

Mary, A Willing Vessel

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Date: 21 December 2025

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[0:00] To two places this morning. We're really very, very close to coming to the end of our Exodus study, and I think there's only one sermon left in that series, and I'm going to save it for next Sunday.

So, we're going to skip ahead and find two places with me, Luke chapter 1 and Matthew chapter 1. Luke 1 and Matthew 1.

When you think from the scriptures on what's called the Christmas story, these are not exactly the portions. Luke 2 is really kind of the prime spot, but we'll save that reading for Wednesday night Christmas Eve service.

But Matthew 1 always gets brought into it, and I'm going to incorporate two passages together here and try to look at an angle of this season and this time that's, I don't want to say it's rarely talked about, but it's just new to me to look at this, and you'll see very quickly here.

Luke chapter 1, and we're going to begin there, reading a few verses, and then we'll skip back to Matthew and read a few more, and you may just heads up, put a marker in or do something, because we're going to flip back and forth between these two passages the entire morning.

[1:15] So, Luke chapter 1, I'll begin reading in verse 26, and read down to verse 33. Luke 1, 26. And 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.

And the angel came in unto her and said, Hail, thou that art highly favored. The Lord is with thee. 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.

The angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found favor with God. And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus.

He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest. 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. Now come back to Matthew chapter 1. And let's read this portion from verse 18 to the end of the chapter.

[2:27] Matthew 1 and verse 18. 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 Ghost.

Then Joseph, her husband, being a just man and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in 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 Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus. For he shall save his people from their sins.

Now all this was done that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is God with us.

Then Joseph, being raised from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife, and knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son.

[3:33] And he called his name Jesus. The birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise, and a few details are given here. The Christmas story begins with the conception of the child.

Both passages we read describe more than the birth at all, they describe the conception. And it was first announced by the angel to Mary in Luke chapter 1, and this was news to her.

And so she receives that news, and then it's followed by nine months of, I want to suggest and show you today, likely confusion and fear, and yet all the while faith.

And I want to zero in on this time in Mary's life, the time before the angel appeared to the shepherds and announced the birth of the Christ child. The time before there was the heavenly host glorifying God and saying glory to God in the highest.

Before the shepherds came and all the jubilation and before they go on to spread the word and the glad tidings around, a young woman, an unassuming, unexpected, innocent young woman, is at the center of a spectacular event.

[4:48] Because according to Galatians 4, the fullness of time had come. It was time for God to be made of a woman, to redeem them that were under the law.

And now God is coming to earth, and Mary is the chosen vessel. I want to say three things to you this morning about her pregnancy, and about something that this young, naive even, clueless, just did not intend for any of this to happen to her.

All of this that happened, I want to show you three things and make some application that I think we can take home with us that make sense. Number one, let's consider that this pregnancy was a scare.

It had to be a scare. That's got to go without saying. Every unmarried and unplanned pregnancy is a scare. When you first find out you're pregnant, you're not exactly shouting for joy.

It happens all the time. And when that takes place, a lot of things, emotions, fears, things just flood through your system. But to realize how much of a scare this must have been for her, you've got to put yourself in her shoes.

[5:59] Now I know you're already thinking, well, the angel told her it was going to happen. Sure, he told her it was going to happen. But she's still an unmarried, she's still a single young lady, and now she's found with child.

You've got to put yourself in her shoes to feel the emotions and to feel the confusion. Nine months carrying a child and none of that was easy for her.

Remember that she's not a fornicator. She's not being promiscuous. She's innocent. And everybody else is only going to suspect and surmise that she did something she shouldn't have done.

They're not going to believe an angel came and talked to her. How did Joseph respond? Look at verse number 19. Joseph, her husband, being a just man, not willing to make a public example, was minded to put her away.

That means to divorce her. They're not even married, they're a spouse to be married. And the Bible calls Joseph her husband, and the angel calls Mary his wife, and yet they have not come together in marriage yet.

