

Luke 1:26-38,46-55

Mary's Story

Image Church // Untold Stories of Christmas #1

MPS: Your circumstances don't change your standing before God. We have to trust God's plan more than our plan.

Introduction

Well good morning Image Family, I am excited to be able to bring the Word this morning, for those of you that don't know my name is Aaron Turner and I am the executive pastor here...

And this morning I get the chance to kick-off our new series called **The Untold Stories of Christmas** where we're going to be looking at the stories of 4 people who played a role in, or around the birth of Jesus...

Each of these people have a very unique story that's full of surprises and challenges... But what we're going to see is that God is in control and circumstances don't define us, **Jesus does!**

I don't know about you, but there's a lot of things I wish I could control! Time is one of them, I don't know about you but this year has flown by!

Can you believe but **Christmas is right around the corner**... and that means that there's going to be a lot going on... Christmas parties, shopping, traveling... *Oh yeah...*

- Let me ask you this, "Raise your hand if you're a 'Planner'?"
 - Like OCD Planner, you have to have a plan- like you will sit down and calendar out the month of December type-of-person?
- Ok you can put your hands down...

"Now how many of you would say that your spontaneous?" Raise your hands and hold them high...

- Those of you with your hand down, take a good look around because these are the people that you'll be taking care-of one day!

I hate taking the time to plan, but I hate not having a plan... So, by default I plan...

But some of you *LOVE* to plan, and the most devastating words to you are: **"There's been a change of plans"**

- See, I don't mind when plans change, I just can't stand it when plans change without my consent!

Well, let me prepare you for this Christmas season with words of wisdom from the great **Mike Tyson**: *"Everyone has a plan til they get punched in the face!"*

- Not every day do you hear him quoted in a sermon!

As great as Christmas is, it tends to be the time of year when people get punched in the face— and I am not talking about "Black Friday"— I'm talking about your plans getting moved all over the place— which, for many of you feels like being punch in the face!

[Transition]: Well, as bad as we think we have it, this morning we're going to be looking at the story of a lady, who I would say had the world's most abrupt change of plans the world has ever known!

*If you think that's a bold statement, just wait till you see what happens...

If you have your Bibles go ahead and turn to Luke Chapter 1...

If you don't have a Bible with you today we have one that we want to give you as our gift to you!

As you're turning there let me give you a little context... Luke who was a doctor, is the author, and he's writing a complete account of Jesus' life for a guy named Theophilus... And we're picking up right at the beginning of it, as Jesus' birth is begging to be announced...

Which brings us alongside a young girl named Mary...

Luke 1:26-38

26 In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, **27** to a virgin engaged, to a man named Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was **Mary**. **28** And the angel came to her and said, "Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you." **29** But she was deeply troubled by this statement, wondering what kind of greeting this could be. **30** Then the angel told her: "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.

I want you to just take a second and imagine what this might have been like for Mary... Now, don't think angel like **Clarence** from "*It's a Wonderful Life*" (some of you have no clue what I am talking about).

Think "mighty warrior," (book of Eli) and *BOOM*, out of nowhere standing right in front of Mary... And Mary's terrified thinking: "Oh no what does this mean?!" And Gabriel is like: "*Don't be afraid you have found favor with God*" And then He says:

31 Now listen: You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. **32** He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David. **33** He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and his kingdom will have no end." **34** Mary asked the angel, "How can this be, since I have not had sexual relations with a man?" **35** The angel replied to her: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore, the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. **36** "And consider your relative Elizabeth—even she has conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called childless. **37** For nothing

will be impossible with God." **38** "I am the Lord's servant," said Mary. "May it be done to me according to your word." Then the angel left her.

So, you got this young girl named Mary probably around the age of 16 or 17 who was currently engaged to a guy named Joseph (v.27).

Now, just like today engagement was a big deal and the wedding was an even bigger deal. So, you can imagine that Mary's probably thinking about all she has coming up in her life.

- She's already ordered all the white monogram shirts for the bridesmaids.
- She knows exactly what shoes she is going to wear under her wedding dress.
- And she finally found the perfect "cake-topper"
- The one thing she and Joseph still have to talk about is whether or not they are going to do a "**First Look**" or not!?!?

