

Witness
Mary
Luke 1:30-37

Steps card

Flier

H2O series (slide)

EJ pic (slide)

When I feel abandoned or unseen or of little worth the truth is that there is Someone whose eyes never leave me, who sees me, and He is not just anyone. In Nazareth He saw a humble young girl called Mary and picked her out to be the mother of Jesus...today He sees you, even if it feels like no one else does and inviting you to be a part of His story that is still being written.

This is Lola's story... this seemingly unknown, unseen young girl in an orphanage in Kaz and chose a Heritage family from the other side of the world that was just right for her Here is their story: **Bischoff video**

Offering will go to work at the **Bridge (slide)** with kids, **Night to shine (slide)**, our partners working with disabled orphans in Kazakhstan **Operation Mercy (slide)**.

Message

Mythology is full of personalities who have claimed miraculous births. Let's be clear, this miraculous birth was no myth. There is so much around the birth that fills us with wonder, and we think: did it happen? Dr Luke does not start with fable or once upon a time

Luke 1 vs 1-4 (slide)

Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, ² just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. ³ With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴ so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.

This is a factual account of a birth that radically altered the course of human history. So much so that people around the world divide history into two parts -- B.C. and A.D. -- Before the birth of Christ and after the death of Christ.

We have been looking at Christmas from the perspective of the witnesses who were there. Today we get an intimate perspective from Mary, who really did have a front row seat.

Gospel clothing - humility

God is not impressed by external features. Everything about the Christmas story demonstrates this. God's power and His kingdom are clothed in humility... The place where Jesus was born, the announcement to Shepherds, Mary and Joseph. The gospel only needs one set of clothes...the clothes of **humility (slide)**.

As humans we don't really like the humility clothing. We want to follow the way of the world and help the gospel with glitz, glamor, flash and external glow. We like to glamorize the birth and the message. This gospel doesn't need our clothes. It stands on its own with its own magnificence and is at its best when we clothe it with humility. When I represent Jesus from a place of humility, I am out the way and people really can see Him. Humility provides the beauty to the message that none of this outward appearance gives. It is the beauty that comes from within, created by Christ who lives in me.

Mary's call (slide) (picture)

She is a beautiful teenager, in love with and engaged to a carpenter, the parents had agreed to their marriage, but it was still a ways off. Between the pledge and the wedding feast was a period usually lasting six months to a year. During that time the couple was considered to be married and were called husband and wife, but they did not live together or have marital relations. For Mary, as a bride to be, this is an exciting time for her.

It's right during this period that God enters the scene. Unbeknown to her the fullness of time has arrived where the mystery will be revealed. God's purpose will be made known. The angel Gabriel steps through the portal between heaven and earth and appears to Mary. He is about to ask a poor, unknown young girl to take part in something that is so shocking that it's almost unbelievable. What God asks Mary to do will change her life -- and the course of history forever.

She hears a voice behind her and saw an astonishing sight. A citizen from another realm

Luke 1 vs 30-33 (slide)

“Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.”

“Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. ³¹ You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. ³² 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, ³³ and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.”

³⁴ “How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?”

How would you have responded? I would be totally shocked and confused...she is like OK but there is a problem here. I am a virgin and a nobody so how does it work? This is humanly impossible. She is about to discover that God is not limited by human impossibility. Did you know this?

Luke 1 vs 35 (slide)

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.

As he is about to leave Gabriel looks back on Mary with amazement:
A poor young woman chosen to bring God almighty into humanity’s realm...It seems there is nothing impossible with God. Before he could leave, Mary spoke

³⁸ “I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May your word to me be fulfilled.” (slide)

If you are Looking to establish your kingdom in a place what would you do? Bring an army or a child? God brought a child.

Who would you choose as the vessel?

Successful, well known, wealthy, beautiful, royalty.

He might have gone to Jerusalem and picked Caiaphas’s daughter.

God chooses Mary from the despised town of Nazareth. A humble young Jewish peasant girl. The gospel is clothed in humility.

The cost of the call (Slide)

Let's not underestimate what it cost Mary to say yes to God.

Gone are the happy dreams of a beautiful wedding; gone are the days of sweet anticipation; gone are the carefully thought out plans for the wedding feast. She will be married, but not before rumors spread through the countryside. There will be a wedding feast, but not the way she planned. Everything has changed.

Mary knew that saying YES to God meant misunderstanding and public shame. Gone was her pure reputation and with it her dreams of a quiet, happy life in Nazareth. She could not know what the future would hold. Before it was all over, she would experience heartache, opposition, slander, confusion, anguish, despair and loneliness. In the end she would face the greatest pain a mother can endure when she would watch her son die on a cross.

