

The Announcement That Changes Everything

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[0:00] The message is taken from Luke chapter 1 verse 26 to 38. It's on page 1016 of your pew Bible. I do encourage you to open and follow along if you can.

This is our fourth Sunday of Advent. And as we've been saying, if you remember, Advent is a time of waiting and a time of longing. But what do we long for?

Why are we waiting? Perhaps it's because we know the world is not as it should be. We know that something is wrong with our world.

And it's not just the world. We also know that something is wrong with us. In fact, the ruin that has befallen the world is the result of our failure and disobedience.

Our sin has turned what God created as a paradise into a hellish world. And so we wait.

[1:25] We wait upon a promise that something will be done. Someone will come. A rescuer. To rescue us.

Now, this plan of rescue has been announced in different ways since Genesis chapter 3 verse 15. There was the first echoes of that promise.

That the great enemy will be crushed. And this promise has echoed throughout history among God's people. For about 1500 years, Israel had been waiting for this promise of a rescue.

God made a promise to Abraham. God made a promise to Abraham. And upon this promise, he builds the following promises that he then makes to Abraham's descendants.

God made a promise to Moses. Through Moses, that is, to his people. Abraham's descendants.

God promised them a land in which they will dwell in and prosper.

[2:31] And have no lack. A land in which God would be blessed. God would bless them. If they will continue in faithful obedience to him.

God continued, as we saw in our first reading today, a promise to his chosen king, David. God promised to David a promised line of kings.

God promised them an eternal dynasty. In which a offspring of his will be an everlasting king. Yet, through all these promises, there is that echo of an offspring.

Of a king that is coming. An anointed one. Yet, Israel failed. In successive generations, Israel failed to keep faith with God.

The rest of the world were meant to look to Israel and turn to God. By observing their covenant faithfulness.

[3:37] But Israel failed. To do what God has called them to do. And even in the midst of their rebellion. Even as God promised that he would send them to exile.

That he would bring nations to conquer them. Even in the midst of all that. Even in the subsequent centuries that followed. Of being ruled by foreign powers.

The word of God kept coming through his prophets. And there is that continual echo. That he will send a rescuer. A deliverer.

For his people. And notice that throughout scripture. It is not just Israel that is coming to be rescued. This rescuer will come to Israel.

But the promise of God. That through Israel. The salvation that he has promised in Genesis 3.15. Will be shed abroad. To the nations. Was embedded in that promise.

[4:41] Of this one who is coming to rescue us. Isaiah. Isaiah. Which we have been looking at in the past few weeks. During Advent.

The prophet Isaiah spoke. Of this Davidic line. Of this Davidic king. Who will come. From whom will be this rescuer. He described him as.

As rising as a shoot. From the stump of Jesse. Jesse is the father of David. That is the royal line. But.

As the years. Went on. As centuries. Happened. As exile. Happened. As they came back from exile. What have. What has become of this.

Royal line. A kingly line. Long bereft. Of any signs of royalty. Yet God said. Hope will come. From that line.

[5 : 38] Hope will come. When it seems. None can be found. Because the mouth of the Lord. Has spoken it. That's what Isaiah said. In chapter 40 verse 5. The glory of the Lord.

We're told. Shall be revealed. And all flesh. Shall see it together. And here we have it. At the beginning of Luke's gospel. The angel of the Lord.

The angel of the Lord appeared. In a remote town. In a backwater region. To an unknown girl. Of no standing. Or favor. By any human standard.

He came. This angel came to make the announcement. This announcement. That changes everything. He came to announce. The one who will usher in.

The year of the Lord's favor. The rescuer. Long awaited. Is here. He who will bring about. The salvation of Zion. Is finally here.

[6 : 39] You know. The world has longed. For this announcement. Since the ruin of mankind. At the fall in Eden. Israel. The nation. Has waited. For over 1500 years.

For the dawning. Of this long awaited figure. And one will think. For such a promise. That has been long awaited. That has been long promised.