Seriously though, getting married back then was a HUGE deal! Taking that step in life was a defining moment for the man and the woman because in a lot of ways your value in society was based on your family.

And then out of nowhere, an Angel shows up and says: "*You are going to become pregnant and give birth to a Son*" ...

It was in that moment that the trajectory of her life would change forever... **Talk about a change of plans!**

We get all shook up because the Christmas party got moved from 6 to 7 and we have to pay the baby sitter and extra 10 bucks...

Now, for many people, they think of Mary as cute little blond headed, blue eyed girl with rosy red cheeks that fits nicely on their mantel and that's about it...

- But the truth is there's a whole lot more to Mary than that... in fact there's a lot that we can learn from Mary and her story...

For starters, you need to understand that she wasn't blond headed and she didn't have blue eyes with rosy red cheeks (*in other words she wasn't white*)...

She was Jewish, which means that she was very dark skinned with dark eyes and dark hair. It also means that she didn't speak English (*shocker right*)!

It's also important that you understand the implications of the message she receives from Gabriel... **So, let me lay it out for you...**

Her reputation would have been ruined... she and her fiancé lived apart so people would know that the baby wasn't his... She would have been looked at as a "**loose**" woman who was sleeping around on her fiancé and got pregnant...

Side note: That's an accusation that she could have been stoned for...

And it's a reputation that she would live with... Can you imagine trying to explain what happened to someone?

"I am engaged and pregnant with a baby that's not my husband's, actually I am not even married yet, we are engaged, but it's OK because an Angel came and told me this would happen- this is actually God's baby not mine!" ?!?

She would carry this baby **for 9 months** enduring all of the discomfort that comes along with it... she would **travel all over the place** at around 9 months pregnant only to **give birth in a small nasty stable!**

And on top of that she was poor and would be poor (Mary will reference this later)— Her husband was a blue-collar carpenter... He didn't get his dream job because he was Jesus' dad!

All in all, this would be a staggering start to Mary and Joseph's life together... Mary would be inconvenienced, uncomfortable, poor and looked down on...

But listen to this, as Mary's life came to a screeching halt, knowing the challenges that lied ahead, look what she says in **verse 38**:

38 "I am the Lord's servant." "May it be done to me according to your word."

***How in the world could a woman whose life literally got turned *Upside Down* say that? How could a woman who was about to endure so much, have that kind of **confidence**... that much trust in **who God is** and what He was going to do???

So, using Mary as an example, let's take a look at several things that we can learn from her this morning...

The first is:

1. Your circumstances don't change your standing

See, the reason why Mary was able to have so much confidence regardless of what's to come is because she understood her standing before God, and that the presence of God would be with her.

- In **verse 28** Gabriel says: **"The Lord is with you."**

So, Mary knew that God was with her, but look what else is declared to Mary, **Gabriel** says in **verse 30**: **"Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God."**

Check this out, the word "**favor**" there is the Greek word "**Charis**" which literally translates to the word "**Grace**"! Gabriel was saying that the "**Grace**" of God had come upon Mary!

Mary was a recipient of God's grace. Mary's favor (*or the grace that she had been given*) wasn't based on what she had done, or how good of a person she had been... **It was freely extended to her.**

It was the grace of God (*when she didn't deserve it*) that allowed her to have the blessing of birthing the long-awaited Savior of the world! See, ***her confidence wasn't waived because of what she was about to endure- because she recognized WHO was about to be born!***

It's that truth that causes her to break out in praise to God. *Look at **verse 46** and see what she says:*

My soul praises the **greatness** of the Lord,
47 and my spirit rejoices in God my **Savior,**

48 because he has looked with favor
on the humble condition of his servant.

Surely, from now on all generations
will call me blessed,

49 because the **Mighty One**
has done great things for me,
and his name is **holy.**

50 His mercy is from generation to generation
on those who fear him.

51 He has done a **mighty deed** with his arm;
he has scattered the proud

because of the thoughts of their hearts;

52 he has toppled the mighty from their thrones
and exalted the lowly.

53 He has satisfied the hungry with good things
and sent the rich away empty.

54 He has helped his servant Israel,
remembering his **mercy 55** to Abraham and his descendants forever,
just as he spoke to our ancestors.

