

Luke 1:26-38,46-55

Mary's Christmas

Image Church // Christmas Wk. 1

Intro

Good morning Image family... Glad you're here...

*We're kicking off a new series this morning called **Christmas** where we're going to be looking at the realities surrounding the coming of Christ...*

*And what we're going to do is study the **circumstances and the people** that were involved in the very first Christmas...*

And we're going to see that there's a lot that we can learn from these Christmas characters that are sometimes referenced but rarely examined...

*Each one of them has a unique story, and a unique role surrounding the **inauguration of the very first Christmas**...*

*If you have your Bible go ahead and turn to **Luke 1**, this morning we're going to look at Mary's Christmas...*

Now, here's the thing about Mary, she's often very misrepresented...

Blond hair and her blue eyes and rosy-red cheeks...

- That's not what she looked like... 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*)!

Or we have her perfectly put together peacefully sitting by the manger scene in this serene moment as the song **Silent Night** plays in the background...

- *I've been a part of the birth of 3 children and there ain't nothing peaceful or serene about it!*
- Meanwhile, Mary just traveled forever and gave birth in a barn...
- And on top of that she has a newborn among animals- there's nothing silent about that!

Here's something else that we do, we limit our view of Mary to just this one night... And we overlook the amazing story that leads to this incredible night...

The truth is there's a lot that we can learn from Mary's Christmas experience that we're going to see this morning...

Speaking of Christmas, it's going to be here before we know it... 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?
 - **This is my wife BTW...**
- Ok you can put your hands down...

Now how many of you would say that you're 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 you'll be taking care of one day!*
- *They will also be the people who will have more fun than you!*

Here's the thing though, regardless of where you fall, chances are you're not crazy about hearing this line: **There's been a change of plans...** It's not spontaneous, just an inconvenience at that point!

Well, this morning we're going to watch as Mary experiences a **change of plans...** **Where we're going to learn: how can we have the faith to move forward when things seem hard?** (MPS)

And that's what we want to do this morning, so let's dive in and take a look...

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.

Now, I want you to notice something really interesting, the angel comes and says **Greetings favored woman, the Lord is with you...**

And here's Mary's response: she is deeply troubled by this statement... *Mary's a real person like us- this humanizes her!*

Mary's anxiety kicks in, she starts to worry, she's scared... She's wondering what this greeting is going to mean for her, what is God going to ask of her, what's God going to do with her?!?

For many of us, this is a picture of our response to God so often when we sense that He's calling us to something...

There are some of you right now who know that God's calling you to something and this is exactly what you're feeling...

- God's calling you to start a bible study at work, to share the gospel with a neighbor or co-worker, to be more generous with you money, or your time, or to leverage your gifts more...
- Maybe it's stepping out of your comfort zone for the sake of the mission, maybe it's starting an initiative, or lead somewhere in the church?!?

And right now you sitting in the midst of fear... You're afraid of what this is going to mean for you... How much it's going to cost you?

You're afraid of failure, or afraid of what people will think, or afraid that it will be hard or that you won't be the right fit...

Mary's right there with you, she's afraid of what God might ask of her... **But I want you to see what the angel says to her in the midst of her fear...**

Verse 30 Then the angel told her: "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God."

The angel says don't be afraid, stop fearing... You have no reason to be concerned... And here's why he assures her with this important phrase... **you have found favor with God...**

The word **favor** is the word *Charis* in the Greek and it also means **grace...**

What I want you to see is that this **favor, this grace** this isn't something that Mary earned, it's something that God gives her, that He declares over her in this moment...

And it's because of this **favor, this grace of God** that Mary has no need to be afraid...

Here's the thing the word **favor** would become a key term in the book of Acts to describe what God does for His people out of His good pleasure...¹

IOW: what we see through Mary is a **picture of what God would do for us through Christ...**

Through Christ God freely extends His favor and grace to us...

¹ Darrell L. Bock, *Luke: 1:1-9:50*, vol. 1, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, 111.

Which means that in the same way that Mary had no reason to be afraid of what God was about to call her to, you and I have no reason to be afraid when it comes to what God is calling us to...

Here's the 1st thing I want you to see through Mary here when it comes to how we can continue on when things seem hard: **1. God's call on your life is not absent of His favor over your life.**

God's favor over your life enables you to answer the call on your life... **It gives you the faith to move forward when things may be hard.**

Listen, you have the grace and favor of the Lord! It's been declared over you and freely given to you, the question is will you be faithful to walk in it?!?

- What's God calling you to as you look toward 2023?

Some of you are crippled with fear... here's the thing **The opposite of faith is not doubt it's fear...**²

- One of the #1 imperatives in the bible is: **do not be afraid.**

*For some of you, *your faithfulness to God is derailed by your fear of what your faithfulness will mean for your life...* You're missing the power of the favor of the Lord...

- **It's the means and motivation for you to move forward in faithfulness!**

You can endure what it might cost you because of who's purchased you!

In fact, that's what we're about to see next, we're about to see is the implications and cost of Mary's faithfulness... And yet in the midst of how she experiences a profound sense of satisfaction and joy...

Verse 31, here's what Mary's going to be called to do... Watch what the angel says next...

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."

Ok. so I need you to see this, Mary probably around the age of 16 or 17 who's 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?!?

