



Nativity

THE CHRISTMAS STORY

NATIVITY 01/03: **THE ANTICIPATION**

Christmas, unlike other holidays, is not just a day on the calendar. It's a season. That means that anticipation is part of the experience. This was especially true for the Jewish people in the first century. They had spent a couple of thousand years anxiously anticipating the coming Messiah. When Mary gave birth to Jesus, he fulfilled the prophecy the world had been waiting for! But it wasn't what anyone was expecting. The story of Mary, a virgin from the middle of nowhere, gives us a glimpse at God's heart for his people. Let's examine three powerful quotes from this Christmas passage to evaluate what they mean for both Mary and you.



BIG IDEA:

This Christmas, give God your heart. You won't believe the victory that happens on the other side of your surrender.



SMALL GROUP OBJECTIVE:

We will aim to be like Mary and look for ways to actively serve others and serve God.



SCRIPTURE USED:

Luke 1:28-38

TEACHING OUTLINE

OPENING:

- **Christmas, unlike other holidays, is not just a day on the calendar. It's a season.**
 - That means that anticipation is part of the experience.
 - We count down the days until Christmas.
 - We wait for our gifts to arrive by mail.
 - We anxiously anticipate the first day of Christmas break.
 - Anticipation is part of the Christmas celebration.
- **This was especially true for the Jewish people in the first century.**
 - They had spent a couple of thousand years anxiously anticipating the coming Messiah.
 - What does "Messiah" mean, you ask?
 - Great question. Messiah derives from the Hebrew word "mashiach," which means "chosen one." The Greek translation is the word "Christos," meaning Christ.
 - The name "Jesus Christ" is the same as "Jesus the Messiah."
 - Scripture predicted a savior -- Messiah, Christos, or Christ.
 - The Old Testament was grounded in the belief that a Messiah would rescue God's people (Isaiah 42:1; 61:1–3).
 - Israel prayed for the Messiah's arrival.
 - For centuries, God seemed quiet.
 - However, an angel was about to interrupt the silence in a little town named Galilee — the home of Mary.

BIBLE STUDY:

Luke 1:28-38

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.

CONTEXTUALIZING THIS PASSAGE

- By all accounts, Mary was just a normal teenage girl. All of that was about to change.
 - She may have thought she lost her mind, but the angel assured her, "**do not be afraid; you have found favor with God.**"
 - The angel explained that she was going to give birth to the promised Messiah.
- Her eyes widened and her heart raced. "There is only one problem, Mr. Angel" she rebutted, "I cannot possibly be pregnant."
 - The angel assured her that a miracle had taken place.
 - She was going to give birth even though that was impossible.
 - **The story of Mary, a virgin from the middle of nowhere, gives us three glimpses at God's heart for his people.**
 - **Let's examine three powerful quotes from this Christmas passage and evaluate what they mean for both Mary and you.**

APPLICATION

- **"You have found favor." (Luke 1:29)**
 - The qualifier of this entire conversation was Mary's "favor" with God.
 - Finding favor means gaining an unmerited award, benefit, or blessing. What comes to mind when you think of favor? For most people, it's probably someone doing you a favor?
 - Maybe they helped you move furniture, covered for you at work, gave you a ride, or helped you out of a tough situation.
 - It's when someone does something nice for you that they don't have to do.
 - From most people's perspectives, her circumstances were actually far from favorable.
 - She was a poor pregnant teenager.
 - People would undoubtedly ask questions, and she had to reply, "this is a miraculous pregnancy."
 - Can you imagine the harsh rumors she endured?
 - In this culture, her pregnancy wasn't good news.
 - Since she was unmarried, it was a death sentence.
 - She could literally be executed based on the legal system of her hometown.
 - That's far from favor, don't you think? How can this angel say that she has "found favor?" - Because the baby in her belly is going to change the entire universe.
 - Mary was more blessed than she could even comprehend. God put her in charge of raising and caring for the Messiah, the world's perfect Deliverer.
 - Her baby would ultimately restore humanity's relationship with God-Mary's included.
 - I want to remind you that you have found favor too.
 - Even if your situation seems unfair and unfavorable, God's favor is all over you.
 - He's given you blessings that you cannot even imagine.
 - In God's Kingdom, we are all recipients of the greatest favor of all because Jesus has ensured and secured our salvation through Jesus.

