

The True Story of God's King: Luke 1v26-38

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Preacher: Jonny Grant

[0 : 00] Open it up to us. So Luke chapter 1, starting at verse 26.

26 is actually on 1026. In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, Greetings, you who are highly favored. The Lord is with you. Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be.

But the angel said to her, Do not be afraid, Mary. You have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus.

He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever.

[1 : 06] His kingdom will never end. How will this be, Mary asked the angel, since I am a virgin?

The angel answered, The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.

So the Holy One to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth, your relative, is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month.

For nothing is impossible with God. I am the Lord's servant, Mary answered. May it be to me as you have said. Then the angel left her. Thanks, Charlie.

Thanks very much, Connor.

There's notes being handed out. If you'd like to follow along, it's a way of just helping to process and think through what we're looking at this morning.

[2 : 18] And if you've got questions, please feel free to ask after. So we're going to look at a section of what we might traditionally call the Christmas story.

And it's a story not only to hear, it's a story to tell. And with that in mind, let me just encourage you and remind us all that on Wednesday, we'll be giving out calendars.

And through the calendars each month, there's verses from the Bible, and throughout the calendar, there's readings, which tell people the story, the true story of Christ coming into the world.

And then next Sunday, just to remind you again, that at five o'clock is our carol service. And again, it's a way of telling the story to people, inviting people to come.

So these little invites that I'm holding up here at the table, please avail of them and do invite people to come along. Well, let's pray.

[3 : 40] Let's pray. Our Father God, we thank you for your word.

We thank you for this account of the coming of Christ into the world. We thank you that just as Luke has written, that we can now read it and hear your truth being spoken to us.

And we pray that it will be a truth that changes us, a truth that sets our hearts on fire, that reveals to us afresh the wonder of God the King coming into this world.

we pray, Father, that not one of us will leave without you doing a work in our lives and showing us Christ more fully so that we may delight in him, love him, and serve him more and more.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Well, do you really believe this story, the story that was just read to us?

[5 : 10] Don't you think it's a little bit far-fetched, all this talk of angels appearing and virgins conceiving? No one really believes this stuff anymore.

It's a nice story, but it's not really a true story, is it? Richard Dawkins, formerly Oxford University's professor for the public understanding of science, so a very well-respected man in these fields, says what many people believe.

He says this, it's supernatural nonsense to believe in the virgin birth. You cannot be an intellectual, scientific thinker and still hold religious beliefs.

It seems that for many, unless something can be explained scientifically, it simply can't be true.

Science, we are told, has proved that there's no such thing as the miraculous.

Angels do not appear and virgins do not conceive. Well, before we write this story off as a simple fairy tale or as just a legend, let's consider this.

[6 : 26] If God is going to say something, and if God is going to do something, why should we be surprised if it does not fit the normal boundaries of science?

What kind of God would he be if he were confined to the natural laws of science? God is not constrained to the tests and formula of a laboratory.

If God created these laws, is he not free to act outside these laws? So when God says something, when God does something, we should not be surprised if it doesn't fit our everyday experience.

You see, God speaks and God acts in an extraordinary way to get our attention. First, God speaks to announce his grace.

Look at verse 26. In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth. When God sends an angel, something big is about to happen.

[7 : 55] You see, angels appearing is not an everyday experience. When Mary saw and heard the angel, she doesn't say, oh, it's Gabriel again.

How are you? No, Mary's in complete and utter shock. Look at verse 29. Mary was greatly troubled at the words and wondered.

The wonder is not in kind of awe and amazement, but am I seeing things? Is this really an angel?

Verse 30. But the angel said to her, do not be afraid, Mary.

Mary is terrified. She's scared. The visit of an angel is not a normal experience. So when God sends an angel, it demands our attention.

God has something important to say. When we were growing up, we didn't have a TV in the home, but my father had a wireless radio.

