

“THE WITNESS OF GABRIEL II”—LUKE 1:26-38—APRIL 15, 2018

INTRODUCTION

- Share background information—Resident, Seminary, Family.
- When was the last time you felt like you were asked to do something that was too big for you to handle? When was the last time you felt like God was calling you to do the impossible?
 - Parenting – Taking Jayden home from the hospital.
- **Big Idea: When God does the impossible - what will be our response?**
 - Billboard (3 Scenes): 1) The Announcement (26-33), The Question (34-36), The Response (37-38).

SCENE 1 – THE ANNOUNCEMENT (26-33)

- **Verse 26-28** - Similar to last week, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to deliver an announcement – but to an obscure town to an unlikely person:
 - **Nazareth** – remote town of probably 500.
 - **Betrothed Virgin** – Probably 13 years old, legally bound to Joseph but not consummate.
- **Verse 28-30** – The Angel says that Mary is favored (the word derives from the Greek word for grace).
 - Some would say that the reason Mary is chosen is because of her worth – rather the text says that **Mary is the object of divine grace!** This is repeated in both vv. 28 and 30.
 - **Luther: “O Mary, you are blessed. You have a gracious God. No woman has ever lived on earth to whom God has shown such grace.”**
- **Verse 31-33** – This is the announcement proper. Because we are so conditioned on hearing this passage read, I think we miss the grandeur of what is happening here. We miss the staggering good news that Gabriel presents.
 - **We would all agree that this is important – or at least, it sounds important – but why does it matter that Jesus came in the line of David?**
 - **Illustration of Sunset Picture in New Mexico with Panoramic view.**
- In order to understand the full weight of this, we need to do some work through the Bible. Can we for 3-5 minutes put on our school hats and walk through some stuff super-fast?
 - **Gen 1-3 – Creation & Fall** – God had created a perfect world for humans to flourish – but mankind chose to rebel and pursue their own way. Even in the initial rebellion, God is radically committed to his people with Gen 3:15, “*Genesis 3:15, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”*”
 - **Gen 12 – Abraham** – Despite the rebellion still present in the earth, God is committed to bringing blessing and restoration to his created order, and does so through a promise given to Abraham.
 - **Exodus Narrative** – God’s people are in slavery to Egypt and God raises up a deliver named Moses. The people are redeemed by the hand of God – this is the Old Testament redemption story. **1500BC.**
 - **Nation of Israel’s** – The people of God enter the land that God promised them in Gen 12 yet there is continual rebellion and hard-hearts. Israel wants a King like the nations

and yet, the Lord is their King – but God gives them the desires of their heart. Many, many wicked kings rule over Israel and lead them into disobedience.

- God gives David a promise in **2 Samuel 7:12-13; 16.**
- **Rebellion & Repentance** – The nation of Israel will continue to ebb and flow in these two situations.
- **Messianic Hope** – Amidst the chaos of the world (wars, exiles, etc) – God is giving his people Messianic hope that one day, someone will come as the perfect Messiah to represent His people faithfully. See Isaiah 53, 53, 55.
- **Northern Kingdom Falls** – Because of Israel’s disobedience, Israel is exiled to Assyria in the 7th century.
- **Southern Kingdom Falls** – Because of Judah’s disobedience, Judah is exiled to Babylon in the 6th century.
- **400 Years of Silence**
- **The fullness of time has come in Jesus (Galatians 4:4-6)**
 - **This series is called “Witness” where we are walking through Luke to see how characters’ witness to the character of God. This passage is witnessing to the faithfulness of God.**
- **Verse 32-33** – Can we now see the importance of Jesus coming? He is the one who has been promised for centuries. Thousands of people have put their hope in his coming. **You need to hear this church – you have been grafted in to a story that God has been writing for literally thousands of years. He has preserved his people through famine, war, peril, rebellion, sickness, and a host of other things – to where you stand today.**
 - **He will be great** = When “great” is used w/o a qualifier, it refers to God alone in the OT.
 - **Most High** = A title reserved alone for God in the OT.
 - **Throne of David / Reign Forever** = This Messiah will establish a Kingdom that will never end and is the fulfillment of every OT promise.