[6:58] And yet Joseph, even a just man, a good, godly, just man, is thinking, she's pregnant, I've got to get rid of her. I don't want her to be stoned, because that's what our culture demands, and that's what the Scripture demands.

So how can I do this in a way that she can go on and live her life? That's what Joseph's being, he's minded to do. But don't you think for a minute Mary wasn't scared about the whole thing.

At first, it's a secret. And she's the only one that knows. Nobody on the planet knows. The angel came to her, not to her parents, not to her friends, not to the community, not a public display, to her privately.

She knows something that nobody else knows. She's pregnant. How's she going to tell her parents? How's she going to let them know? Are they going to believe me?

How are they going to treat me when they find out? She knew exactly how they'd treat her, because her own just husband, Joseph, was ready to send her down the road. He felt he had to do it.

[8:04] Which tells you, he didn't believe her story. He didn't understand how any of this was true. An angel had to come to him, in verse 20, and say, it's okay, Joseph, don't be afraid to take her as a wife.

You better believe Mary was scared, and alone, and nervous. So Mary kept it quiet. Look at Luke chapter 1. Look what Mary did.

Look what the first thing she did was. She got out of town. In Luke chapter 1, and in verse number 39, right after this visit with the angel, Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste.

She got out right away. She didn't go talk to anybody about this. She took off to her cousin Elizabeth, whom the angel had said she also was with child.

And as we know, she's six months pregnant with John the Baptist. And she stays there for three months. Look down to verse 56. Mary abode with her about three months and returned to her own house.

[9:13] Mary's instinct in her first move is not to go talk to her parents and to her husband, but she's getting away. She gets away. She goes to Elizabeth, and she's with Elizabeth.

And when she comes in the door and salutes her, in verse 41, it tells us that the babe in Elizabeth's womb, John, leaped. And so Mary, no doubt, hiding out for a bit, trying to sort out her thoughts and figure this out, and laying low and doesn't know how to approach all these people in her life and how she'll be received, she goes and finds Elizabeth and probably sheepishly walking into that door, hey, cousin Elizabeth.

And when that baby responds, now all of a sudden something is a distraction. It's something to talk about. And now these two women that are pregnant with a supernatural godly thing that's going to take place here, these two women have a conversation and a private ceremony, a worship of the Lord.

But you have to understand what you read here about Elizabeth saying, bless art thou of women, blessed be the fruit of thy womb, and saying all these glorious things about the Lord coming, and Mary responding, her spirit rejoicing, God might say, you have to understand that's in a private room in the hill country in Judah.

That's not public knowledge. The whole nation is not rejoicing and glorifying God. That's just two women celebrating and being relieved. I think Mary is just fully relieved to have somebody accept this and to know about it with her.

[10:48] But three months go by. She can't stay there forever. And she leaves and heads back to the house. She heads back home to see her family. She could no longer hide after a full trimester that there's a baby boy growing in her womb.

In Matthew chapter 1 and in verse 18, it says at the end of that verse, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.

She was found with child. The news was kept close. It was kept quiet. But it could not stay that way because she was found with child. And now everybody knows it.

You better believe she was scared. This whole thing is scary. She thought Joseph would react a certain way and she was dead on right.

I don't doubt that her parents felt the same way. I don't doubt that the whole community felt the very much same way as soon as they found out. But look back at Luke chapter 1 again. The whole thing was scary, but Mary submitted to it anyway.

[11:52] This is something we want to learn from her. In verse 38, at the end of her discussion or discourse with the angel, in verse 38 of Luke chapter 1, Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord.

Be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her. Mary didn't know who would understand.

Mary didn't know who would be on her side. Mary didn't know who would desert her. Who would put her in front of the firing line to be stoned. The future for this young woman was full of uncertainty.

And it's not at all what she asked for. It's not what she anticipated for her life. But in this verse we see she surrendered herself to the Lord. She believed the word of the angel.

