

# Matthew 1:18-25, Mary

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[ 0 : 00 ] It's a joy to be together this evening. How does one make a birth announcement? Perhaps a phone call to a loved one?

Maybe you were out to dinner with dear friends and you were waiting for that opportune time to share the news. These days we see clever social media posts, maybe three pairs of shoes or sandals in a photo, maybe a potential older sibling holding a sign that I'm going to be a big brother or sister.

Impending births are great news, news that ought to be shared. But what if a baby comes in less than ideal circumstances?

What if news of a baby comes during wartime? Or family? Or poverty? What if news of a baby come out of wedlock?

In those times, is it best to refrain from announcing it? See, not all birth announcements are convenient and joy-filled.

[ 1 : 23 ] Not all birth announcements are necessarily reasons to celebrate. Some come at a great cost. Some come at the cost of social shame, at the price of severe poverty, to the point of abandonment, even rejection.

And so the question needs to be asked, how does God announce the birth of His Son? What platform will He use?

What medium of communication will He choose? And if you're familiar with the Bible, you'll see He assembles all the stars together to summon shepherds.

He assembles all of creation together to move wise men from the east. He will stupefy religious leaders into silence to announce a birth.

In other words, God will call all of creation. Assemble the entire angelic realm, the earthly bodies, the religious systems in the city, the agrarian nomads in the fields to call attention to a baby being born.

[ 2 : 44 ] A baby on a night that a child is born, a son is given, and the government of all the universe rests upon His shoulders.

He's not a child to inherit a throne. He is actually a child who sits on the throne at birth. Staggering. An infant born as a king. Well, the birth of God's Son is announced in several different ways, and I'll leave to you. But we'll focus in on one this evening.

We read the majority of the text tonight. And tonight we anticipate what tomorrow holds. There's an announcement given to a mom, namely Mary, from whose womb the Lord Jesus would emerge.

And I'll focus particularly tonight on her response. It's framed by two statements she makes actually in Luke's Gospel. It's Mary's response after the announcement that Gabriel gives to her of a divine Son, the Eternal King, the Savior of the world.

[ 3 : 56 ] Two statements that I hope that will launch us into some meditative thoughts this evening and on to tomorrow and ultimately for the rest of our lives. From Mary's lips, we fasten ourselves onto two things.

Firstly, an impossible conception. An impossible conception. And it's followed by a humble reception. An impossible conception followed by a humble reception.

Impossible. Impossible is the word that comes to mind. Mary responds in verse 34, How will this be since I am a virgin?

In Mary's mind, conception is an impossibility given her virginity. She has yet to know a man. She was well aware that the angel was not announcing a child that would be born to her later through Joseph.

Rather, the angel was announcing a child that would come apart from Joseph. You see, the angel himself acknowledges the reality of the impossibility because the angel cites an Old Testament verse, Genesis chapter 18, 14.

[ 5 : 11 ] Here it reads, For nothing will be impossible with God. There in Genesis, our translation reads, Is anything too hard for God? See, Genesis 18 was also a birth announcement, incidentally.

It promised to Abraham and Sarah a child in their advanced age. And to that promise, Sarah laughed at the prospects of bearing a child. The Lord responded that what is laughably impossible is well within the capabilities of God.

Barrenness has never been an impediment to the purposes of God. Birth announcements to the barren are common in the Bible. They demonstrate that God has never been constrained by human limitations or the unproductivity of a womb.

He is more than able to keep His promises. He is more than able to bring about deliverance. He is more than able to send His people prophets to lead them. Isaac was the son of a promise.

Samson, in his birth announcement, is a mighty deliverer. Samuel was Israel's guide when there was no king. And even in today's, tonight's passage, interwoven is this account of barrenness, that of Zechariah and Elizabeth.

[ 6 : 29 ] That from their barren, her Elizabeth's barren womb, would come, Jesus' predecessor, the main signpost, billboard. John the Baptist.

God has always given children throughout Israel's history to bring about His purposes and announce His plans. Yet this one, announced in Luke chapter 1, is given not to a barren couple, nor birth through difficulty, but would come, would be given unlike any other.

A single woman, the Bible tells us, betrothed to be Mary, would have the Holy Spirit come upon her, and the power of the Most High overshadow her in such a degree that the infant born, the Bible tells us, would be holy, signifying His prestige, His set-apartness, the very Son of God.

The writer is actually collecting every, this image of overshadowing. The writer, Luke, is collecting every image that he can find that magnifies the presence of God.

When the tabernacle was completed, God overshadowed it. When Jesus was baptized, God overshadowed it. In the transfiguration, God overshadowed it.

[ 7 : 50 ] So much to say that what is taking place in this child's birth, or his mother, is that the baby is the summation, the totality, the intensity of the very presence of God.

As the Creed affirms, God from God, light from life, true God from true God. Therefore, He is the Holy Son of God.

He is one of a kind, not only in means of His conception, but in His very identity. The uniqueness of His conception only fortifies the uniqueness of His identity.

There is no other. There will be no other. In all of Israel's history, there were many who were mighty, but none would compare to this baby. Even John the Baptist, the first century, in the first century, arguably was one of the most significant people in history.

And that baby, called later on, in chapter 1, verse 76, John the Baptist, is nearly just the prophet of the Most High, where in Jesus, you have the very Son of the Most High.

