

# God's Grace Removes Fear - LUKE 1:26-38

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Last time we looked at Zacharias and Elizabeth, Zacharias being the type of the person just going through the motions, business as usual, that part of the church that they are comfortable in their set, in their lifestyle, in their theology, and they're not able to see the signs and the seasons around them, and they don't really want to because it kind of disrupts their life. Then you have Elizabeth, someone who kind of becomes awakened, and you see her response as God leads her then to this place, her and Zacharias, where they're both in great expectancy, waiting for the coming of Messiah. Today's message is, good things come in small packages. Again, playing off the season. We're going to look at Mary and Joseph as the announcement is made to Mary. We will be looking at, in Luke chapter 1, we'll look at verses 26 to 38. That's going to be Mary's account. That's going to come right after we read Elizabeth's account. I'm sorry, we read Zacharias's account when Gabriel comes to him, and then it jumps right into Mary's account. We skipped that to talk about Elizabeth, so this week we'll do that.

Then we'll jump over to Matthew, which gives us Joseph's account, Matthew chapter 1, verses 18 through 25. Then we'll come back and finish up with Luke chapter 2, 1 through 5. We could spend our whole time in Luke chapter 2. It's just so wild, their trip to Bethlehem, but we won't. We have a lot to cover. So, Lord, help me to stay on track and not get sidetracked. So, remember that last time we said that the days of the coming Messiah, they were unprecedented times. They're foretold by Scripture, and they're filled with spiritual darkness. They're a time of spiritual apathy, and they're days of great emotion. And into the center of that, or not into the center of that, or through, but these two lives, Mary and Joseph. Mary, anywhere from 15 to 17, possibly, somewhere in there, pretty young. And Joseph, not much older. They would have been living in the northern part of Israel, up in the Galilee. We know Joseph is from Nazareth, so therefore Mary seems likely to be as well. But the time they were living in, Rome had just spent decades of civil war. You had Octavius, who was the great-grandnephew of Caesar, Julius Caesar. He was the first ruler of Rome to kind of coalesce all of Rome under an emperor. He sort of disbanded or put down the Senate, and he took authority. That's why the

Senate murdered him. He didn't last very long. He had this habit of the people he conquered, he would then put them in power with him, in trusted positions, even though he just conquered them and they hated him. So, nothing like what's going on today, trusting people who want to kill you.

But, anyway, he made Octavius, his great-grandnephew, his heir. And Octavius then, there's a civil war between him and then, you know, Antony and Cleopatra, that story. So, Antony goes down to Cleopatra in Egypt, gets a bunch of her troops, and then there's three of them, Octavius, Antony, and one other guy, I can't remember his name. They sidelined him pretty quick. Decades of civil war, 20-plus years, and then Octavius comes out on top, and he wins. And he goes to the Senate, and he says, look, I'll put you back in power. On one condition, you voluntarily give me the name August, which was only at that time reserved for deities, for gods. So, you give me that name.

Just make it look voluntarily, like we decide to. They're like, okay, for sure, so that we can have power. Well, what they didn't realize was by doing that, they pretty much undercut themselves, because how can you then go against a god? How can the Senate make something that's against the god?

[ 3 : 34 ] So, he becomes really the first emperor, which will eventually lead to emperor worship, so that by the time the early churches, the early centuries of the early church is on the scene, and it says you have to give a pinch of incense to Caesar. Well, that was kind of like your allegiance, which involved worship at the same time, which will be revived under the Antichrist when he says, you want to be part of this kingdom, part of the citizenship? You got to take the mark. You got to worship me. It says specifically that those that take the mark worship the beast. So, you can't accidentally be given the mark. It's a voluntary worship thing.

But anyway, so that's the scene he brings about. He sets in motion Augustus Caesar, that's why he takes the name Augustus. Centuries then of Roman rule, stability, so that you could travel, and that you could send information across the Roman Empire, around the Mediterranean, under relative ease and peace. Perfect timing for the gospel, right? God knows what he's doing.

But that's the scene here. You've just come from chaos, years of just corruption, civil war, and on the frontier of Rome is Judea, is Israel, and this is where Mary and Joseph are.

And so, if we pick up with Mary in verse 26, and in the sixth month, so that would be Elizabeth's sixth month, right? She's the one that's referring to, giving us a date stamp.

In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. So, the emphasis there is they are not married. She's a young girl. She had been living at home at this time, but it says they're espoused. So, we were talking about this ahead of time.

[ 5 : 27 ] You have multiple periods of leading to marriage in the Jewish system. You have the betrothal, which would have been like almost the arrangement that you'd make, the parents would make between their young children, all right? They shall be married. You have the espousal period, and when that kicks off, it's kind of like the start to the beginning of what will eventually culminate in the wedding. You'll have a feast, a feast for seven days, the wedding is consummated, and then they're married. But the espousal period is they are legally married right now. And for Joseph or anyone who's a spouse to end this, there's going to have to be a legal divorce. At this point, they are legally married.

And it kind of says to Mary, okay, get ready. The marriage is coming. And it says to Joseph, go and get ready because, you know, it's time. And it's kind of the father initiating that saying, all right, son, it is time. It's time to start this process. And then, of course, no man knows the day or the hour when the father sends the son to get his bride, and that's a whole other topic.