She just trusted him. Then if this is what God wants for me, then be it according to thy word. I'm in. I'm yours, Lord. And she surrendered to it.

[12:50] The pregnancy was a scare, but Mary surrendered. You ever been scared to submit yourself to something God wants you to do? I know you have.

I have. The immediate reaction when the Lord moves on your heart is your flesh says, Oh no. Your flesh just throws up fear and says, What will people think? You don't think that went through Mary's head?

What will people say about me? You don't think that went through her head? She was scared. And yet she submitted to the Lord. I remember a girl, a young girl, this has nothing to do with pregnancy in any way, so don't think that about it.

There's a young girl that had a heart for the Lord. A good girl. And she was at our church, the previous church we were at, and she was faithful in a church and attended the Christian school in just a good spirit.

She sang in the church, solos as a teenager in front of a big church. She just had some guts. And she just had a beautiful voice. She sang with other specials and groups. And she was just a good young lady at a heart for God.

[13:57] And I can remember her coming, I may have told you this story before, if I have, forgive me, but I remember her coming into my office and sitting down and just, I could tell she was just stressed.

She was in her senior year. She had no direction for where she was going to go after her senior year. And the real issue was that her mother and father were pressing her to go a certain direction. The certain faculty members and staff at the school was pressing her to go that direction. And she didn't want to do it. And it wasn't that she was rebellious at all. It says she had a heart for the Lord and she felt surely this is what God wants me to do.

And as she tried to talk to her parents, they would have none of it. And they cut her off and they wouldn't support her and they wouldn't listen to her and they kept trying to push her a different way. And this young lady came in and sat down and I knew of this, just vaguely knew of these details. I just, but I never stuck my nose in it. It just wasn't my business. But I could see she was coming to me and in the moment it just felt like she's looking for help. And she was pretty emotional.

[14:58] And I just said, how you doing? And she just shook her head kind of really slowly and subtly, just not good. And so I just, I thought, well, this is weird. So she's not going to talk.

She's emotional and she'd come in here just to sit and what. And so I was quiet for a while and then I just began to just to prod subtly and ask some questions. And I said, so you look like you're kind of stressed about something and she just kind of like nodded.

And I said, I bet you it has to do with what you're going to do after school's out. And she looked up at me and she started crying. And so I said, well, and I kind of talked her through what I perceived the situation to be and she just nodded yes or no the whole time.

And it was, I was right. It was her mom and dad and others like not, you know, pushing her one way and she felt in her heart that she should be going this direction to a place where she could go to a Bible school and be trained and be with Christians and serve the Lord with her life.

And she didn't want to do the other thing. And so as we, gosh, we didn't talk. I talked and she nodded. Kind of dug into that a little bit and got her to admit that the situation for what it was.

[16:13] And in the end of it, she was afraid. She wanted to follow God's leading in her heart. She wanted to surrender to that thing. But she was afraid of her parents and fearful of what the community that she was in and all the people that loved her and supported her would say about her and would do when she's going to go against all of them.

And she was kind of reaching out to me to help her stand up a little bit and to do it. And I gave her a little bit of counsel there and just prayed with her and fast forward to the story.

She ended up going following the Lord's leading and married and has several kids and they're in a good church right now. And she's a blessing. She's been a blessing and a thought from all of this is she was in a moment she was scared.

She wanted to go against what everybody else was telling her to do. Not to be rebellious but to love and follow and submit to the Lord's leading in her heart. And there's Mary. This pregnancy was a scare.

But God was orchestrating something. God was calling her to do something. Something that was going to bring about some uncomfortable situations.

[17:25] And Mary understood that. And she submitted to God. She surrendered to God and so can you. When the Lord leans on you and presses

on your heart and tries to draw you a certain direction and immediately you're like oh I can't do that.

I can't start going to church every time they have church. My family's going to start thinking I'm crazy. You're afraid of what they think about you. So was Mary. And yet she surrendered to God. I can't start telling other people about Jesus Christ. They're going to think this. They're going to say that. And so does Mary. I want to tell you and I want to charge you that you can surrender to the Lord when you're scared.