[9 : 03] And at the dinner table, it would always be on in the background and with all the noise and all the talk, no one could ever hear it. But then just before six o'clock, you would hear this beep, beep, beep, beep from the wireless.

It was the cue that the news was just about to come on and we all had to shut up so Dad could listen. Now the sending of an angel is God's way of interrupting the normal run of life.

It's God's megaphone into the noise of this world. God's way of saying, shut up and listen. I have some news and I want you to hear it.

Because what the angel has to say is what God has to say. So what is it that God has to say? Well, he speaks in grace.

Verse 28. The angel went to Mary and said, greetings, you who are highly favoured. the Lord is with you.

[10 : 18] Mary is favoured. Literally, it means grace has come to you or grace has come upon you.

Not because Mary was special or sinless, but simply because of God's amazing grace. God could have chosen anyone.

But, look at verse 30, the angel said to her, do not be afraid, Mary. You have found favour or you have found grace with God.

Mary's not even looking for God. She's not even expecting any kind of visit. But yet, God intervenes into her life and that's what grace is.

God's goodness and generosity and kindness intervening invading our lives. Not because we've earned it or deserve it, but because God loves us.

[11 : 24] You see, we can be so familiar with this story that we can miss the point of the story. Look at how Luke begins his introduction to this story in verse 26.

In the sixth month, that is the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, that's the cousin of Mary, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee.

Now, Galilee was a region that was at the very edge of the nation of Israel, the northern edge. and Nazareth was at the very edge of Galilee.

It's like talking about Ballyhillon. You know Ballyhillon? It's at the very tip of Midden Head, at the very top of Donegal. It's kind of who goes there kind of place.

Nazareth is not the centre of the universe. It was a small, backward town. Archaeologists can tell us that it was a town of no more than just 50 houses.

[12:38] In fact, one disciple would later make the derogatory comment, Nazareth, can anything good come from there? You never went to Nazareth.

You left there as quick as possible. But that's where God chooses to go and announce his message. And if that doesn't seem strange, look at who God chooses to talk to, verse 27.

To a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David, the virgin's name was Mary. Who's Mary?

Well, that's the point. Nobody knows who Mary is. She's a small-time girl in a small-time town. In fact, she's probably not much older than 15 years of age because that's when marriage arrangements would happen.

She's a nobody. We don't have any background or any recording of who she is or anything about her family. Now, doesn't all this strike you as odd?

[13:53] God chooses an ordinary person in an ordinary place to announce to announce his grand message? Surely God could do much better than that.

Why not announce it in Jerusalem, the capital, somewhere really important? Why not choose someone wealthy or well-known, someone from a religious establishment?

Why does God deliberately and intentionally go to this back-a-beyond town and speak to an unknown trembling teenage girl?

Because God comes and speaks in grace. You see, what God has to say, he has to say to people like you and me.

God has come to ordinary people in ordinary places. You see, the point of this great story is that no one is off limits from God's grace.

[15:06] You don't have to be important or wealthy or well-known. You don't have to come from a certain address and have studied at a certain college. You don't even have to have it together.

You just have to be undeserving and that's what we are. God could have chosen anyone in any place, but in his grace he chose Mary in Nazareth.

And so God chooses to intervene into our world and into our lives by his son, the Lord Jesus Christ, speaking his truth through his word and calling people like you and me, ordinary individuals, nobodies in this world, calling us to come and serve him, to love him, to obey him because no one is off limits from God's grace.

But what is this news? What is God announcing? What is he going to do? Well, God acts to establish his king.

Verse 31. The angel said to Mary, verse 31, you will be with child, give birth to a son and you're going to give him the name Jesus.

[16:38] Now, women get pregnant all the time. There's nothing extraordinary about that. Except in Mary's case, it is a supernatural act of God.

Verse 34, how is this going to be? Mary asked the angel. I'm a virgin. Mary didn't doubt that she could have a son.