But anyway, that's where we find ourselves. But God's messenger is Gabriel. That's what an angel is, right? It's those that serve God's people, that bring messages to God's people. And God's messengers, God's messages, God's messages brought by God's messengers bring life-altering news, always bring life-altering news. But before that, all right, so this is the sixth month for Elizabeth.

What happens on the fifth day? I mean, the fifth month, on the 29th day of Elizabeth's progression in her pregnancy for Mary. That's the 29th day of the fifth month.

Nothing. Life is going on as normal. For her, she had no idea that tomorrow her life would be changed, that her future would be changed. She had no idea what was in the heart or mind of God, nor what was about to happen to her. But what was her part? To be ready, to be in readiness.

[ 7:17 ] And she was a girl ready. This was her espousal period. She's supposed to be ready. And so God meets her at this time. And what does he find there? He finds what? We're going to see he finds a surrendered heart. And a surrendered heart is the most effective means by which God can work his will in this world. We think, well, God, you're all powerful. You're almighty. Just do it. Make it happen. But God has chosen to use us. He chooses to use us. You are the light of the world. Let men see your good works and so glorify your Father in heaven. God's most effective means by which he works in his will in this world is through a surrendered heart. And that's also what he prizes most in this world. Because it is the surrendered heart that can be the redeemed heart.

In Exodus, Moses speaks to the children of Israel in Exodus 35, verses 4 and 5. And he says this, he says, God doesn't want it if it's not willing. God's not looking to force something. He didn't grab Mary and say, this is what we're going to do whether you like it or not. Okay, let's go. Philippians 2, 13, for it's God which works in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. So we're not left alone to do God's will. God also is the one who supplies what is needed to accomplish it. And so Mary's life has been ordered by God. He has a plan. He has a purpose. But what do we see with her? She also had chosen to live within God's order, right? She wasn't living with Joseph. But I love him, you know? So we're just living together. Well, God can still use me. Do you think if Mary was living with Joseph outside of marriage, as if they were married, right? We get the picture, that God would have said, oh, okay, I'm going to use you to bring my Messiah into the world. She would have totally disqualified herself from that, wouldn't she? Do you think if Zacharias was like, I've gone to temple my whole life. I'm tired of this. Nothing happens. I'm going to stay home. I'm going to stay home this round. You know what? Do you think God would have met him and said, you know, Zacharias, get up off your lazy boy. Turn the TV off. I'm going to bring John the Baptist into the world. No. They were within

God's order. They were where they knew they needed to be. And so God was able to use their lives. There's a couple names here. We have Joseph, David, and Mary, right off the bat. That Joseph being of the lineage of David, the house of David. David means beloved, as best I can see. It's a very odd Hebrew name. It's not used very often. It seems unique when it comes on the scene.

Joseph means let him add. So if you think when Jacob, Israel, has Joseph, Rachel has finally, yeah, Rachel has finally had a son. So he names him Joseph, like let him add, let God add more than just this one. So it's let him add. And then Mary is an interesting name. It means both bitterness and beloved together, which you think of when Jesus is brought to the temple for circumcision or for the offering for the firstborn. They had to offer a sacrifice for the firstborn, the offering of redemption. And Mary and Joseph come and they bring the dove and they meet Simeon there. Then they meet Anna. And Simeon says to Mary, he said, behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel and for a sign which shall be spoken against. Yea, a sword shall pierce through your own soul also. And so there's that bitterness and then that beloved, that Mary's life is one of extremely blessed. What a beloved woman that God has chosen to bring the Messiah through her life. And yet what bitterness she's going to have to endure at the same time. It also means rebellion. It also has the meaning within it, rebellion. Rebellion. Which I think is kind of cool because Mary's going to have to be a pretty feisty, pretty like stand on her own kind of girl. All she's going to go through. You think of it like, oh Mary, you got Jesus. God came and said, you're going to give birth to a son.

A couple pages later, he's there. It's like, yeah, a couple pages later, he's there. She's got to travel from her home. She's in a place that's strange. There's nobody there to help her. And she's giving birth and putting him in a manger, feeding. Okay. You know, it's so romanticized for us.

[ 11 : 39 ] But anyway, continuing on now. So that's the meaning of their names. And it's very, with Joseph, you know, let him add. God's going to add a lot to this man. And as we see, continuing on then. So then the angel comes and he pronounces this to her. And it says he comes in unto her now and makes this pronouncement in verse 28 and 29. He said, hail thou that are highly favored, compassed about with grace. That's what that word literally means. Highly favored. Hail thou that are compassed about with grace. The Lord is with you. Blessed art thou among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be.

And it says he came in unto her. I don't know where she was, but it seems like there he is all of a sudden where nobody was. She's like, what kind of greeting is this? You think, wow, that's so true.

You know, hail Mary, highly favored. You are. God's going to give you the opportunity to give birth to Messiah, compassed about with grace. The Lord is with you. Surely the Lord is with you. You're going to have Jesus with you. And blessed art you among women. You are blessed to give birth to the Messiah.

