe who stands over all creation. He is the highest order of creation who sustains everything in His omnipotent hands.

RESPONSE OF DEVOTION

- *Luke 1:38, ESV 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.*
- Mary states that she is a servant of the Lord, willing to do anything for the sake of the Lord.
 - This was not some non-consensual type of relationship that some have attempted to describe it as.
 - She emphatically had been willing to give up of herself fully to the Lord.
 - She knew what it would mean to be pregnant and not married. She knew that, although not often given, that a just punishment in the eyes of others would be to stone her for infidelity. She knew she would bear the weight of the burden and her life would never be the same again.
 - Yet, she willingly accepted all of this, not out of some reluctant submission but out of a deep joy of knowing that a life in the Spirit and in the perfect plan of God would be better than anything else.
- As scripture talks about being a servant, as being a slave, this is not the type of servitude and slavery that western culture, specifically American history, understands it as.
 - That part of American history is a stain on our reputation that has had lasting effects even today. People are not property and whatever a person's race, they have worth in the eyes of God and bear His image in their being.
 - Being a slave to the Lord is an exchange of our life for His life. Every part of who we are, the fullness of our being, belongs to Christ as we abide in Him, in faith.
 - In truth, apart from Jesus, our life is dead anyway. Sin, being rebellion against God, separates us from the source of life. While the flesh may offer some promises of pleasures, pride, and prosperity, they ultimately leave us dejected, destitute, and dead.
 - A life in the flesh is dead anyway.

- The gift of God offers a life in Jesus Christ, the author and perfecter of everything. We dedicate our lives to following Jesus as servants of Him, knowing that He is a good and perfect God.
- We give up what is already dead for the sake of coming truly alive to the greatest good in all existence.
- *1 Corinthians 6:19-20 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.*
- Faith is not this thing that we just believe in our head and go “Oh that’s cool.”
 - That would be knowledge or worse, trivia.
 - Faith goes beyond a mere understanding or thinking and is translated into our actions.
 - Faith, in essence, is how our life is expressed differently when
- Believing in faith built on the foundation of hope submits our lives fully to the work of the Lord.
- Throughout the Old Testament, when the God and the prophets spoke of the promises of God, they spoke about them as realities not as potential futures.
 - The grammar of Hebrew works a little differently than our English understand. They don’t have past or present in the traditional sense, but completed, incomplete, and wishful type of actions.
- Faith is expressed in what we do. It trades our life for the life of Jesus Christ, nothing that true life is found in Him.

The angel Gabriel announced to Mary that she would bear the Savior of the world. Knowing the goodness of God, and the favor that rested upon her, she gave her life for the sake of the Gospel. Faith comes from Jesus Christ coming into the world and assuring the hope of life that He is love and that He is the life for all who seek Him.

Discipleship Group Guide for Sermon Talk Back

Open in Prayer

Open up your gathering in prayer. Ask that God would reveal His word to you and move in and through your conversation to transform and renew you to glorify Him.

Read Luke 1:26-38

Have someone in the group read Acts 1:26-38 together. After reading it, ask to see if anyone has any immediate questions or observations from the text.

Discussion Questions

1. Compare and contrast the announcement to Mary that she would be carrying a child to the announcement to Zechariah that Elizabeth would be carrying a child. What is similar? What is different?
2. How does Mary display faith in God by her reaction to the news?
3. What is faith? What does it mean to have faith? What changes when our faith is in Jesus Christ?
4. What are some of the things we tend to put our faith in other than the Lord? What do these desires promise us? How do these things fail to deliver on those promises?
5. What would happen to our prayer life if we fully believed that God is able to do the impossible? How can we encourage one another to walk in faith?

Prayer Requests

Challenge for the Week

Advent is a time to look at the second coming of Jesus Christ by looking at His first. As we celebrate the coming of Jesus Christ, we know that He brings hope with Him. This week pray that God would fill you with life abundantly to experience the hope of living fully in Christ.