After all, she was soon to be married to Joseph and like every young girl, she dreamed of being a mother. The problem for Mary was, how can I have a son when I am still a virgin?

It's impossible. This is nonsense. Virgins do not conceive. Unless, of course, God chooses to act in a supernatural way.

Verse 35, the angel answered, the Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.

[17:48] This is unique in the history of the world. No other child has been born in this way.

Millions of children have been born. Billions have been born. children have been born. But no child has been born this way.

God, by the power of his Holy Spirit, caused Mary to be pregnant without the normal means of sexual intercourse. This is not ordinary.

This is extraordinary. This is supernatural. This is God's way of getting the world's attention and saying, I am going to do something grand and amazing and I want you to pay attention to what I am going to do.

So what is God going to do? Well, look at verse 31 again. You will have a child, you'll give birth to a son, and you're to name him Jesus.

[18 : 57] Jesus. The name Jesus means the Lord saves. So this child born to be Mary is God's means of saving this disordered world and its broken people.

At this stage of the story, we're not told exactly how it's all going to happen, but simply that this child, Jesus, is going to save.

four things were told by Luke at this point. First, he is the promised king. In the chronicles of Narnia, the land of Narnia is frozen in ice and snow, ruled by the wicked white witch.

But then as you read through the story, the land begins to thaw, and the ice begins to melt, and the animals of the forest recognize the sign. Aslan, the king, he's coming.

Now, the first readers of Luke's gospel, as they read this text, would have said the same. The king, he's come. You see, all through the Old Testament, God had been promised, the whole story of the Old Testament, is God's great promise that he would establish his king.

[20 : 24] king. Listen to this from the prophet Isaiah, speaking all those hundreds of years before, 700 years before the birth of Christ. This is what he says, Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign.

The virgin will be with child and give birth to a son. So as these first readers, as they began to read Luke's gospel, and they come across Mary, a virgin, giving birth, they would recognize the sign and they would declare God's promised king has come.

God is ruling all of history and all of time and bringing to fulfillment his promise to bring his king. But he's not just a promised king, he's the ruling king.

Nations today, like Britain, they have kings, but they're largely symbolic. They don't have any real power. But God's king is the one who will rule with absolute power and supreme authority.

Look at verse 32. He will be great and will be called son of the most high. God's king sits on the world's throne.

[21 : 47] He rules over all people and all things. He holds the reins of all power. He decides what is right and what is wrong. He will determine the course of history and the decisions of man.

But he's more than that. He's the eternal king. Some rulers and kings reign for a long time over a nation.

king. We know of one recently, Fidel Castro. For years he ruled over Cuba. But eventually they die and someone else comes and takes their place.

But not with God's king. Verse 33. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever. His kingdom will never end.

this king is not going to be pushed out or overthrown or replaced. Yes, he will die but he will rise again.

[22 : 53] He will be king forever over all time and over all people and over all history. And he is God the king.

Kings in the past as rulers do today behave as if they are a god. Dictating, ruling, just like we want to do with our own lives.

We think we're God. But this child is God the king. Look at the end of verse 35. As the angel says to Mary, so the holy one to be born will be called the son of God.

You see the virgin conception is not just to get our attention. It's there to tell us that this child born to Mary doesn't have an earthly father.

He has a heavenly father. In other words, his nature is divine. He is fully God. He will be called, end of verse 35, the son of God, a title making him equal or one with God.

[24 : 06] God. So God acts in a supernatural way to show us that this child is nothing less than the eternal God come in human form into our world to save.

This is no ordinary child. In fact, this supernatural conception proves to us his supernatural role. He is God's saving king.

And he's not voted in by popular demand, but he has been installed among the nations of the world by God. His rule doesn't depend on the will of the people, whether they like him or not, but he is there by the will of God.

And that will will not be overturned. His kingdom is built, not by our support. His kingdom is established by God because he is God.