That's true. The angel is declaring what shall be, but he's also declaring what already is. This is present statement. The angel came in unto her and said, hail thou art now currently compassed about with grace, highly favored. The Lord is with you now and you are blessed now among women. This is God pronouncing this on Mary. Isaiah 46 10 says that God declares the end from the beginning and from ancient times, the things that are not yet done saying my counsel shall stand and I'll do all of my pleasure. And then we see in the new Testament kind of a parallel to that where Jesus declares in revelation one verse eight, I am alpha and omega, the beginning and the end saith the Lord, which is, which was, which is to come the almighty. And so God is able to declare what things that are not as though they are. And God's view of Mary may have been a whole lot different than her view of herself. She may be like, cause she says she's casting about in her mind. What manner of greeting is this? Right? What she didn't say was, yes, you are so right. I am so favored and I am so blessed. I tell the women all the time, I am highly blessed among you, but they don't like to receive that. No, she's a, she's a girl living in humility, isn't she? And the angel said unto her in verse 30, fear not Mary, for thou has found favor and grace with God. And God's grace removes fear.

When we realize that God's favor and blessing are not dependent on anything except his grace, right? He says, Mary, you are highly favored. Do not fear. You have God's grace upon you. And it's God's grace alone, which brings blessing. It's not dependent upon you. Now, while God's grace and favor is not dependent upon Mary, Mary's ability to be used by God, there is a part that she has to play in that, right? She has to stay within God's order. She has to be submitted and surrendered to him. God cannot work with someone who's in sin. Now he will work with them to bring them back, but you're not going to find a life that is outside of God's order, that's living in sin or carnality, that God is going to call them and say, I've been looking for someone, you know, I, I so wanted to use someone who was caught up in that horrible sin. I'm going to use you to be a light. No, it's not how it works, right? Not until he does the work in the heart first. And so God's view of us is often very different than our view of ourself, isn't it?

[ 15 : 13 ] In Colossians three, verse three to four, Paul writes, for you are dead. Your life is hid with Christ and God. When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall you also appear with him in glory.

It's God's view. You are dead in your life, but your life is hid with Christ and God. How does God look at us? He says, I see your life hid with Christ in God. And when Christ who is my life shall appear, I shall appear with him in glory, immaterial, completely of myself in that verse, those things shall be accomplished on my behalf. Now, the amount that I get to experience Christ being my life in this life is dependent on, you know, walking by faith, putting my trust in God to do in me and through me what he said he would do. And not my own efforts, but trusting that God who works in me will will and do of his good pleasure. And that I will essentially, like Mary say, behold the handmaid of the Lord. We haven't got to that verse yet.

But he says there, Christ who is our life for you are dead. I think most of the time we have the view of ourself correctly. Like I'm just dead, right? My flesh, my motives, my mind. Like I was talking about in Psalm 139 where he says, you know, behold the Lord, every word in my tongue and you already know it. Oh, oh Lord. Oh, it's such a cringy thing I said. And it was so rude. And you knew I was going to say it before I said it. Why didn't you stop me? You know, he knows that. And we focus on so often our view of things. Oh, yes, I know. I'm dead. He says, no, you are dead, but your life is hid with Christ in God. And Christ is your life. So partake in that. Be a part of that.

Continue on. Verse 31. So the angel has said to her, you're highly favored. God is with you. Do not fear. And he says, now here's the message I'm going to bring you, Mary. And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb and bring forth a son. Thou shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great and shall be called the son of the highest, Yeshua. And the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father, David, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever. And of his kingdom, there shall be no end. Wow. Messiah has come. But wait, let's hit reverse. Rewind. You shall conceive in your womb. Whoa. Like the rest of it's all kind of cool. He's going to be great. He's going to be son of the highest. But what's this part about conceive in my womb? You see, the arrival of the Messiah disrupts the normal patterns of life. You just, life as you know, it's over. That when the Messiah comes, the normal patterns of life are completely disrupted. And as you get closer to the coming of Messiah, he does that. Like, look what's happening in our world. And it's completely disrupting my pattern of life because if I continue to follow the Messiah, I'm going to walk very different than the path this world is going. The world is going into utter chaos. And they're saying, even well-meaning people, the thing to do is stock up, make sure you got a way to protect yourself, and get ready and hunker down, right? Jesus doesn't say that. He doesn't say to do that. He says, rejoice, rejoice, and be a light. Get out there and be a light. Why? Because he's going to provide our daily bread. He's got it all taken care of, right? Because our life is Christ. And so when the

Messiah arrives, the normal patterns of life are turned upside down. You see, God saw that Mary was willing to sacrifice, I'll quote this one, Mary was willing to sacrifice her respectability, her relationships, and her reputation for the coming Messiah. I didn't do, I didn't put the alliteration there on purpose. It came out that way. Her respectability is gone if she says yes to her part in the coming Messiah. Her relationships are going to be called into question now, and her reputation because of the coming Messiah. As the coming of the Messiah drew near, Mary's life got more topsy-turvy. But God also provides more revelation about what's going on. He doesn't leave her in that. She doesn't just all of a sudden find her, wake up one morning like, I'm pregnant. And the Lord said, yeah, I did that. You'll figure it out later. You know, no. He gives revelation, further revelation, as the drawing near the Messiah comes. What is the revelation that she receives? Well, if you look there, what did it say about Jesus? It said, he shall be great prestige.

