



1: Servants of the Lord (Luke 1::13-17, 26-38)

The Christmas story begins with folks who were servants of the Lord, willing to trust and obey Him even when they didn't know the answer to all their questions. As we recall these ancient events may each of us ask this contemporary question: "Am I a SERVANT of the LORD?"

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teachingnotes

God was silent for 400 years as the Jewish people held onto the last prophetic message from Malachi - that **Elijah** would return to prepare the way for **the Lord**.

Malachi 3:1 (LSB) Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me. And **the Lord**, whom you seek, **will suddenly come to His temple**; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming," says Yahweh of hosts.

Malachi 4:5-6a (LSB) Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and awesome day of Yahweh. "And **he will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers**, lest I come and strike the land, devoting it to destruction."

ELIJAH 850 BC	450 YEARS 850-400 BC	MALACHI 400 BC
MALACHI 400 BC	400 YEARS 400 BC-1 BC	ZECHARIAH 1 BC

The Jewish people waited generation after generation, for 400 years (from Malachi's prophecy) with no sign of Elijah's return.

The angel Gabriel appeared to Zechariah and revealed that this promise was about to be fulfilled. A baby was to be born to this childless couple, despite their old age.

Luke 1:13-17 (NIV) But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John. He will be a joy and delight to you, and **many will rejoice because of his birth**, for **he will be great in the sight of the Lord**. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and **he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born**. He will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. And **he will go on before the Lord**, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—**to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.**"

Messengers would enter a town before the king and proclaim that **the King is coming**. But **what of the King he prepares the way for? When we HE show up?** Today we hear what is likely the eyewitness account of Mary as she tells the story to Dr. Luke.

Luke 1:26-27 (NIV) In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, **God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth**, a town in Galilee, **to a virgin** pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was **Mary**.

The word **angel** is (Greek *angelos*) means 'messenger'. There are 2 types of *angelos* - meaning 'messengers' - *earthly messengers* like John the Baptist & *heavenly messengers* like Michael & **Gabriel** (the only 2 names of angels mentioned in Scripture). But the angel is **NOT** the focus of the story. He is only the messenger of the most wonderful MESSAGE: The King is Coming!

You would think this kind of announcement would be trumpeted from the temple of God in Jerusalem, but God sends Gabriel to a young, peasant girl in an insignificant town.

4 Facts about Mary & Joseph

1. **Mary lived in Nazareth** and this is where the angel Gabriel is sent.

- Nazareth is obscure & insignificant, never mentioned in the Jewish writings of the Old Testament, the Talmud, nor the writings of Josephus. There are no major trade routes there and it was far away from the important centers of Jewish culture, like the Temple (over 60 miles away in Jerusalem).
- Nazareth was even referred to as "Galilee of the Gentiles" (Isa. 9:1; Matt. 4:15) because it bordered Gentile regions. Nazareth did not have a good name among most Jews as they thought interaction with Gentiles meant contaminated

morals. Years later when Phillip tells Nathanael that they have found the Messiah, who is from **Nazareth**, Nathanael says, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:45-46) Others were shocked to hear that Jesus had come from **a town in Galilee** (John 7:41). Luke (the author of this writing) was a Gentile writing to Theophilus, another Gentile. This message was for all nations...it still is.

2. **Mary was a virgin.** It was the ancient norm that a Jewish woman would remain a virgin until her marriage ceremony. Sex is a great gift, intended for marriage alone. Mary believed this...so Mary waited for her future marriage.

3. **Mary was pledged to Joseph.**

Joseph's father would have approached Mary's father and struck a deal, a formal agreement. After the payment and signature or verbal oath, the couple was engaged. This engagement was legally binding, and any sexual contact with person was considered adultery. The engagement could not be broken except through divorce (Matt 1:19), because the couple was considered husband and wife at this point (Matt 1:19-20, 24).

The normal age of the woman for engagement at this point was 12-13 years old. Mary would now be engaged with just 1 year until the marriage ceremony & moving in with her husband. During that year, Joseph would have been preparing a home for his new bride while Mary was living in purity & preparing to move away and invest her life in her husband.

② Parents - Are we giving our teenagers freedom without responsibility or are we using each day to train them to become husbands, wives, daddies, mamas - responsible members of society?

4. **Joseph was a descendent of King David**

This fact will become very significant to this story. The Jews believed the Messiah would have to come from David's family. Matthew notes that Jesus asked the Pharisees this question:

Matthew 22:41-42 (NIV) While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, "What do you think about **the Messiah?** Whose son is he?" "**The son of David,**" they replied.

The religious leaders understood that the Messiah was to be in the family tree of David.

Luke 1:28 (NIV) The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! **The Lord is with you.**"

What greater greeting could there be! Just as Noah "found favor in the eyes of the Lord" (Gen 6:8), so had Mary. Both were used to bring salvation for those facing God's judgement.

You are highly favored. *God loves Mary personally & passionately. The Lord is with you!* *You are a simple girl in an insignificant town...but You aren't alone...and YOU are NOT insignificant. The Lord is with you!*

X This is where Catholics get their prayer to Mary, "**Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee...**" But the Greek text doesn't speak of Mary being the dispenser of grace. Mary can't offer you forgiveness. She was a godly young lady, but she was not and IS NOT our redeemer. She needed to be redeemed & forgiven - just like us.