See, Mary recognized what God was about to do. ***And it's in Mary's praise back to God that we get a beautiful picture of the gospel.***

That God is great and Holy- He is the Mighty One who, through and incredible act of mercy would make all things right.

The word Mercy means not getting what we deserve... We deserve death and eternal separation from God because of our sin. Because God is perfect and Holy, he demands perfection and Holiness.

That's a standard that we can't live up to- we are sinners and by nature who are separated from God. But God made a promise that He would make a way—because only a perfect God could provide the perfect remedy for imperfect people!

God's act of mercy would be sending Jesus to take our place, in his life he would accomplish what we never could have and in his death, he would take on the cross that we deserve!

Tim Keller says: "*Because [God's] holy, he had to do something about our sin. Because he's merciful, he wanted to do something. Because he's mighty, he was able something.*"

Mary recognized what God was about to do, let me ask you: ***Do you recognize what God has done?*** Have you trusted in the act of Mercy that God offers you through Christ?

Because when you do, you realize that your standing before God is no longer separated and condemned... It is a son or daughter!

See, ***it's not until you recognize your standing before God that you are able to endure your circumstances!***

I know that for many of you, the Christmas season represents a time where you feel pain, loss, and disappointment more than ever.

Maybe you're going through and incredibly difficult trial right now and "*Christmas cheer*" is the last thing on you mind...

Maybe you lost someone close to you, or maybe your struggling financially and you have no idea what Christmas is going to look like for you. Maybe you're having health problems or you lost your job.

Listen, your circumstances don't have to define you!

If Mary allowed her circumstances to define her then she would have missed what God was doing... ***Mary had to remember her standing before God- what God had declared over her!***

Pastor JD Greear says this: [When you look at Mary's life you see that] *"Being blessed and highly favored doesn't mean living a life without suffering and bad situations—it means having the presence and unalterable promises of God in those situations."*

The promise of God is that He will make all things new! ***You can endure because of what awaits you for all of eternity!*** All of the pain you're facing now, all of the injustices that are happening, all of the hurt- it will all go away for those that have trusted in Jesus!

Listen to me, you can't just look back at the cross, you have to look forward to what it promises! What Jesus did started something, it was the beginning of making all things new... Trust in the hope of the gospel and remember your inheritance in Christ!

We live in a world where we are seeing the direct result of our sin- there's evidence of brokenness all around us.

Life may be a living hell for you right now, but the gospel teaches you that in Christ, this is as close to hell as you will ever get!

One Pastor says: *"Hope is the expectation of future blessings and the confidence that the best is yet to come."*¹

Let's look at the second thing that we can learn from Mary:

2. Trust in God's plan more than your plan

There is no question that Mary had a game plan for her life, all girls do- *guys maybe not some much...*

But God had a different plan for Mary and Mary embraced it because she trusted in what God was doing.

That's hard for us because we love our plans- we want life to go exactly like we want it to go and we don't want anything to get in the way of it.

But what happens when things don't go as ***planned?*** How do we respond? See, it's when our plans fail that reveals where our trust really is.

We tend to place our trust in our plans, but here's the problem: ***If your plans always worked out just as you diagramed, there would never be a need for God!***²

Mary had to trust that God was in control and that he was going to be with her no matter what laid ahead. Is that true for you?

Don't let your plans make you miss God's purpose. Mary, was planning a wedding, but God was planning to change the world.³

I think that Mary would say to us, *"Plan for inconvenience"* because you're not in control, God is!

And listen, a change of plans can mean that life may become more difficult. It did for Mary. But in Mary's suffering God brought about salvation for the world!

Let me ask you this: *What if God used your suffering to lead to the salvation of many? What if the way that you suffered pointed others to Jesus?*

¹ JD Greear who adapted it from James MacDonald

² Steven Furtick: There's Been a Change of Plans: Luke 1:26-38

³ Steven Furtick: There's Been a Change of Plans: Luke 1:26-38

Paul is an incredible example of this, that guys plans got switched up all the time- most of the time by being thrown in prison as he was trying to spread the message of the gospel...