He can make up all the difference. He can fill you up on the inside with boldness with security and you don't have to fear.

You'll look at the scripture and you'll be like the Lord is my helper. I will not fear what man can do unto me. It'll change you. So you have to surrender to the Lord like Mary did.

[18:26] And you'll find out you have nothing to fear. I want if I could I'd love to just stick this into every single one of your minds this morning for eternity. This is something I had to learn.

I kind of feel like I had to learn it on my own and I think you can learn it just from hearing me say it that if God is dealing with your heart you don't have to fear anything. You just have to submit to Him.

Trust Him. And stop fearing your mouth and your mind and your ability. He doesn't need your ability. He's got enough of it Himself. Just surrender to Him.

It's going to take us into our next thought here. The pregnancy was not only a scare but it was supernatural. Think about this with me. It was supernatural. This was not normal.

She was found to be with child of the Holy Ghost. Look back over at Luke chapter 1. This medical doctor, Luke, he's going to give us the greater description of it all.

[19:25] Look at Luke chapter 1 and start in verse 34 where we stopped. Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be seeing I know not a man?

So there's only one way to conceive seed. There's only one way to have a baby boy. Mary says, How is this possible? Because I haven't known a man.

In verse 35, The angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee. And the power of the highest shall overshadow thee. Therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.

God's Son. Not man's. God's Son. And behold, by cousin Elizabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her own age. And this is the sixth month with her who was called barren.

For with God, nothing, nothing shall be impossible. Mary didn't understand how this could happen.

[20:28] I mean, how could she understand? That's the craziest thing she's ever heard in her life. How could she possibly have understood the words of the angel? But the angel assured her not just of the possibility, but of the reality of the situation.

This is real, Mary. This is happening. And he said so by saying in verse 37, With God, nothing shall be impossible. What took place here with Mary defies all human logic, defies all human experience. Barren women have become pregnant when God opened their wombs or when God gave them conception, as the scripture would say, but never, not once in human history has a virgin conceived child and been found with child.

Never. It's not unlikely. It's impossible. And so Mary's pregnancy was supernatural. She's being very honest here when she says to the angel, How shall this be?

How? If you were a young lady in that same position as she was, you would have said the same thing. You would have felt the same way. I don't understand what you're saying to me.

[21:45] This is very, very confusing to me. But don't worry, Mary. God will take care of that. With God, nothing shall be impossible. God doesn't even need you to do anything.

You know why? Because this is his work. This is something that he's going to do. This is his plan to bring his only begotten son into the world. All he needs, Mary, is a vessel.

That's all he's looking for. He's looking for you to be a vessel, as the Bible says, sanctified and meet for the master's use. And Christian, this morning, that's all God ever needs from you is for you to submit yourself and surrender your life over to him as a vessel.

God, you can use me if you choose to. You can use my life. You can use my hands. You can use my voice. Whatever you want, Lord, I'm yours.

That's all he needs from you. A willing and an available vessel for him to accomplish his work through. He'll do the work. You don't have to worry about it. You don't have to plan it.

[22:57] You don't have to be smart. You don't have to be accomplished. He'll do the work. This is where the charismatics have it backwards. Our charismatic friends, many of them, believe the gospel of Jesus Christ, yet they take a little turn on the Holy Ghost that God gifts to the believer.

And they take this idea that they can do great things because they have God in them. Because they have God, now they can command and they can work and they can manifest.

And they've got it backwards. They think that they can use his power to do some extraordinary feat. They claim some gift.

But the reality is we don't get God in us so that we can do great things using him. But the right way to look at this is we surrender to him, he gets us.

We give him our life, he gets us. And then he does whatever work he chooses to do using us as a vessel.