One will think. That the eventual pronouncement. Announcement. Of this promise. Will be to. One more notable. Significant.

Than a teenage girl. In Galilee of the Gentiles. For God. Moves in mysterious ways. His wonders to perform. As Calper's wonderful hymn says.

And God. He is his own interpreter. And he will make it. Make it plain. That is. God himself. Will make his plan. Plain. He himself.

[7 : 40] Is the revealer. And God. Has graciously revealed. His marvelous work. Of salvation. To mankind. In his revealed word. And so we have. Here.

This announcement. Of grace. The angel. Gabriel comes. And look at the markers. That Luke. Gives us. In the sixth month.

The angel. Gabriel was sent. From God. To a city. From God. To a city. Of Galilee. Named Nazareth. Well. In the sixth month. If you've been reading. The previous verses. In Luke.

You would have known. That the sixth month. Is referring. To the sixth month. Of Elizabeth's pregnancy. God had. Earlier come. To a priest. Zechariah.

To announce that. This plan. Is about to unfold. That he. Will bear a son. That his wife. Will bear a son. Even though she was barren. And this.

[8 : 37] Son. Will be the forerunner. For the great messenger. The great rescuer. That God is. That God is. Bringing. In. And now. God comes.

This same angel. Gabriel comes. To a city of Galilee. Named Nazareth. Don't know why they called it. A city there. It's really. Really. A small town. A backwater town.

Of no renown. Nazareth. Remember what Philip said. About Nazareth. Can any good come from it? And here. This young woman.

To a virgin. Bethrow. To a man. Whose name was Joseph. Of the house of David. And the virgin's name. We're told. Was Mary. Twice. It was mentioned. Even in this. Verse 27.

That this. Girl. It's a woman really. She is bethrowed. In that time. She will have been considered a woman. In our day. She is a young woman. A young girl. Of 13 years old. Probably.

[9 : 31] That's the age of bethrow. In those days. Here. The angel Gabriel comes. To this. Young.

Maiden. Virgin. We're told. Twice. Virgin. That's echoing. Isaiah 7.14. Where God earlier promised. Through his prophet. Therefore the Lord himself.

Will give you a sign. See the virgin. Will conceive. Have a son. And you shall name him. Emmanuel. And so the angel.

Comes to this virgin. Long promised. And he came to her. And said. And what was the saying. Of the angel. Greetings. O favored one. The Lord is with you.

Greetings. It really. It means. Rejoice. It's not just. Hello. It's really. Rejoice. O favored one. The Lord is with you. Again.

[10 : 29] This is an echo. Of the prophets. In Zephaniah 3. Verse 14 to 15. It says. Sing for joy. Daughter of Zion. Shout loudly. Israel. Be glad. And celebrate.

With all your heart. Daughter of Jerusalem. The Lord has removed. Your punishment. He has turned back. Your enemy. The King of Israel. The Lord. Is among you. You need no longer. Fear harm. And that's what. The angel. Gabriel. Has come to announce. To this virgin. Woman. This young. Lady. Mary. And she's referred to.

As a favorite. All favored one. This is the designation. That is given to Mary. That is. She is. An object. An object.

Of divine grace. Notice. Intentionally. I say. Object. She's not the subject. She's the object. Of divine grace.

[11:24] It is. All favored one. The Lord is with you. The Lord is with you. Mary. Mary. Mary is not merited. This honor. It's not that she is.

More righteous than. I want to be careful here. Mary. Is someone. Worthy of our emulation. She is righteous.

She is a godly. Maiden. That's not what I'm implying. But what I really am implying. Is that she is. Not in and of herself. Any more righteous. Or deserving.

Of this great honor. Do you understand what I'm saying? Mary. Is favored by God. Because God. Has made her. The object.

Of his beneficence. Of his grace. And that's what. That's what angel Gabriel means to say. You are highly favored. O Mary. You have been marked out.

[12:23] You have been marked out. With a central. Unique. Role. In God's salvation plan. Verse 29.