- **"Nothing is impossible for God." (Luke 1:37)**
 - Luke speaks of two supernatural pregnancies, not just one. The angel points out Mary's aunt's pregnancy as proof that God can do anything.
 - Why? Because Elizabeth was physically unable to have a child due to her age.
 - It was impossible for her to conceive. But it wasn't impossible for God.
 - Mary's virgin birth is so much bigger than a Christmas story. It is a picture of God doing the impossible with improbable circumstances.
 - What God did with Mary and Elizabeth, he can do with you too.
 - What is in front of you that seems impossible? Invite God to invade that impossibility.
 - God does the impossible throughout scripture.
 - What are the impossibilities in front of you?
 - Do you desire harmony this holiday, but your family is plagued with conflict? Ask God to do the impossible.
 - Do you want to actually find peace even though your mind has been in a meltdown? Ask God to do the impossible.
 - Do you want the coming year to bring new opportunities, blessings, and favor? Ask God to do the impossible.
 - God won't always move the way you think. I doubt Mary's plan included an unexpected pregnancy, but it was the greatest gift she ever received.
 - Invite God into your most improbable circumstances and ask Him to show up and show off.
 - He won't always move according to your preferences, but He will always move according to His purpose.
 - I assure you, his purpose is far greater than your preference.
 - **This was a lot to take in for Mary, but take a look at her response.**

- **"I am the servant of the Lord." (Luke 1:38)**
 - Do you want to see the impossible unfold? Take a note from Mary's reaction to God's revelation. She said, "I am the servant of the Lord. Let it be to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38).
 - God only requires one thing of you — to be willing.
 - Humble yourself to His will. Surrender to His power.
 - God moves when we move out of the way.
 - Mary chose to surrender to God, which made a paramount difference in human history.
 - She could have resisted.
 - She could have questioned.
 - She could have kept quiet, ran away, or ignored it.
 - What is God calling you to do?
 - Be a willing servant and allow God to pave the way towards His ultimate promise.
 - She trusted God to do what He said, so she surrendered. We should do the same.
 - She surrendered to God's mission even though it was socially awkward.
 - We should do the same.
 - Authentic servants don't use God to get their way.
 - They let God use them to get His way. Do you see an important distinction there?
 - Let's all be like Mary -- willing, trusting, and open to doing whatever it takes. Your assignment is to serve. - Leave the rest up to God.

Landing:

- Mary's life was marked with unthinkable miracles. She got to raise the Son of God.
 - She got to watch him perform countless miracles.
 - She held Him as he took his last breath on a Roman cross.
 - All of that was made possible with God's favor, His invitation to the impossible, and her servant's heart.
 - This Christmas, give God your heart.
 - You won't believe the victory that happens on the other side of your surrender.

— Break for Small Groups —

TALK IT OUT

Go through these questions with your circle. Be honest. Be open. Talk through the tough stuff.

Ice Breaker: Go around your circle and share this week's highs and lows. What was the best part of your week and what was the lowest part of your week?

- What's one thing that stood out to you from today's message?
- When the angel came to Mary, what do you think was her immediate reaction? What did the angel say to her?
- In your own words, was the angel's message difficult for Mary to hear? Why or why not?
- What doubts or concerns do you think Mary may have had about God's message?
- Mary's response to the prophecy was "I am a servant of the Lord!" What can we learn from her response?
- What is an impossible circumstance that you're facing or have faced? How can/did you bring that before God?
- Application: How can you position yourself as a servant this season? We should all aim to be like Mary and look for ways to actively serve others and serve God.