[ 19 : 41 ] He shall be called the son of the highest, his pedigree. And the Lord shall give him the throne of his father, David. He shall have preeminence, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever.

And so Mary is given further revelation as the coming of the Messiah draws near. As God begins to reveal her part in this, he says, hey, you need to know more about this to be ready. You need to know what my Messiah will be about. And Jesus has the prestige, the pedigree, the preeminence, and the perpetuity that nobody else will ever be able to meet that qualification.

And so then Mary responds in verse 34. She says to the angel, how shall this be? Seeing I know not a man. And the angel answered and said unto her, the Holy Spirit shall come upon you, and the power of the highest shall overshadow you. Therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the son of God. And then this is some of the verses we read last week regarding Elizabeth, but they overlap. And behold, your cousin Elizabeth, she has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible.

And Mary responded, behold, the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her. So Mary has questions, naturally. But Mary's questions were different from Zacharias'. They were not an unbelief. Mary's questions were those of faith. You see, faith is full of questions that only God can answer. It's okay to have questions. Our faith generates a ton of questions.

God, how, you know, again, I've just been sitting in Psalm 139 so much, and you read through it, it's like, Lord, what does that mean? You know, that you've compassed me behind and before, and you've placed your hand upon me. That word encompassed means to, like, to siege about, to have a siege, to grip tightly, and place your hand. I almost picture it like he's going like this. I got him. What you got in your hand?

[ 21 : 39 ] I got him. You know, that's how the Lord, he's got us. He's got us. And he's not going to let me go. Not to preach a whole message on Psalm 139. But then he says, where shall I go from your spirit?

Whether shall I flee from your presence? If I send up into heaven, you're there. If I go into the, in the depths of, make my bed in the depths of hell, you're there. If I flee to the other most parts of the sea, even there, your hand will guide me. Your right hand will hold me fast. So whether I go somewhere spiritual, heaven or hell, or physical, that God is there. And what is he doing? Holding and leading.

It's mind-blowing. Faith is full of questions. But God answers them. See, Mary accepted what God was doing. She was just unsure of her part to play. How's this going to happen? Okay, God, I see what you want. I see your will, but what am I going to do? And then, I love it, how does he answer? Look what he says. He said unto her, the power of the highest shall overshadow you. Who's that? The Father? Therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.

Who's that? The Son? I'm sorry, in verse 35, I missed that part. The angel answered and said unto her, the Holy Spirit shall come upon you in the power of the highest. Mary's questions were answered by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. You see the Trinity working here. And then lastly, she says, be it unto me according to your word. The word of God satisfies all questions. Any questions we have that our faith generates, I mean, we go to the word. That's where we find it. You don't need to go to a commentary. You don't need to go to a best friend. You don't need to call up, you know, the pastor hotline. You go to your Bible, and you go and say, Lord, what would you have me to do? And he will answer.

And it shall always be done according to God's word, won't it? That's not the question. It's just, will I be in a place of surrender so that it can be done accordingly in my life? Will I be part of that, working in one accord? So as we see Mary participating in the coming of Messiah, we see it's by faith, and faith alone, that she participates. And it's the same for us. As we see the coming of Messiah approaching, we participate in that by faith. As we continue in Luke 39 here in chapter 1, okay, Mary says, I accept this. And what does she then do? She rises in those days and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Judah, and entered into the house of Zacharias and saluted Elizabeth. So Mary's a picture to us where Zacharias was that picture of one who was just, you know, life according to motion, going according to the motions, life as usual, business as usual.

[ 24 : 08 ] Mary's that picture of one that, as God gives further revelation, as the coming of Messiah draws closer, she's one of those who says, yes, yes. I don't care what it'll cost my life. I don't care what that means. I don't care how goofy I may look to people because I say, I believe that I'm going to get snatched away, that the rapture is coming, and that I'm going to go to be with Jesus. Because just like that faithful bridegroom who's espoused himself to me, he's going to come back and get me.

I don't care. I believe it and I accept it. And the next thing God does is he surrounds Mary with those who are like-minded. He says, hey, go see Elizabeth. She's in the same condition you are.

She's receiving the same promises, and she's living in expectancy. Mary, go and dwell with those who have the same mindset and condition that you're in. She didn't stay with her family, interestingly.

She took off. I doubt she told them anything at that point. She's like, hey, I'm going to go visit cousin Elizabeth. Mary, that's like a, you know, five-day journey from Galilee. Yeah, it's okay.

It's okay. You know, so-and-so's heading that way. I'm going to go with them, and I'll be back in three months. So she's obviously of an age where she's capable and responsible enough to be doing that.

[ 25 : 21 ] And what happens? She goes and she salutes Elizabeth, and we know from what we read last time that the baby, John the Baptist, leaps for joy, and Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit.

The indwelling Messiah produced an outward response, didn't he? As the Messiah indwelt Mary, and it produced an outward response. Mary's entire world is now only about one thing, isn't it?