Now, we might have trouble with a God who acts and intervenes in this way. But if God is truly God, does he not have the right to install his king?

[25 : 32] and establish his rule over all people and over all nations? You see, this child born to Mary is your king and my king.

He is the world's king, whether we like it, whether we bow to him or not. He is our king.

So, God announces speaking his grace into this world and God acts to establish his king.

Now, again, because this story is just so familiar to us, we could write about it, we could tell it to people. It can be so familiar that we might think, you know, this was just easy for Mary.

Oh, yeah, have a baby, God's son, no problem, what's next on the agenda? But it wasn't. Mary is deeply troubled. She's terrified.

[26 : 45] She's doubting. She's questioning. An angel has just appeared telling her that she's going to give birth to God the king. How can this be?

I'm not even married. What am I going to tell Joseph? What if he doesn't believe me? I'm just a young girl living in a small town.

This can't be happening. This is not possible. Well, listen to what the angel said, verse 37. For nothing is impossible with God.

It's not saying that God will do anything and everything, but literally it's saying no word of God will fail. Mary, everything God says he is going to do, he will do, and it will not fail.

It will come to pass. So Mary, what God has said is going to happen in your life, will happen. In a sense, it's a call for Mary to obey God's word and trust God's actions.

[28 : 07] And that's exactly what Mary does. She surrenders to God the King. Verse 38. I am the Lord's servant, Mary answered.

May it be to me as you have said. then the angel left her. You see, let's get ourselves into the feet of Mary.

Mary might not like everything that is asked of her, but yet she obeys despite all her doubts and all her questions. I am the Lord's servant.

And Mary might not understand everything that is asked of her, but she trusts despite all her troubles and all her fears.

May it be to me as you have said. I don't understand everything that is going on. I can't see how all this is going to work out, how I'm going to tell people, how they're going to respond.

[29 : 21] I just don't know what's going on here, but I will obey you. And I will trust you because what you say and what you do and how you act is always right.

now as we hear this true story of God's King coming into the world, intervening, invading by his grace, the same response is required from you and from me.

Thinking and studying about this this week and reading, I came across one writer who put it like this. he asks two questions which I think get behind the response of Mary.

And here's the two questions that we're going to settle on and reflect on. Here's the first one. As we think of God coming the King into the world, speaking his grace, establishing his King.

Here's the first question. are you willing to obey anything God says in his word, the Bible, whether you like it or not?

[30 : 42] Are you willing to accept the King's commands on how we should live? Mary was called to. Are you willing to submit to his word in regards to marriage?

not how I think marriage should be, but what does God say? Are you willing to submit to his words in regards to church? Not what I think about church, but what does God say?

Am I willing to submit to his every command and live under its authority? Can we say, as Mary said in verse 38, I am the Lord's servant.

I will obey. Here's the other question. Are you willing to trust God with how he acts in your life, whether you understand it or not?

Mary didn't understand everything that was going on. Are you willing to accept the things that God brings into your life, the circumstances that you must go through?

[32 : 01] Are you willing to surrender to his gracious interventions in your life, whether that is a path of suffering or a path of honour?

can we say, as Mary said in verse 38, may it be to me as you have said.

I will trust you. I can't actually see the point of why I'm going through this or why I have to go through this, but I will trust you.

you see, I think we all want to be in control of our lives. We all want to decide what is best.

We don't want God intervening or interfering with what we should do. We don't want people telling us how to live. But if God the King is King, does he not have the right to say to us what we should do and what should happen in our lives?

[33 : 18] Who are we to speak back to this God who spoke through the angel, who establishes his King? What right have I to say, you should do this and you shouldn't do that?

my life and your life belongs to God.

What you say to me, Father, through your word, I will obey. And what you do in and through my life, Father, I will trust.

are we the Lord's servant? Can we say, may it be to me as you have said?

This is God's King. He demands our life. Obey him. Trust him. Let's pray.

[34 : 31] adds him to him.