You would think that this would hinder his efforts, right? Look what he says in **Philippians 1:12-13**

¹² Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually advanced the gospel, ¹³ so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard, and to everyone else, that my imprisonment is because I am in Christ.

Oh, and on top of that 4 of the books in the NT he wrote while he was in prison!

Don't put God in a box, just because you're not where you want to be or things haven't worked out the way you wanted them to doesn't mean that God can't use you right where you are!

At the end of the day, you need to recognize that God's plan isn't hidden somewhere in the right job, or in the perfect church, and you don't have to set out on a **quest** to find it. He's already given us his plan- **JESUS!** Jesus was God's plan from the very beginning!

And His plan for your life is to know Jesus, live like Jesus and tell people about Jesus!

There are some of you that need to let go of you plans and respond like Mary did "I am the Lord's servant." "May it be done to me according to your word."

Conclusion

I don't know where you are today, I don't know what you're going through, and I don't know what you will go through in this life.

But what I do know is that God offers you the same thing that He offered Mary, **grace and mercy when you don't deserve it.**

A grace and a mercy that re-defines who you are, so that no matter what your going through you can have the confidence of knowing that your circumstances don't define you Jesus does.

And it's when you understand that grace that your able to endure, trusting in the plan that God's had from the very beginning... knowing that He will finish what he started, He **will make all things new.**

Trust in Him today, let me pray for us.

Notes:

No one remembers Mary for what she didn't do or for her shame in carrying a baby and an unmarried woman... we remember Mary as the mother of Jesus- Jesus defined Mary not her circumstances

When things happen in your life will you allow them to define you?

The announcement about Jesus comes privately to a humble woman in a little rural village. Luke contrasts the greatness of the setting of the announcement about John with the simplicity of the announcement about Jesus. The tone of the setting of Jesus' birth matches the tone of his ministry. The great God of heaven sends the gift of salvation to humans in a serene unadorned package of simplicity.

- Bock, D. L. (1994). [Luke: 1:1–9:50](#) (Vol. 1, p. 107). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

JD:

"nothing has changed in her circumstances, so she's not rejoicing in what God has given to her, but what God has become to her in Christ. At this point, Christ in her is the only exaltation she has; the baby in her womb is her only fullness; her only sustenance; her only salvation."

He is the treasure; he is the blessing. The problem with prosperity gospel. It prioritizes earthly blessings God can provide over God.

He was allowing Mary to taste the cross, because that is how he will bring salvation to the world.

- God has said that he will bring salvation to the world, in part, through our suffering.
 - Raudel's dad: Stage 3 cancer. "Here's my dad with a terrible prognosis, but more joy and contentment and happiness than people who have health. Raudel told

me he said recently, "I know it's ok to cry and hurt, but either we believe the Bible or we don't."

- ***Being blessed and highly favored does not mean living a life without suffering and bad situations—it means having the presence and unalterable promises of God in those situations. It means having a life in which God is committed to conforming you more toward the image of Jesus and bringing others to know Jesus through you.***

For example, he tells Mary what Jesus' name will be. Usually parents get to name their children, right? That's a very important symbol: It's your child; you assign a name to it based on what you hope for the child. It's yours.

- The angel said, "Not this one. God calls the shots with this one."
- This is a picture for us: If you are going to have the blessing of Jesus in your life, then we have got to surrender fully and let God call the shots, even in our most intimate relationships and our deepest dreams.

You can only be in 1 of 2 positions to Jesus: full surrender or rebellion.

- You can't negotiate your way into the favor of God. A lot of people do that... I'll be good. I'll give this. I'll shape up here. ○ There was a guy in the Bible, Saul... "To obey is better than sacrifice."
 - ONLY 2 POSTURES
- There's only one deal that God will make: all of Jesus for full and complete control of your life.

Habakkuk 3:17–19: [17] Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, [18] yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation. [19] GOD, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet

like the deer's; he makes me tread on my high places." (the mountains of pain)

A choice. You don't always feel like it. This Christmas, you can choose.

You can say: In Christ, I can lose all that I have, because in Christ is all that I need.

Mark Dever: "In Mary's song, there is a theme of reversal, and she is sure of Jesus' role as a ruler of heaven and earth. Mary and Elizabeth were both part of God's plan to reverse the order of how things are done."