[24:05] We don't claim his power and his gifts and then start going around finding ways to manifest them. We just submit ourselves to the hands of God. And if and when he chooses to use us to do whatever he chooses to do, we're just a vessel.

You know what Mary should not do? Mary should not go to Joseph and say, Hey, angel, talk to me. I need to get pregnant. I need to bring forth a son.

She better not get in the way of what God's doing. Mary cannot take any of this situation upon herself or into her own hands. She'll be getting in God's way. What she must do is allow the Lord to do his work.

To do a work that only God can do. A work that when it's finished, and accomplished will be pointing to heaven and saying what God hath wrought. This pregnancy is supernatural.

And there's a lesson in this for the Christian too. It's because we can get mistakenly thinking that God needs our help. That God needs us to do something.

[25:12] And I think you can get, you can really cause a big mess when you get to thinking that way. God doesn't need you to tell him what to do. God doesn't need you to tell him when to do it.

We don't understand something and we get tempted and we get pressured into doing something or making a move. We better be careful because we need to learn to trust the timing of God.

We need to learn to trust the working of God. We need to learn to wait on the Lord. The Bible says tribulation worketh patience.

But let patience have her perfect work that ye may be perfect and entire wanting nothing. What does that mean? That means God puts his children through something and I'm using this as an analogy to tie this into this because the negative things are the ones we hate the worst.

And so God puts us into some tribulation and he says that's going to work out patience in you. And when that works the patience you then are grown.

[26:24] You're perfect. You're complete. You're entire. Wanting nothing. In plainer words God allows ugly and negative and hurtful situations to unfold in our lives and he allows them to last in our lives because he's not trying to work in the situation or fix it.

He's trying to work on you. He's trying to bring you somewhere else because the tribulation does the work. So God allows you to stay in it until the work's accomplished.

While you're praying take it away take it away God take it away he's allowing it to work and to grow you. And so the thought is don't get in God's way.

Don't try to start making moves and think just trust his hand. Believe him. He knows exactly where you are. He knows exactly how you feel.

He knows full well how it's going to turn out too. That's where you trust him. This was a supernatural thing with Mary and she decided and she did rightly behold the handmaid of the Lord.

[27:41] I'm yours. I'm your vessel. You take and do what you need to do and I won't get in the way and I won't ruin this which you're trying to work.

One more thought one more reason maybe God had to work in a supernatural way come back to Matthew this time in chapter 1 in Matthew chapter 1 let's look at verse number 22 Now all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet saying behold a virgin shall be with child and shall bring forth a son and they shall call his name Emmanuel that's Isaiah Isaiah chapter 7 and he prophesied that God would himself do a sign a sign that men would wonder at the pregnancy number 3 this morning is the pregnancy was a sign it wasn't the birth that was the sign baby boys are born every day but for a virgin a virgin to be found with child that could only mean one thing that God is coming to earth

Emmanuel is on the way God is going to be with us he's going to dwell with us the prophecy of Isaiah is now being fulfilled right here and now I don't know if when the angel spoke with Mary if he may have quoted that to help her understand it I don't know if he may have said it to Joseph it's not recorded there maybe not at all maybe they only got the words they got that we have in the text but maybe he said don't you remember what Isaiah said that a virgin shall be with child for this pure for this chaste young woman to be found with child it wasn't a scandal it was a sign but what's the purpose why the sign well the sign is to get man's attention it's to cause men to wonder and not to attack the girl and to disbelieve her but it's a sign is given to force them to stop and to consider and then to look upward toward God and say father this is a sign this is a miracle from heaven what is it that you want us to show us why do you want to get our attention and the answer to that question is one of the greatest answers to any question it's in verse 21 she shall bring forth a son and thou shalt call his name

Jesus here's the answer to your question he shall save his people from their sins that's what God is doing that's why the attention should be drawn to heaven because God is now giving his only begotten son and bringing him into the world that the world through him might be saved that's why this virgin is pregnant God is coming to earth in the form of a savior not as the angel of the Lord not as the Lord of hosts and almighty God but as a savior manifest in a form that would ultimately become a final sacrifice for sins the mighty God the everlasting father in the womb of a virgin it's a sign Mary was just a vessel a vessel