Imagine. Hearing an angel. Show up to you. This is a young. Girl. Of 13 years old. An angel of the Lord. One who beholds.

God's face. Comes to you. And says this. And what is. Mary's response. For she was greatly troubled. Verse 29. At the same. And tried.

To discern. What sort of greeting. This might be. That's very logical. That's a very logical. Reaction. To such.

An occurrence. She was greatly troubled. At the same. And tried to discern. What this might. What. What this greeting might be. But the angel continued. And says to her.

[13:21] Do not be afraid Mary. For you have found favor. With God. Here is the announcement. Of grace. And then. There is another announcement.

Embedded in this. It's an announcement. Of the son of God. Here is the promise. Now being unfolded. By angel Gabriel. And angel Gabriel. Says in verse 31. Behold. You will conceive. In your womb. And bear a son. And you shall call his name. Jesus. Jesus. It's a very familiar. Name for us now. But the word. Means.

The name means. Jehovah saves. Jehovah rescues. Jesus.

He will be great. Gabriel says. And we. He will be called. The son of the most high. And the Lord God. Will give to him. The throne of his father. David. And it will reign.

[14:15] Over the house of Jacob. Forever. And of his kingdom. There will be no end. Here is the announcement. Of the son of God. Now. There is echoes here. Of kingship.

Even in this pronouncement. Even the phrase. He will be called. The son of the most high. Now. In Israel. The kings. In the times of the kings.

The kings were. Were referred to. As. The son of God. Because they represent. Uniquely. God. They represent.

The people. Before God. God. And here. Will be the one. Who will come. Who will be. The son of the most high. But. But. Gabriel. So that Mary. Will understand. Even further.

Explains it. The Lord God. Will give to him. The throne. Of his father. David. And he will reign. Over the house of Jacob. Forever. And of his kingdom. There will be no end.

[15:11] Now. Imagine. Just imagine. As I'm saying all of this. We are familiar with these verses. Aren't we? We've heard them. Every Christmas. But imagine. Being this young. Woman. Hearing this.

Imagine. The reality. That she lives in. In Nazareth. It's been now. 600 years. Of foreign rule. Over Israel. Since they've come back.

From exile. They've not had a king. Who to rule over them. They've had vassals. Who are not truly. From. Even. Most of them. Were not even. Jewish.

And they really. Are under the. The boots. Of foreign powers. First. It was the Persians. Then it was the Greeks. And now it's the Romans.

Those 600 years. Of rule. And this promise. Comes. That there will be. From you. Mary. In Nazareth. A king. Who will sit on the throne.

[16:07] Of his father David. And will reign forever. Here's the announcement. Of the son of God. Imagine. How you will see. Seeing your surroundings. Seeing your reality.

How you will. Weigh. Such a. A promise. A declaration. An announcement. And further. Is the announcement. Of a new creation.

That is going to take place. So Mary said. To the angel. Again. Rightly so. How will this be. Since I am a virgin.

I want to make a distinction here. Between Mary's response. To the angel. And Zechariah's response. To the angel. Earlier in Luke. On first reading. In my scene. That.

Mary is also doubting. The word. Of the angel here. But you can tell. By the response. Of Gabriel. To Mary.

[17:06] And the response. Of Gabriel. To Zechariah. To know that. The motive here. The heart of Mary. Is not doubt. It is.

How will this be. You've pronounced this. Angel Gabriel. You've said this will happen. But how. So you might just know. This isn't.

An irrational. People. These are not primitive people. They. They're people of flesh and blood. And reason. Just like we are. Mary knows. Our babies come.

There has not been. Such a birth. In human history. At any time. Until now.

So it is. Logic. And reasonable. For her to ask. How will this be. Since I am a virgin. And she is. A righteous woman.

[18:02] She is a virgin. And here is a promise. That. She will bear a son. And so maybe logically. She's thinking. Well. I am already betrothed. To Joseph. Now this is the thing.