Marriage was a HUGE deal, 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're going to become pregnant and give birth to a son...*

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

² Joby Martin

We get all shaken up because the Christmas party got moved from 6 to 7 and we have to pay the babysitter an extra 10 bucks...

Meanwhile, here's Mary, her life just got turned upside down in one conversation... I don't think we often get a full glimpse of the implications all of this would have had on Mary's life...

Here's what lay ahead for Mary, 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... *Ppl didn't believe...*

Can you imagine trying to explain what happened to someone?

- *I'm engaged and pregnant with a baby that's not my husband, 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 discomforts that come 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...

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 lay ahead, look what she says in **verse 38**:

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

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 to continue on, to put her yes on the table?!?**

She saw the goodness of God and the significance of the Savior...

Jump down to **verse 46**:

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.

WOW! ... **BTW:** *The song: Mary did you know... SHE KNEW!*

I read this and I'm like, I want faith like this to ***move forward when things seem hard***... When the call is big in my life... When it comes to living out my faith when it's inconvenient...

And here's the key that we see through Mary...

2. The depth of your faith is contingent on your view of the goodness of God

Mary saw the goodness of God... **Verses 46-55** drips with declarations surrounding the goodness of God...

Her faith to continue on was a direct result of her seeing the goodness of God...

I think for many of us we miss the goodness of God... Or we forget it... At the core, this is really why we struggle to have faith...

Just because things were going to be hard for Mary didn't mean that god wasn't good...

You need to believe that God's working even if you can't see it right now... That God's in control... That ***in the same way God's efforts were calculated for Mary, they are calculated when it comes to your life...***

*I think we think that when things happen that God's scrambling...

Trying to fix or figure out things... Such a small view of God...

Nothing happens in your life that's out of His... Everything that happens to you is for your good and His glory...

Though it may not feel like it's a good thing at the time, God's working to bring about something beautiful in you and through you...

And it may not be what you think or what you want but it's ultimately going to be for your good and His glory...

It was the goodness of God that gave her the ability to endure... She saw her circumstances through the lens of God's goodness...

- Is that true for us??

It actually led her to worship... That's what she's doing here **BTW**...

- *This is known as Mary's Song...*

Mary worshiped in the midst of the chaos...

- This is a great way for us to respond as well...

Singing allows the truths of God to saturate our soul...

- Some of you need to worship your way through...

Here's another thing that we need to see when it comes to having the faith to move forward when things seem hard. By understanding this...

3. God's plan is better than your plan

There is no question that Mary had a game plan for her life, ***it just happened to be different than God's plan for her life...*** And Mary embraced it because she trusted in what God was doing...

You could say it like this, ***Mary was open to interruption from God...***

- *The question is are you??*

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 diagrammed, there would never be a need for God!***³

Mary had to trust that God was in control and that he was going to be with her no matter what lay 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.⁴

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?*

It's through Mary's broken circumstances and messed up plans that God would bring about something beautiful...

Mary says that The great and Holy God, The Mighty One, would bestow an incredible act of ***mercy...***

The word ***mercy*** means *not getting what's deserved...*

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."*

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

⁴ Ibid.

Gospel...

And watch this, what I want you to see is a theme here: it's ***through brokenness that Jesus would bring about restoration...***

And in this restoration, He starts the root of our problem, sin... But He's not finished... That was just the start...

Jesus says that He's going to return and make all things new... That He's going to do away with the brokenness of this world...

When we see the significance of the Savior it gives us an incredible hope, and ability to endure...

- Though things may be broken right now, they will not be forever...
- Though you're hurting now, you will not hurt forever...
- Though you may suffer, you will not suffer forever...

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!

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.*⁵

Mary trusted God, she believed what he had declared over her, and she was willing to endure...

See, her faithfulness to move forward came from the overflow of her trust in God's plan over hers...

⁵ JD Greear

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

That leads me to the last thing that we can learn from Mary when it comes to having the faith to move forward when things seem hard...

4. Your ability to endure the darkness of your circumstances is rooted in seeing the work of the Savior.

Mary saw what God was doing...Verse **47** my spirit rejoices in God my **Savior**...

Mark Dever says that: *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 was part of God's plan to reverse the order of how things are done.*

God didn't leave you in your brokenness. He came into it to provide a way out of it!

Listen to me, you can't just look back at the cross, you have to look forward to what it promises!

We live in a world where we are seeing the direct result of our sin- there's evidence of brokenness all around us... Some of you walking through it right now...

- You need to see that God's made a way out- that he came into it to bring you out of it...

Our **only hope for moving forward when things seem hard** comes by looking at the faithfulness of God that's been revealed through Christ...

Some of you need to trust in this Savior for the very first time this morning... You need to surrender to the work of Jesus...

Conclusion [VAMP]

So, **how can we have the faith to move forward when things seem hard?**

1. God's call on your life is not absent of His favor over your life!

2. The depth of your faith is contingent on your view of the goodness of God

3. God's plan is better than your plan

4. Your ability to endure the darkness of your circumstances is rooted in seeing the work of the Savior

Questions to consider this week in CG and as you meditate on your own life:

What's something you feel that God's calling you to that seems intimidating or overwhelming?

What is your view of God like? How do you tend to see God- really- and what are the implications in your life based on your view of Him?

What are you going through right now where you need to trust that God's plan is better than yours?

What are you going through right now? Are you in the midst of dark circumstances- How does the work of Jesus speak to this? How do the promises of Jesus help you endure?

Pray