Mary's response (slide)

It's interesting to note that Mary does not doubt the angel's word, even though it must have sounded incredible. She believed what the angel said. Her only question had to do with how it would happen. In essence she says to Gabriel, "All right. I'm willing to do my part, but you need to explain how we'll handle this one little problem." That's real faith. That's believing the impossible. That's trusting God even when the facts argue against it.

Mary took a deep breath and said, "**May your word to me be fulfilled.**" (slide)
And with those words Christmas would enter into the world.

Will you respond to God's calling on you this Christmas? Are you ready to say "yes" to Him? To His plan for you? What is holding you back? It's time to believe and act on that belief.

Right now, tomorrow and the next day will you let Him in and say 'Lord Jesus, I am Yours. May your word to me be fulfilled'? In other words, recognize that God has a plan for you. More than that, give yourself over to God's plan. We need not wait for an angel's appearance when we have the testimony of God Himself, given in the Person of Jesus His Son.

Christmas is our reminder that God has a plan—He has a good and perfect plan for each one of us. He sees you today. May it be done to you according to what God has said in Christ.

JESUS- Why all the fuss?

Angels, Shepherds, wise men, stars, sacrifice.

Let's end with a focus on this child that had such an impact on Mary and all these other people who bore witness to, and millions of us do today.

The sceptic argues that there is no evidence of God. If there is a God let Him come down to where we are. Let Him live in the filthy place I live. Let Him smell the stink and feel the poverty, know the pain and hunger...know the agony of loss and death. Let him see disease and blindness. Let him be hated, jeered, cheated, robbed. Let him lose everything at the hands of the wicked...let Him taste injustice.

Let him feel what it is like to be tempted and experience my weakness. Let him feel what I feel, here in this miserable aching body. Then let him die, probably like I will, alone, homeless, forsaken, uncared for, forgotten. If he wants to impress me, let him become like me...maybe then I will believe. And so, at Christmas, He comes...and in the prophetic words of that ancient text

Isaiah 53 vs 1-10 (MSG) (slide)

Who would have thought God's saving power would look like this?

**²⁻⁶The servant grew up before God—a scrawny seedling,
a scrubby plant in a parched field.**

**There was nothing attractive about him,
nothing to cause us to take a second look.**

**He was looked down on and passed over,
a man who suffered, who knew pain firsthand.**

One look at him and people turned away.

We looked down on him, thought he was scum.

But the fact is, it was *our* pains he carried—

***our* disfigurements, all the things wrong with *us*.**

We thought he brought it on himself,

that God was punishing him for his own failures.

**But it was our sins that did that to him,
that ripped and tore and crushed him—*our sins!*
He took the punishment, and that made us whole.
Through his bruises we get healed.
We're all like sheep who've wandered off and gotten lost.
We've all done our own thing, gone our own way.
And God has piled all our sins, everything we've done wrong,
on him, on him.**

**⁷⁻⁹ He was beaten, he was tortured,
but he didn't say a word.
Like a lamb taken to be slaughtered
and like a sheep being sheared,
he took it all in silence.
Justice miscarried, and he was led off—
and did anyone really know what was happening?
He died without a thought for his own welfare,
beaten bloody for the sins of my people.
They buried him with the wicked,
threw him in a grave with a rich man,
Even though he'd never hurt a soul
or said one word that wasn't true.**

**¹⁰ Still, it's what God had in mind all along,
to crush him with pain.
The plan was that he give himself as an offering for sin
so that he'd see life come from it—life, life, and more life.
And God's plan will deeply prosper through him.**

This is what Christmas is all about

Jesus was born of Mary, becoming like us in every way, fully human, and therefore fully able to identify with our condition. Conceived by the Holy Spirit, therefore fully divine. He alone could satisfy the demands of a holy God and be the lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world.

There was a garden that used to be the place where the two realms touched...where the joys of heaven and earth were one. Then the tragic day came where man was cast out and the garden disappeared from view. But

Christmas would reveal once again the joining of the two realms. He, the light of the heavenlies would become a man of the earth and would be the coming together of the two realms in to one. The two creations would be joined in God. Divinity and humanity would be in one man, visible for all to see.

This is what happened on that first Christmas

Veiled in flesh the Godhead See, Hail the incarnate Deity

The Son of God becomes the Son of Man.

The Unseen becomes seen

The incomprehensible SOMEONE - becomes the approachable, touchable, understandable JESUS.

Your response to Him this Christmas?

He sees you. He knows you. He understands you. Do you see Him? Will you respond to Him as Mary did: "Here is my life Lord, let it be surrendered to you will". Let's make that our gift to Him this Christmas.

Prayer

Set up candle lighting

Bend to the light

The Lord bless you

and keep you;

²⁵ the Lord make his face shine on you

and be gracious to you;

²⁶ the Lord turn his face toward you

and give you peace.

Merry Christmas let's go and be the light of the world