Her entire world, whatever plans she had, are now just about the coming of Jesus. Nothing else mattered to her. Verse 46. So we're going to jump down now. We're going to skip the part with Elizabeth when she goes to meet with her. I'm going to jump down to 46. Mary's then response to Elizabeth describing to her what happened. Oh, as soon as I heard your voice, the babe left in my womb.

And so this is now Mary's response to Elizabeth saying, blessed is she that has believed, for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord. And in verse 46, Mary now with her cousin there, and she responds and says, my soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God, my Savior. Mary had an understanding of her spiritual condition, Lord and Savior. She recognizes that her will must be submitted to her Lord. She has a submitted will, a submitted soul, and that she had a redeemed spirit, that her spirit needed a Savior.

For he has regarded the lowest state of his handmaiden. For behold, from henceforth, all generations shall call me blessed. For he that is mighty has done to me great things, and holy is his name. Mary knew herself for what she was. He that is mighty has done great things to me, whom so lowly, he has regarded the lowest state of his handmaiden.

[ 27 : 08 ] In Philippians 3.21, the same type of wording is used there, that lowest state, talks about that the Lord shall change our vile bodies. Just means our bodies that have not yet been brought into their finished glorified state. Our vile bodies are our bodies of low estate, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself. That God is able to bring even these bodies, as we were just talking about, that's so prone to spend so much time in its own death instead of the life of Christ that it has, that God shall take our bodies of low estates. So because of the coming Messiah, because of Jesus, Mary's low estate has been replaced with what? Blessing and greatness.

From henceforth, all generations shall call me blessed. For he that is mighty has done great things unto me, and holy is his name. We could go deeper into her worship of the Lord, but I'm going to keep trekking here. And let's go on to verse 50, as she continues on. And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation. He has showed strength with his arm. He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has put down the mighty from their seats and exalted them of low degree. He has filled the hungry with good things and the rich as he sent away empty. So she's contrasting here. You have kind of the negative and the positive. You see that where she says, he showed, he scattered the proud in the imagination of his heart in verse 50, in their heart, I'm sorry, in verse 51. Verse 52, it says he's put down the mighty from their seats. In verse 53, the rich as he sent away empty. The coming Messiah will bring judgment on the self-centered, the prideful, the self-promoted, those that are of high degree, and then the self-sufficient, the rich. That God will judge the self-centered, self-promoted, and self-sufficient. But opposed to that, those that look for his coming, those that fear him, his mercy is on them that fear him, what will he do? He shows strength with his arm, exalted them of low degree, and filled the hungry with good things. Those that look for him will experience God's mercy, his strength, his exaltation, and his fullness. Verse 54, he has helped his servant Israel in remembrance of his mercy as he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed forever. There are people today who would love to cut that verse right out of the

Bible. God doesn't help Israel. No, no, no, no. Israel is just a land-occupying humanitarian blot upon this world. Yes, yes. And there's no heaven and hell. Jesus isn't real. So let's eat and drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die. One lie, repeated over and over loudly, doesn't make it any greater than any other lie. It's just, it's still just as much of a lie. But he's helped his servant Israel.

You see, Abraham's blessing to his seed comes only by way of Israel. Abraham's blessing to his seed only comes through Israel. Abraham had Ishmael. Abraham had multiple sons under Keturah. We'll get to that eventually in January. We get back to Genesis 25. And then Isaac had Jacob and Esau. But the blessing only came by way of Jacob, by way of Israel. Psalm 98, verse 3 says, he has remembered his mercy and his truth toward the house of Israel. All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God, which comes by way of Israel. Jesus will eventually say to the woman at the well, salvation is of the Jews. Period. And it's no different today. And Mary abode with her in verse 56 about three months and returned to her own house. Okay. Remember last week when we looked at that, and then the next verse in 57 says, now Elizabeth's full time came. Like, well, why would Mary be there up till the ninth month of her pregnancy? And she's like, I felt a contraction. Okay, I'm out of here. Bye. I don't want any part of this. Oh, my word. No, it's just, it's finishing the narrative about Mary. We just read the narrative about Mary. It's jumped to her. Verse 56 is rounding out her narrative, saying that when she was done visiting, she was there for full term. Then she went home. Then it jumps to Elizabeth's narrative.

It doesn't mean, and I don't think it means that she left. I think she stayed to help because it also says in the next section, it says Elizabeth's cousins there and friends were there around about her. And Mary was her cousin. And so Mary's taken to this place. She goes and she's with Elizabeth.



[ 32 : 11 ] And what does God do? God allows her to have right in front of her, this beautiful picture of a miraculous birth coming to fruition, just as like he's promised to her. He said, stay here, Mary, help with Elizabeth. See it come forth. And she was there when Zacharias prophesied and talking about her baby and saying, oh, my word, this is what he's going to do. He's going to give light to them that sit in darkness and the shadow of death to guide our feet into the way of peace. And Mary's faith is just growing and growing in strength. And she's like, God, this is what you're going to do with me. I'm like a nobody. Mary abode there three months. And then Mary has to go where?

