

Series: **Christmas 2017**

CDOBC – beginning on 12/3/17

Today's Title: **"Embracing Confusing Change"**

*December 10, 2017 - Luke 1:26-45*

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**OBJECTIVE:** To help people know that change is an opportunity to see God do amazing things - things we never would have imagined!

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**Houston team testimony** (Bill Updike & Patti Kaetner)

***Prayer***

For those of you who are married, think back to when you were engaged. When we were engaged, most of us knew our upcoming wedding would bring changes to our life. We knew it would bring a great deal of confusion to life as we adjusted to living with our spouse. But most of us didn't let those changes and the confusion we anticipated derail our wedding plans. Of course, some get cold feet - some are commitment-phobic - but most of us forge ahead, even though we know full-well that change and confusion is in the forecast.

We forge ahead because we believe the good - the benefit - the joy of being married to this person will surpass and outweigh the challenges and confusion of the changes.

***Turn / tap in your bibles to*** Luke 1:26

In fact, the most pleasant and exciting time of life is when you're engaged and anticipating your wedding.

There are many other exciting milestones in life - birth of your children, the various milestones in your child's life...like when they move out!

But the engagement period is at the top of the list...or at least close to it!

That was what I remember about our engagement. Kim would ask me what I thought of the invitations, and I would say, *"I like the one you chose."*

She asked me about the cake, and I said, *"I like that flavor."*

She asked me about the flowers, and I said, *"I really like what you selected."*

She asked me about the guest list, and I said, *"Yes, let's invite all your friends."*

I can't imagine Joseph and Mary were much different from our modern-day engagement life. Excitement would have described their outlook as their wedding day was approaching.

But all of that was shattered - or at least tempered - when God sent His angels to them and told them: "I have a change of plans!"

All their wedding plans...disrupted.

All their expectations...altered.

All their relationships...tested.

All their dreams...totally surpassed!

***Read*** Luke 1:26-38

## Sometimes God brings confusion & change into your life

vs. 26-36

God does this stuff on purpose sometimes!

Talk about changing the plan!

Everything is set...the caterer has been hired and the down payment has been made...

The flowers have been selected...

The musicians have been chosen...

The dress has been made...

The invitations have gone out...

And then the angel Gabriel shows up, and changes everything!

vs. 26: “In the sixth month” - connects with vs. 24 & 36 - where Mary’s relative, Elizabeth, is in her 5<sup>th</sup> month of pregnancy.

Grace is mentioned twice in this section (vs. 28, 30).

Mary was in need of God’s grace just like you and I are in need of His grace.

We see the same thing happening in **Genesis 6:8** as we see here in **Luke 1:30** - Noah “...found favor in the eyes of the Lord.” - just as Mary “found favor with God.”

The news Gabriel brings to Mary is amazing, exciting, humbling, but it’s also confusing and frightening.

This will change everything.

Moments before she was planning a wedding...and now she must begin planning to raise the Messiah!

Think about it...what did you hope for your kids?

- I hope they're healthy - 10 fingers, 10 toes...
- I hope they're able to walk...
- Able to run and play...
- Able to tie their shoes...
- Do well in school...
- Make good friends...
- Be a good friend...
- Trace their hand on a piece of paper in Kindergarten and color it so it looks like a turkey that I can put on my fridge at Thanksgiving.

Look at what Mary's kid is going to be / do!

"He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to Him the throne of His father David, 33 and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end."

Where's the parenting book on this one?

Aside from the parenting pressure...what will Joseph think? *(She knew what Joseph would think...how would she deal with what he would think?!?)*

I'm certain Joseph was excited about the wedding - excited about Mary being his wife. I can speak for myself and tell you getting married to Kim was the best decision of my life. I was so excited to get married - to be with her - to spend my life with her.

But the photographic evidence cast doubt on my state of mind the day after the wedding.

We went to Lake Tahoe for our honeymoon, and when we were at the airport getting ready to board our flight, someone took these pictures.

I'm ashamed to say, but this certainly looks like 'buyer's remorse'!!!

I wasn't remorseful or second guessing my decision - no matter what the photos indicate.

But I know this...Joseph was full of remorse...and anger, pain, rejection - his hopes and dreams shattered.

It's not recorded in Scripture, but you can imagine the conversation that evening did not go well.

Turn to **Matthew 1:18** - where we read of what happens to Joseph when an angel visits him.

***Read Matthew 1:18-25***

We put up our Christmas decorations - light up the Nativity scene in the front yard - play Christmas carols - and we often forget to realize how much confusion, change and fear was brought into Joseph and Mary's life - and the life of their family and friends - when Gabriel showed up.

How much confusion and fear do you have today?

I don't know what's going on in your life - what personal or family struggles and crisis you're dealing

with - but I know as a church, we're in the middle of a whole bunch of change...and as glorious and wonderful as all this change is...it's also a bit confusing and challenging.

I'm certainly not equating the conception announcement to Mary with our new campus.

I'm only pointing out some of the similarities we have due to major changes in life.

God has moved in this place - God has showed up.

God has brought confusion and change to our life!

The question is: How will you react?

How will you respond?

**Trust in God's sovereignty.** vs. 35-38

Joseph trusted what the angel told him - and he went through with the marriage. Against all human logic, he obeyed "...as the angel of the Lord commanded him..." (Matt. 1:24)

What a gracious God we have! Mary has just been told that Almighty God Himself will perform a creative act inside her womb and she will be the mother of the Messiah even though she is a virgin! Then, before she can say anything else, the angel tells her of the miraculous work God has already done in the life of her relative, Elizabeth. Elizabeth was advanced in years – and she was barren – she had no children. In Jewish culture, this was a scarlet letter - thought to be a sign of

divine disapproval. In fact, the text here seems to indicate that “*Barren Elizabeth*” might have been a degrading nickname she had – “...she who was said to be barren” (vs. 36b)

Elizabeth’s pregnancy was a sign to Mary that God could do anything – even if it was against all logic, human knowledge, experience, and normal expectations!