No one had heard from God in 400 years yet now, this peasant girl was hearing from an angel sent by God.

Luke 1:29-33 (NIV) Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. **You will conceive and give birth to a son,** and you are to **call him Jesus.** He will be great and will be called **the Son of the Most High.** The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and **he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.**"

In Hebrew, **Jesus** is '**Yeshua**' (pronounced Ye-shU-a), meaning "Yahweh is salvation." While **Yeshua** was a very common name for men at that time, the description of *THIS Yeshua* was absolutely **UNIQUE**.

He will be great; the Son of the Most High. John the Baptist was to be a "prophet" of the Most High (Luke 1:76), but **Jesus** would be **the Son of the Most High.**

He will reign on David's throne forever. God had promised David his throne would continue forever if his son Solomon was faithful to the Lord and His laws (1 Chronicles 28:7). Solomon failed and by 586 B.C. (Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and took many Jews captive) no Davidic king had sat on the throne in almost 600 years. What Solomon had failed to do, the coming King of Israel would fulfill. His reign and **his kingdom will never end.**

Luke 1:34-35 (NIV) "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So **the Holy One to be born will be called the Son of God.**"

② Do you see God in 3 persons in this passage? **The Holy Spirit will come on you,** God the Father - **the Most High, will overshadow you,** and the **holy one** will be IN you - that's **the Son of God.**

Luke 1:36-37 (NIV) Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. For **no word from God will ever fail.**"

This last phrase is often translated as "For nothing will be impossible with God" (NET, ESV, NAS, CSB), but is literally "for not impossible will be every word with God."¹

The angel speaking to Mary reminds us of Yahweh God asking Sarah a question after promising that she would birth Isaac in her old age.

Genesis 18:14 (LSB) **Is anything too difficult for Yahweh?** At the appointed time I will return to you, at this time next year, and Sarah will have a son.

- Old women can't have children...virgins can't have babies...**unless God says so.**

God still does what man struggles to believe. God still heals body & soul. God still mends relationships. What looks impossible to us is NOT impossible with Him, even when we can't see the end result.

Like many of us, Mary doesn't have all her questions answered yet. Yet she can trust that God's words spoken through the angel will not fail. The future isn't clear, but the Father's will is: Mary will conceive and give birth to a son, and call him **Jesus**. With no answers to all her questions, and facing this uncertain future, **Mary responds...**

Luke 1:38 (NIV) **"I am the Lord's servant,"** Mary answered. **"May your word to me be fulfilled."**
Then the angel left her.

What a great example this teenager is for us! She demonstrates the heartbeat of **the Lord's servant**. "Whatever You ask and whatever the cost, **whatever You want is what I want.** I don't understand it all, but I trust You. Use me to accomplish your plan."

❓ Are you the Lord's servant?



▶ PRAY IT.

Start your day praying..."I am the Lord's servant. Whatever You ask and whatever the cost, whatever You want is what I want. I don't understand it all, but I trust You. Use me to accomplish your plan."

▶ LIVE IT.

Attempt to **BE the Lord's servant throughout the day.** Serve Him with each decision & situation.

▶ CHECK IT.

Before you go to sleep, ask yourself: "*Have I been the Lord's servant TODAY?*"
Then wake up tomorrow and Pray it, Live it, & Check it again.

heretoserveyou

Have questions and need some help? ...real soon...how about now? Please **call** or **text** us soon!

* Contact **Jackie** (850-673-1582), **Christy** (850-673-9764), **Caleb** (864-315-8015), **Gary** (850-673-2507), **Betty** (850-973-3266), or another follower of Jesus soon!

* Or call our **deacons & wives: Alan & Christy Androski** (850-464-1428), **Steve & Debbie Bass** (850-673-7952), **Tim & Joni Hughey** (850-464-1156), **Mark & Dot Mancil** (850-253-5405), **Boss & Amelia Mulkey** (850-464-6717), or **Tom & Martha Waddail** (850-973-0011).

¹ R. Kent Hughes, Luke: That You May Know the Truth, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1998), 35.

discussion questions

Take some time to discuss these questions with your family, friends, or group.

1. **Read Malachi 3:1 & 4:5-6.** Discuss the significance of what this prophet was to do and who he was preparing the Jewish people for. **Read Luke 1:13-17** and discuss how John fulfills the prophecy from Malachi.
2. **Read Luke 1:26-27.** How does knowing the background of Mary, Joseph, their engagement, Nazareth, & being a descendent of King David add to the significance of this historical story?
3. **Read Luke 1:31-33.** What 2 characteristics of **Yeshua** (Jesus) prove Him to be absolutely unique? Discuss why these 2 characteristics are so significant.
4. **Read Luke 1:36-37.** How does the pregnancy of Elizabeth & Mary prove that nothing is too difficult for God? On a side note...did God have to use a sexual union between people to create Eve? (see Genesis 2:20-24)?
5. Share a personal story when God proved that NOTHING is too difficult for Him. What are YOU facing that seems impossible at this point? (We will pray for you in a few moments.)
6. **Read Luke 1:38.** What if every person who claimed to follow Jesus responded like Mary - saying and living out - "I am the Lord's servant"? How can our lives find purpose & passion if we **Pray it** ("I am the Lord's servant"), **Live it**, & **Check it** this week?
7. What challenged you most from today's teaching? Explain your answer.
8. Share your prayer needs and lift each other before the King.