About the betrothed. That we mentioned earlier. They have been promised. Legally bound. To marry. But such was the custom. At this time. In Israel. That a betrothal. Will take place.

And the bride. Will still reside. In her father's house. For about a year. While the groom. To be. Prepares. The place. The home. For his family.

And that's what's going on. So there's been. The betrothal. And that betrothal. Is legally binding. It's not. It's much more. Than our engagement today. It's similar.

But much more significant. Than just a mere engagement. And proposal. That we have. In our day. It's a legally binding. It's a legally binding. Betrothal. The marriage though. Has not been consummated yet.

[18:57] Because they are not living together yet. She is still under her father's. Home and authority. And so within this interminum. Time. She's probably thinking.

Well. I'm still. I'm still a virgin. I am not. In my husband. To be his home yet. How will this be? She asks. And what does the angel say?

The Holy Spirit will come upon you. The power of the most high. Will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born. Will be called holy. The son of God. Here's the key thing here. The Holy Spirit will come upon you.

The power of the most high. The Holy Spirit. Will overshadow you. The words used there. Are the same words used. At the transfiguration. When the glory of the Lord.

Overshadows. And the three. Closest disciples. Beheld God's glory. The power of the most high. Will overshadow you.

[19:56] Gabriel says. Here. And the child to be born. Will be called holy. The son of God. This child. Will not be from the tainted line.

Of Adam. This child. Will be conceived. In the power of the Holy Spirit.

To a virgin. Here is the promise. That Isaiah long foretold. And to comfort her.

To comfort Mary. And to affirm. Our trust. The angel Gabriel said to her. Behold. Your relative. Elizabeth. In her old age. Has also conceived a son.

And this is the sixth month. With her. Who was called barren. For nothing. Will be impossible. With God. Where. Here it is. Elizabeth. Who she well knows.

[20:54] It's very likely. That Elizabeth. Is like a great aunt. Actually. To Mary. She is barren. She is a woman. Of elderly age. Long past the age. Of childbearing.

She was barren. As now. It's in a sixth month. With child. Nothing. Will be impossible. With God. Okay.

So we've heard. The angel Gabriel's response. Pronouncement. Announcement. What is Mary's response. To God's announcement. Verse 38.

Mary said. Behold. I am the servant of the Lord. Let it be to me. According to your word. Mary's response. To God's word of grace. Is faith.

In contrast. To Zechariah. Mary's response. Is faith. She believed God's word. And said. Amen. To God's announcement. Of salvation.

[21 : 55] Amen. That's what it means. Let it be to me. According to your word. She expressed. Her faith. In God's revealed plan. And our part in it. Not counting the cost.

To herself. Mary doesn't know. What would happen. She doesn't know. In what way. She doesn't even know. If Joseph. A husband to be. She probably.

Expect that. Joseph will put her away. She didn't know. That angel will go. To Joseph. To tell. To tell him. Of what it's about to be. She does not know. She hears God's word.

And. Despite. What the cost. May be. She responded. In faith. And she says. Let it be to me. According to your word. The blessed.

Virgin Mary. Here. Shows us. What our response. Should be. To God's announcement. Of grace. God has come.

[22 : 51] In the person. Of Jesus Christ. Christ. He has come. To rescue us. To save us. There is the gospel. It is an announcement.

Of God's grace. And mercy. How do we respond. To that announcement. And if you already. Receive that. Announcement. If you receive Christ. We've been saying.

Through this. Season of Advent. That we live. Between the two. Advents. We still have. The word of promise. He has come. And he will come again. And when he comes. He will come.

To take us home. How do you respond. To that word of promise. Is it in faith. Is it with longing. Expectation. Is it with joy.

And a hope. That God who says. Will accomplish. That which he says. He has declared. Or that we will all. Follow Mary's example. And respond.

[23 : 45] With like faith. To our gracious God. Who does not forget. His promises. Who keeps his word. To perform it. Or that we will be like Mary.

Amen.