*Nothing will be impossible with God!* He is sovereign above all things! There is nothing beyond His grasp and nothing too great of a challenge for Him to accomplish!

*Mary asks: “How will this be, since I am a virgin?”*

*This is God you are talking about Mary – this is nothing for Him! He created the whole universe out of nothing – He has caused your relative Elizabeth in her old age to conceive – and He will cause you to have a child even though you are a virgin because the child you are to bear will save His people from their sins and He will be called the Son of God!*

Don’t force God into the limited box of possibility that your mind creates.

God is not limited by nature - by history - or by human limitations or by your limited imagination.

He often chooses to work within those boundaries - but He’s not bound by them.

I’ve never been a part of something like this...and I’m guessing most of you haven’t either.

I hoped and dreamed, but years ago - in 2003 - when we created the master plan for the church campus - I never expected it to become a reality in my lifetime.

*Shame on me for not believing God for the impossible!*

When God brings change, and disrupts life - and everything we knew is now different - increase your trust in God! He is the constant! He never changes! He takes us places we never imagined we could go!

“For nothing will be impossible with God.” vs. 37

Notice the future tense of what Gabriel tells Mary.

This is not only addressing the miraculous conception which is about to take place in Mary’s body - but everything the conception implies!

- What will Joseph say? “Nothing will be impossible with God.”
- What will my parents say? “Nothing will be impossible with God.”
- What will the neighbors say? How will I parent the Messiah? “Nothing will be impossible with God.”

Often, we’re not only afraid or hesitant about the immediate changes in life, but what those changes will do to my long-term plans - my goals - my expectations. We love to control our life - or at least think we’re controlling our life.



When God changes stuff - when He redirects my path or the path of someone close to me where I will feel the impact of those changes, we get worried - maybe even fearful that we're no longer in control - like we're walking in the dark with Legos all over the floor!

“Nothing will be impossible with God.”

When you believe this...when you trust in God's sovereignty - when you really trust Him...there's only one right response:

vs. 38: And Mary said, “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her.”

Trusting God is not theoretical - it's not just a cute, sentimental bumper sticker.

Trusting God leads to obeying God. It leads to saying 'yes' to Him - 'yes' to His commands - 'yes' to His leading in your life - 'yes' to His offer of salvation.

When Mary said “...let it be to me according to your word”, she was both aware, and at the same time unaware of what she was signing up for. And this is exactly how God works with us today...He reveals just enough for us to see the first few feet in front of us - and we trust Him and say 'yes'. But we don't know what lies 20 feet ahead...or 200 feet ahead. The truth is, if we would have known what was 20 feet ahead or 200 feet ahead,

we might not have said 'yes' because we'd be freaked out by it!

What was Mary saying 'yes' to?

- Being pregnant before her and Joseph were married - and knowing her parents would not be excited.
- Being pregnant - and telling Joseph - he would certainly conclude she was unfaithful.
- Being pregnant and the people in Nazareth assuming she was guilty of fornication.
- Being the mother of the Messiah.
- Being the mother of the Son of God.

But there was so much more she couldn't see...there always is when we try and look into the future.

She couldn't see much of the conflict and pain which would be the predictable result of the Messiah being her son.

- The sibling rivalry with their other kids...
- The rumors of her unfaithfulness which would continue for 30+ years...
- The pain of hearing what some people would say about her son...
- The pain of seeing Jesus hanging on the cross.
- The joy of hearing Him teach
- The joy of hearing people amazed at what He did and said...
- The amazement as He healed people of sickness and disease...
- The fearful excitement as He raised Lazarus from the dead...
- The hope and laughter as the people lined the road into Jerusalem praising Him as the long-awaited Messiah - yelling, "Hosanna" and proclaimed Him as the King of Israel!
- The joy of seeing Jesus raised from the dead!!

When God brings change into your life, your life is never the same - but it's also never better!

**Blessing comes to those who walk by faith vs. 45**

***Read vs. 39-45***

“In those days” - refers to the early days/weeks of Mary’s pregnancy.

**My guess:** her parents, the town - either wasn’t accepting her version of the story...or she didn’t even want to tell anyone yet...and since the angel Gabriel told her about her relative *‘barren Elizabeth’* who was now expecting...she goes to her house - to someone who would understand.

When she arrives - Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit - her baby - in his fetal state - the forerunner to the Messiah - the one who would proclaim the Messiah’s coming - begins his work in while still in his mother’s womb.

Elizabeth makes a wonderful statement in **vs. 45** - a statement which is helpful for us today:

“...blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.”

Not only was this true of Mary - but it’s true of us.

When you believe that God will do what He has said...when you read the Word of God - and believe what it says.

When you read that God loves you...that He died for you to pay the price for your sins...and you read that He rose from the dead, defeating sin and death...and you believe it...**YOU ARE BLESSED!**

You’ll be blessed in this life...and for all eternity!

**Apply it...**

**God uses change to do the unexpected in our life.**

*Don't resist change...look for God in the change!*

**Trust God when your plans are disrupted by change.**

*Trust God...reject fear - He is at work!*

**Believe that God will do as He promises.**

*Belief...faith - this is where blessing is found!*

Embrace change...God is working in your life!

Close in prayer