[ 9 : 02 ] There are many in human history we will encounter who will continue to pour into humanity and help humanity. But even after the summation of all the accomplishments of people you and I think good, they pale in comparison to this and the Holy Son of God.

Virgins don't give birth. And with advancements, this is, note this, with advancements in medicine and technology, that statement is actually debatable.

Yet the impossible conception refers not only to the means by where conception happened, but also refers to the man that was conceived.

I'm not here to undermine the virgin's birth. I affirm it, and we must. It needs to be emphasized. But what needs to be esteemed highly is who is born.

consider what it means for the timeless one to be condensed into time. Consider what it means for the omnipotent one to be constrained by the human body.

[ 10 : 13 ] Consider what it means to be a king to transform himself into a servant. Consider the perfection of a newborn. That is the most absurd thing ever. You just have to ask a parent in this room.

Put these two things together. These two words. a holy toddler. Perplexing. Impossible.

And that is what occurs in this moment. The text tells us that Mary was certainly perplexed by the announcement.

But I can only imagine that Gabriel was even more perplexed. In his mind he had done many things for the Lord I assume.

In Daniel he illuminates dreams and visions and gives understanding. He is a messenger of great news as seen earlier in Luke chapter 1. And he's dispatched by God.

[ 11 : 15 ] He's entrusted with the inner workings of the divine will. And I can only imagine in this announcement what he was talking about.

Mary said this is impossible. I'm there's a conjecture. But I believe Gabriel is thinking this is impossible.

If angels long to look into the grandeur of human salvation then I think angels will be backed by the mystery of the incarnation.

How could the God that he served condescend so low if not for the mercy of God? The impossible conception is affirmed and acknowledged by Mary.

It's so miraculous to such a degree that the angel voluntarily says here let me give you a sign that you have a relative Elizabeth who's old and advanced in age and barren. She's actually sixth in her third trimester expecting after a lifetime of unprovedfulness.

[ 12 : 26 ] The announcement of an impossible conception gives way to a humble reception. A humble reception. The text shows no signs of objection. Luke the writer highlights for us the reception of the word of the Lord that came from the angel.

Mary's response is one of faith. Luke actually commends her belief in verse 45. Blessed is she who believes that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.

In humility she submits the revealed word and speaks arguably the best definition of discipleship there is in the Bible. Let it be to me according to your word.

The mother of the baby is also his servant as it turns out. And this baby not only is humbly received by Mary but enters into our world humbly.

He was not born to Herod the king as if he needed earthly kingship. He was not born to Zechariah the selected priest that year as if he needed a religious pedigree.

[ 13 : 45 ] He was not born in Jerusalem the chief city as if he needed geographic affirmation. Instead he was brought forth through Mary. That in Mary God subverted all the earthly powers of the day.

She held no official position. She is not described as righteous as Zechariah was earlier on. Her experience does not take place in the temple.

She is among the most powerless people in her society. She is young in a world that values age. She is female in a world ruled by men. She is poor in a stratified economy.

She had no husband at the time and she had no children to validate her existence. And as we spent the last few Sundays of Advent at least here in Hyde Park looking at women in Matthew's genealogy, we have seen that Jesus enters our world through what appears to be a very tainted lineage.

Jesus is identified with Tamar who is forgotten. Not only forgotten but deliberately overlooked.

[ 15 : 06 ] He would be identified with Rahab the prostitute who was uncleaned by virtue of her very livelihood. He would be identified with Ruth the refugee and the outsider who had little to no rights as a foreigner.

He would be identified with the wife of Uriah Bathsheba who was victimized sexually and widowed because of the depravity of a human king.

he would enter shamefully as a child seemingly conceived out of wedlock and into obscurity. Right? Born in Bethlehem. Where is that? Raised in Nazareth. What comes out of Nazareth? Adopted by a carpenter who has no religious pedigree.

An apparent bastard child to an insignificant woman. Born in a manger only soon to flee as a refugee who had no permanent place to lay his head.

[ 16 : 10 ] In all human appearances you would say this is no king at all. But don't let his humble beginnings mislead you to thinking that this baby is to be overlooked.

Though his family portrait and his entrance into our world is shrouded in shame. His exit from our world is gaudy with glory.

The same one who miraculously entered a humble insignificant obscure womb is the same one who majestically exits a sealed and secured tomb.

Both miracles at the beginning and the end. What a baby! What a king! What a Lord! And that is the beginning of the story.

The story of the gospel. What a birth announcement. What a testimony for you and I that Jesus Christ came to save sinners. Shame laden sinners overlooked, forgotten, unclean, foreigners with no rights, victims.

[ 17 : 24 ] Jesus came to say, oh, well, tonight, as you leave, what happened in Mary's life happened only to me.

God, you know, you know, but it isn't far fixed to think that in your life there was an impossible conception that the Holy Spirit overshadows you and then seized you and then secures you and as a result, may you respond, humbly with receptivity and faith and obedience for this baby who entered the world and this man who exits the tomb will reign forever.

in your life and in mine. Let's pray together. Father, we thank you that from womb to tomb you are king, unrivaled, unparalleled, that you invite all the shame and all the brokenness and all the consequences of sin.

you invite all sinners to come to you because regardless of how great the sin, the Lord Jesus is able to save and deliver and redeem.

So, Father, as we sing of this night, as we sing of this joy, would you seal these truths on our hearts as we go.

[ 19 : 12 ] We pray these things for Jesus sake. Amen.