Mary's got to go home, doesn't she? I believe Mary's courage is on full display as she returns home with what would appear to be very unsettling news. Okay, 15 to 17. Kitty's 15. Natalie is out in college. She's almost 18, right? If she comes home and says, that's a little strange, but I'm pregnant.

And before you get upset, God did this. God did this. Like, oh, okay, right? So remember, we just talked about the world that they're in. Rome is, it's been a pretty ugly place. Rome has been ruling and still ruling. And Octavius or Augustus is only now really bringing things within his grip. He was an administrative genius. The guy was amazing. He brought in money and administration.

He was able to bring in all this wealth from Egypt. I guess he went down to Cleopatra and said, you lost, give me the dough. And then he was able to bring in a lot of administration, which set up then the Roman Empire to thrive. But right now, there's a lot of corruption. And so a lot of people think, well, maybe they thought Mary was, you know, attacked by a Roman soldier and became pregnant. You think, okay, if you're her family, maybe she's in denial. Honey, you, we'll get you some therapy. You know, let's go talk to the rabbi. You know, or maybe your dad's like, I thought your mom explained this to you. God, this does to you. Come on now. And he's like, no, no, no, it's God did it to me. And, oh, no, you know, they said, okay, honey, we'll love the baby. Who's ever, no, it's not just any baby. I'm having the Messiah. What? Yes. God gave me the Messiah.

I don't think it was a very good situation she went into. We never hear about her family ever. We're going to see her in this next section after we deal with Joseph. The next time we see Mary, she's with him. They're not married yet officially. It's not consummated, but yet he's got her.

[ 34 : 42 ] There's no word of her family. I think it was very difficult. But before the indwelling Messiah could come forth into the world, God allowed Mary to assist with this other miraculous birth, right? And God wants us to do the same. Before the Messiah comes again into this world, we have the opportunity to assist with miraculous births. We can go out and say, you must be born again to receive the kingdom of heaven. We can partake in those miraculous births.

And guess what happens every time you partake in a miraculous birth? Your faith goes, woo-hoo-hoo, right? You're filled up to the max. You're excited as you see someone else partake in the faith of Mary. So now we're going to jump to our buddy, Joseph. That's going to be over in Matthew chapter 1. We're going to have to really start hiking here because we want to get through this. So Joseph's genealogy, that was the beginning part of Matthew chapter 1. We're going to pick up in 18. Joseph's genealogy was to show Jesus's legacy and his ancestry. It was not to show his physical descent, that Mary is Jesus's physical descent.

Joseph is Jesus's legal ancestry. And that's because of a curse that was on David's line back in one of the Kings. So look that up on your own. But in verse 18, it says, now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise when as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. So you see Joseph's perspective on this. Before they came together, his espoused wife, she's pregnant. Mary returned home three months pregnant with a fantastical story that defied human reason. Then Joseph, her husband, being a just man and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privately.

Joseph found himself stuck in a situation that was beyond his control and beyond his understanding. He was just stuck. He understood the world he lived in, but he did not yet realize what God was doing in that world. Joseph could not believe the coming of the Messiah was at hand because he would not believe that God would ever work outside the boundaries he had been taught were acceptable.

There's a whole wing of the church that lives that way today. It is not acceptable to talk about this world going into utter chaos and God destroying it over seven years and remaking it and thus being raptured. No, no, no, no. I have been taught the acceptable thing is the gospel go forth in all the world that will save all the nations and all the nations will come under Christendom. We'll set up this beautiful kingdom for Christ and he'll return and start ruling it. I cannot accept the fact that my entire life, this work that I've put towards building a kingdom here is just going to crumble. He would not believe that God would ever work outside the boundaries that he had been taught were acceptable.

[ 37 : 23 ] Isaiah 55 8 says, my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither your ways my ways, saith the Lord. So what is Joseph going to do? He's going to put Mary away privately. He loves her. It says he's a just man.

You know, I think he really had a heart for her. I think he wanted to marry her. I think he really loved her. And I think his heart is broken as she's like, no, Joseph, Joseph, no, God did this. And he's like, Mary, I don't want to hear anymore. Okay. I've heard everything you have to say. You see, you see, Joseph's heart was in the right place, but his theology was not. He had the right heart and the wrong theology. The church today, unfortunately, except for the remnant church, which we are a part of, so much of the church today is the right heart and the wrong theology. And you know what wrong theology will eventually lead to? The wrong heart. As the theologies that said that, oh, church, you've replaced Israel has now led to a heart that hates and despises the Jews, God's people.

And the church, God's presence on earth, his bride are bringing themselves under the curses of Israel by poking their finger in God's eye. It's just crazy. But what does God say? Those whom I love, I chasten. So don't be surprised if you see a great chastening in the church in these coming months and years. And lastly, here with this section, do not be too quick to discredit those you've always been found to be credible. I've experienced this in my experience, this in my own life. Don't be quick to discredit those who you've always found to be credible just because they have some fantastical story or just because you can't figure out what's going on in a situation. And I've experienced that multiple times in my life. But anyway, verse 20, but while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him into a dream saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she shall bring forth a son and shall call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins.