God is visiting his people he promised he would he's going to make right everything that they had gotten wrong the sign is the sign of a savior and now this scared and this innocent young woman looking at the days that lie ahead with all uncertainty ultimately she is used by almighty God to bring the only begotten son into the world a vessel to bring the savior to mankind that's the line you need to hear she's a vessel to bring the savior to mankind so what if God wanted what if he wanted to use you to bring the savior to mankind do you expect that God would ever want to use you to bring his beloved son to someone else would you be scared

[32:31] Mary was and yet she surrendered herself to God and allowed him to work she didn't allow her fears to throw her off Mary didn't allow her worry and the uncertainty of it all to turn her away she didn't fear what others might say about her nothing got in the way of accomplishing what God called her to do to bring his son into the world I want to close with this thought church that God wants to use your life to bring the Lord Jesus Christ to others this Christian life is not just about you come to church and sing a song and go home privately read your Bible and pray and stay to yourself that's great have a relationship with God but it needs to start to come out don't keep it in Mary brought forth her firstborn son you have the son the spirit of Christ in you if you're born again it's time for you to bring him forth to the world to stop hiding that you're a child of God at work to stop hiding the reason why you go to church every now and then to stop playing the game and keeping it undercover

God wants to use your life to bring his son into your world all he needs is a willing vessel he'll do the work he'll lead you he'll speak through you you just have to be willing you just have to avail yourself to him you're gonna say I never did that before I never talked to my parents I never talked to my grandparents or I never witnessed to anybody before about Jesus Mary never did any of this before

either and yet here we have the story and I believe the same thing's true that with God nothing shall be impossible he can use you frail innocent foolish fearful ignorant weak you he wants to and if you'll submit yourself to him he'll use you and could you can you imagine the joy that you're forfeiting because you're too scared to surrender to God

I can't promise you what the Lord will do but can we just imagine he's done it with others so could we imagine that if you would have some boldness and surrender to the Lord Jesus and start taking the gospel message that's in you to people in your life and to see one of them receive Christ as their savior to see one of your family receive Christ as their savior can you imagine the change in you and the joy that'll come in you and rejoicing with them and you're gonna forfeit it because you're scared you're gonna just leave it on the table and say I just never did that before well Mary didn't either and yet she surrendered and so can you God can use you to bring his son into the world you live in so that they too can be saved father this morning we ask that you'll use these thoughts and this example of this young woman that you'll use it to prick our hearts that you'll eliminate excuses from our tongue that you'll embolden us to take your son to those that we know that don't have them surely there are sinners and hell is getting closer and closer eternity is coming quickly and Lord we need to have compassion we need to hear from you and be strengthened by you we need to be surrendered to be used by you we need to live sanctified and be meat for the master's use the Bible says we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us Lord we believe that so please come into these earthen vessels and strengthen us to lift up the Lord Jesus Christ to live lives sanctified and righteous and separate from this world would you please give each one boldness and conviction to speak the name of the Lord Jesus Christ the one that saved us from our sins give us that conviction give us a burden for the lost souls in our lives forgive us for our selfishness for our cowardice for our complacency and renew a right spirit within us this morning prick our hearts for Jesus sake while your heads are bound this morning don't let

Mary show you up she's a young woman God will use a young woman she didn't need to have much ability she just needed availability and that's all God wanted would you make yourself available to the Lord to use your mouth to use your life to tell others about his son as the Lord laying somebody on your heart even now that you need to talk to that you have been reluctant to witness to would you commit to him today that that's what I'm going to do Lord by your grace I'm going to witness to him the best way I can I want to take Jesus Christ to them would you surrender to do that this morning would you surrender your vessel to him don't let

[39:16] Mary show you up you too could be highly favored in the eyes of the Lord up