SCENE 2 – THE QUESTION (34-37)

- **Verse 34** – You’ll notice that this is *similar but not the same* to Zechariah’s question in the previous narrative. Any rightful person would respond this way to the news given to Mary? How can she conceive of a Son if she is still a virgin?
- **Verse 35** – The angel Gabriel gives the answer to Mary’s question. The Holy Spirit will “come upon you,” and the power of the Most High will overshadow her.
 - These terms do not connote sexual interaction – as the word “overshadow” recalls the divine cloud that overshadowed the tabernacle in the Old Testament.
 - **Overshadow** = The Divine Presence of God used to dwell in a *place* but now dwells in a *person*.
 - **This series is called “Witness” where we are walking through Luke to see how characters’ witness to the character of God. In this narrative, Mary is witnessing to the presence of God. Throughout the narrative, the angel says to Mary, “The Lord is with you,” which comes to a head now with the Divine Presence overshadowing her.**
 - **God is a God of presence—he is there for you. He is by your side. He walks with you. No matter where you go, how far you run—God’s presence is near.**

- **Holy / Son of God** = In this passage, we see that Jesus is both God and man; because he is conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus is *holy* but because he comes through Mary, he is fully man.
- **Verse 36-37** – The Angel is providing evidence for the prophecy given to Mary. If God can produce a child in an old barren woman, cannot God also produce a child in a virgin?
 - This leads to the angel proclaiming “For nothing will be impossible with God...”
 - Some of you this morning need to hear this word spoken to you over and over again. *NOTHING is impossible for God.* If God can make an old barren woman conceive, a virgin conceive—what else is he capable of?

SCENE 3 – THE RESPONSE (38)

- **Verse 38** – We have to notice the comparison drawn between the two stories here in Luke 1. When the Angel gives the prophecy to Zechariah, he doubts and is disciplined; when the Angel gives the prophecy to Mary, she believed in God’s word that he is faithful and able to bring about what he said.
 - **Servant of the Lord** = The more appropriate term is “slave,” which can convey full and complete surrender. She does not object, does not ask for a sign—she simply has faith and believes in the word of the Lord. She becomes his slave or servant—surrendering everything over to Him.
- Again, I think because we are so accustomed to hearing this story in church, some of the force is lost on us. Imagine how much it would have cost for Mary to believe this? Imagine how much it would cost for Mary to have such faith?
 - She would be giving up her reputation – women that were betrothed *do not get pregnant*. Imagine the rumors spreading around a town of 500 people? Imagine some of the hateful speech that could have come against her?
 - Let’s be honest – Mary was also signing up for the physical pains that were coming. Being pregnant is not easy and delivering a baby is surely not easy.
 - Because of her decision, Mary would endure many hardships—feeling to Egypt, the scare of having all the children being killed, the controversy of Jesus’ life, and further the death of her son!
- Returning again to our Big Idea: **When God does the impossible - what will be our response?**
 - What would your response be? Would you doubt? Would you demand a sign? Would you negotiate the terms? Or would you respond with the faith of Mary? Would you respond “I am the servant of the Lord – do what you want, Lord!”
 - Mary lived in complete dependence upon God to do the impossible. She knew that physically it was impossible for her to conceive while being a virgin – yet she believed that God could do the impossible.
 - **For myself and us—perhaps we rarely are dependent on the Lord because we don’t believe God calls us to impossible tasks; or we never live in dependence because we never walk into the impossible with God?**
 - **Illustration of First Home and Praying a Ton!**
 - While not “impossible,” it felt impossible to me – and I lived in complete dependence upon the Lord.
- **So when God does the impossible, how will you respond? How we will respond? Where should we start?**

- I believe that we must start with the condition of our all hearts—if we were honest, all of completely broken before God. We have disobeyed, lived lives that are selfish, and have rebelled against God. There is a great chasm between God and us. We cannot ever reconcile the relationship with God. No amount of working or striving will ever be enough. To use the language of our text—it is impossible for us to be in relationship with God again on our own terms.
 - But what is impossible with us is not impossible with God—God is able to do the impossible. And he does the impossible by dealing with our sin once and for all.
 - Let's return back to the passage in Galatians 4 mentioned before, “[4] But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, [5] to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.”
 - Those of us who were disobedient and gone astray have now been brought back into the family of God because of the work of Christ. When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his son—to redeem those under the law, so that we might become sons. God has done the impossible. He has reconciled those who were far from him. He has done the impossible.
 - Now, what will be your response? Will you scoff at this? Will you reject this? Or will you be like Mary, respond with faith and trust in the good news that God has brought to you.
- God has done the impossible—he has been faithful to his promise given thousands of years ago. He has sent Christ to be the fulfillment of the Law and the Promise. He has sacrificed himself for our sins. He has reconciled us back to himself. He has grafted us into a story that he has been writing for thousands of years. **How will you respond?**