What Joseph decides to do about the coming Messiah will determine his entire future. In fact, his marriage and any chance he has at a marriage, a good marriage with Mary, hangs on the fact that he has to accept Jesus. Joseph's marriage had no chance unless he first accepted Jesus. And I would say there's no marriage today that does.

Now all this was done. This is Luke now giving some commentary about what just took place here with Joseph. Now all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken to the Lord by the prophet saying, behold, a virgin shall be with child, shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is God with us. While God's plan may have been surprising, and it is surprising at times, it will always align with his character and with his word.

[ 40 : 16 ] Because what does the angel say there? Or I mean, what does Luke say? That just as the prophets had spoken, that he shall be called Emmanuel, God with us. And that's quoting Isaiah 7 14. And so God's surprising plans always align with his character and with his word.

So Joseph now says, okay, and believes this. Joseph is one, like I said, he had the right heart and wrong theology, and God strongly stepped into his life. And look, he corrected him. So there's hope.

There's hope for those today that you see like, oh, they're so messed up in what they believe. They say they love God, and I think they do, and they have a heart for people, but they just don't understand what God is doing in this world. And you can see that God on his own stepped into Joseph's world to kind of correct his ship there. While faith may question God's means and methods, it never questions his motives. Our faith will question often, how is God going to do this? How is he going to bring it about? But we can never question God's motives. And what is God's motive? That he might be with us.

Emmanuel, God with us. God's motive is relationship and fellowship with us. Then Joseph, being raised from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, in verse 24, and he took unto him his wife, and knew her not till she brought forth her firstborn son, and he called his name Jesus. So Joseph takes Mary. Let's go 10 more minutes. We can do it.

Let's jump over to Luke chapter 2, and let's finish there. We can do it. So Joseph, he takes unto him his wife. Consider Mary having returned home to her family, and consider that her story is pretty fantastical. At the get-go, Joseph's like, I'm going to divorce her.

[ 42 : 16 ] So you know there's some meeting going on with the family. There's all this swirling around, all this talking that's happening. At this point, Joseph says, you can just picture him going to Mary and being like, ah, I had an angel. You were right. Don't you ever tell me I'm wrong again.

Right? He says, okay, I believe you. I believe you. Let's do this. In Luke chapter 2, it says, it came to pass in those days there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed. So that was what we were just talking about with Augustus. He's going to have a census. This is part of his attempt to bring the Roman Empire back into cohesion underneath his rule. He's like, I want to know who I got, what I got. Okay? And also, he needed to raise a lot of cash. Mary did not need to go. Under Roman law, Mary didn't need to go to Bethlehem. Joseph did, but he takes her with him. Why?

I think because Nazareth wasn't a good place anymore. When you see in Jesus's ministry, when he's in his hometown, you'd see him mocked and ridiculed. We are not the son of fornication, the Pharisees will say to him. Well, who is your father? We know our father. So this is going to stick with him. So I don't think this is a very good place at this point for Mary. There went out a decree from Caesar because their first went out a decree from God, didn't there? God's like, I need these guys to get to Bethlehem. Bethlehem was about 90 miles, could have been done in four days, but not with a pregnant wife.

You're talking maybe a week. There's two ways to get to Bethlehem from Galilee, from Nazareth. You go through Samaria. No way they were doing that. The Jews did not go through Samaria. So you had to go down into the Jordan Valley and then come up around and that side red line there, coming through Jerusalem and into Bethlehem. So this would be about maybe a week, a week's trip. Imagine you're on the road with, and you pass Mary and Joseph, right? People, a lot of people traveling right now.

Just this guy and his wife, you know, the Christmas cards always put her on a donkey. I don't know if that's worse or not. If you're pregnant, you want to walk or you want to be, get me off this donkey. I'm going to walk. You know, I don't know. Don't touch me. When she gets to Bethlehem, we're going to see, and after, it says something like, after those days were accomplished, she brought forth her firstborn son. So it doesn't seem like she's like in labor, nine months, boom, ready to give birth.

[ 44 : 44 ] She's got a little time. It seems like they're in Bethlehem for a bit when they get there. But at this point, you know, they're just traveling along the road here. And, oh, they lost my spot.

And verse 2 of Luke chapter 2, and this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria, and all went to be taxed, everyone into his own city. So we think of Mary and Joseph traveling alone.

They wouldn't have been the only ones going to Bethlehem. As much as this was an upheaval at the time of this census, everybody was also going back for a big family reunion. Everybody from Joseph's family, every male would have gone to Bethlehem. But it seems like they're traveling alone.

And it seems like, hmm, nobody really wants to travel with them. Why isn't Joseph's dad going with him? So the decrees of men, what are they? They're simply to facilitate the plans of God, aren't they? This decree that went out. God will move an entire world, an entire city, and a heart to bring the fulfillment of his word. And God shook up the entire world for the sake of the coming Messiah, and he's doing it again. Verse 4, and Joseph also went up from Galilee out of the city of Nazareth into Judea under the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be taxed with Mary, his espoused wife, being great with child.

Okay, so she's with Elizabeth for three months. She comes home three months pregnant. Now she goes to Bethlehem with Joseph, great with child. So there's months that have taken place in Nazareth, months of dealing with the talk, the gossip, the famine. Joseph's like, all right, let's go. It seems like he's now taken her in as his wife. That marriage ceremony, seven days long, the feasting, the celebration. Was it just like, whatever, just cut it short, go get married? You know, was it like, hey, okay, you come and live with me now? They've not yet consummated the marriage. They're not yet, you know, fully married, but it seems like he's taken her in to care for her at this point, that they are all alone. Puts it in context when Mary's going to eventually give birth.

[ 46 : 51 ] It seems like she's alone. Mary did not need to make this trip with Joseph, Joseph for the sake of Rome, for the sake of the census, but she did for the sake of the scriptures. God needed her to go, and what looked like a horrible situation with her and her family was so that God could move her from Nazareth to Bethlehem.

If everything was hunky-dory, you know, maybe Joseph would have been like, honey, stay here with your mom. I'll be back before the baby's born, I promise, but he had to take her with him. But as we close, at this point, the entire fate of the coming Messiah was in the hands of a faithful young husband who said, come on, honey, I gotcha, and his young bride.

Nobody to the world's eyes, but pretty big and God's. Good things come in small packages. As they traveled that road, if you were on that road, if we were, they're coming to Bethlehem, say we're heading the other direction, the Judean Valley, and it's just this man and this woman, the Messiah just passed you. She carries within her the Messiah, the Savior of the world, completely exposed to the elements, to robbers, to Romans, flood, landslide, rain, hail, whatever, right? To all the hordes of hell traveling this road, and you never would have known it.

Guys, we carry every day within us the Messiah. Every day we pass people. They don't have any clue that the Messiah is within us. They don't know what's coming. They have no idea. And all the forces of hell are arrayed against us to try and keep the Messiah contained. Fine. He's going to be in you. Keep him there. Don't be the light of the world. Don't tell anybody about me. There's opportunities. We don't, you know, it's not like we go out and just start shouting at people, you need to get saved. Unless God calls you to do that, go do that in Jesus' name, you know. But it's not in Jesus' name. Don't do it in anybody else's, yours or any other evangelist, only in his name.

But we are the light of the world. I was thinking about that this week as I was on my one site that I'm on, or we're building this pump station. They're doing clearing now, taking down trees, and you know, all these people around and whatever. And I'm standing there in the middle of the woods on my phone. Probably looks like I was texting. And I'm typing out notes for the message for Sunday.

[ 49 : 08 ] And it's like the whole world could care less. I'm nobody. They don't care. Oh my word. It's a pastor preparing a message. Go get guys. I almost stood there. Careful. He's preparing a message in the middle. Stop everybody. Oh my word. God's at work. They don't care. They could care.

If a tree fell on me, they'd only care because of their liability, right? They don't care. They don't know. But we carry within us the Messiah, and he's coming soon. Nobody's to the world. But to God, Mary was highly favored. She had the Lord's presence.

She was blessed, and she had God's favor. To Joseph, to God, Joseph was just. He was faithful. He was compassionate, and he was obedient. So as the coming of the Messiah draws near, what direction are we headed, right? Are we passing Mary and Joseph on the road? They're headed that way. The Messiah's headed that way. And we're just like, I don't know who that was. Whatever. I got my own plans. You know? Or are we going, wait a minute, and turn around and be like, the Messiah just went that way. I'm going to go with him, right? But we have these treasures in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us. Good things in small packages, right? Who are we? We're nothing. Nothing to this world. Yeah, every one of us has experienced a miraculous birth of the Messiah and has the opportunity now to go and partake in other miraculous births. Crazy. Absolutely crazy. Recognize who you are in Christ, right? Recognize that he's your life. Recognize that he looks with us. He says, you are highly favored,

Lord, church at Calvary Chapel, Charlotte. You have God's blessing, God's presence. He sees us justified, faithful, compassionate, obedient, and it's because of the work he's done in us.

Father, thank you so much. Lord, as we we don't even understand. We look at Joseph. I can identify with that, I think, more than any of them, Lord. Being like, no, this is not what I've been brought up to believe.

[ 51 : 24 ] This is not what I've ever thought would happen. It can't be this way. And Lord, when I look at what you've done in my life, when I see the grace of God in my life, Lord, when I know the sin you've forgiven and the heart you've redeemed, I'm just as surprised. This isn't how it's supposed to work, Lord. There's supposed to be consequences and pick yourself up by your bootstraps and make something of yourself and, you know, an education and reputation. Lord, you're looking for a heart.

None of that stuff matters. Mary sacrificed all of that because she said, I'm going to have the indwelling Messiah. That's my priority. And Lord, we obtain that through a willing heart. So with surrendered hearts now, Lord, we sit before you. And as we close out this, our time together, Lord, we thank you that you would entrust us, just like you did with Mary, with something so precious and so valuable to you. In Jesus' name, amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

[ 55 : 14 ] Amen. Amen.

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[ 57 : 44 ]    Amen. Amen.

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[ 60 : 14 ]    Amen. Amen.

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[ 62 : 44 ]    Amen. Amen.

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[ 70 : 13 ]    Amen. Amen.

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[ 75 : 13 ]    Amen. Amen.

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Amen.