

Announcing The King

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[0 : 00] This is the evening service at Holy Trinity on the 8th of December 2002.

The preacher is Paul Dudley. His sermon is entitled Announcing the King and is based on Luke chapter 1 verses 26 to 38.

The best news that you've heard just recently I would say Mark Ward being dropped from the test team. I've been advocating that for five years and finally said. You've just heard recently That I could go to Cairns without children.

And that's good? It was great. News, you've just heard recently That Country Road and Central Lane have 30% off sales. News, you've just heard Oh, that you're having another baby, Paul. Obvious. News, you've just heard My class is coming off in two weeks. Good. Steve, what's some great news you've just heard recently? Some good news is that the young adults can go to this barbecue next week at Ruffy Lake Park at 5pm on Saturday and bring a friend along and bring your own meat.

[1 : 14] That's some good news. Another good news is Paul hasn't gone for a run lately so when I go on a run I'll thrash you. Thanks, Steve. Jamie, what's some great news you've just heard recently? I've just found out that I passed all my exams which is good so I don't have to do summer school.

That's very good. Well done. Yeah. Great news you've just heard? No good news recently. None at all? No. Not bad. I'm a pessimist. See ya. Bye. Some good news you've just heard recently? Good news. 19 people were baptised today. That's great news. What's some good news? Oh, I just be apt-oved today. That's great, Patrick. That's great. Thanks.

Well, what is the best news that you've heard recently? It has just been fantastic. You just want to tell the whole world that you're pregnant. Well, I'm not, but my wife is.

But the problem is you can't tell anyone for about 13 weeks. You really should try and keep it a secret. You want to keep it a secret for a little while. So you're trying to keep this incredible thing a secret for so long.

[2 : 17] You're so excited. You want everyone to know. What if you're given great news from God? You're given great news that God was going to send His Son onto the earth.

But not only that were you given that news. You were told that you had to plan for it. This is pretty good news, this is. God sending His Son to the earth. This is fantastic news.

This is really good. The Creator of the universe dwelling on earth and you've got the responsibility of setting it all up to tell the whole world that Jesus has come. Well, you can imagine you're trying to organise it, can't you?

Now, we're going to have to get some good parents for this. We can't just have anyone. We need to make sure that we've got people who are morally upright. People, I imagine. Someone with a strong marriage. Someone well-educated, I imagine.

Obviously, we don't want anyone with any diseases or anything like that. We want to make sure we've got the pick of the parents, I imagine. Then we want to make sure that we're in a good town.

Now, I imagine Melbourne would be okay at the moment, but the MCG, we can't use that.

[3 : 22] So, I'm sort of thinking not MCG for the special announcement. I'm thinking perhaps Sydney. Now, it's got a great Olympic stadium there. Just picture it with me here. We're trying to announce the birth of God coming to earth.

So, we've got the stadium and we're going to organise all this pre-excitement and entertainment.

You can just imagine it, can't you? You have people singing, big babies floating around the stadium. It's just going to be fantastic. And then when you've got every nation on the ground there, you want to get every single nation there, I think. This is my idea, by the way.

I think this would be great. You'd have all the nations there, every camera pointed in on the centre. And it's all dark. Perhaps, you know, a few flashes going off with all the stadium filled.

And there in the centre, you hear the microphone go, ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, I present to you the parents of the, the parents of God.

[4 : 29] What am I saying here? The parents of God are the son-to-be. You can just imagine it, can't you? At that moment, everyone would stand up, the lights would come on, and there in the centre would be the parents.

There in the centre. And everyone would stand up and start singing, holy, holy, holy. It would be a great moment. Well, that would be the way that I'd organise it anyhow.

If you look at your Bibles, let's look at the way that God announces the birth of his son. In the sixth month, the angel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged, to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David.

The virgin's name was Mary. The first thing we notice, that this town is not an elaborate town. It's Nazareth. It's a little obscure town in Galilee, north of the capital.

In the eyes of Israel, it's not a respectable place. But it's there that God chooses Mary. Now, Mary, Mary doesn't have an outstanding resume for this position.

[5 : 48] She's to be engaged. That means that there's been some formal engagement contract that's been signed. They've exchanged bridal price. They're waiting for their wedding to come.

It's still some time off. Normally, the period between when the engagement contract's been signed and when the wedding is, is about a year. And there's some time in that period. According to the custom, she could be as young as 12 years old.

We don't know her age. We do know the only other qualification she has is that she's from the house of David or that Joseph was from the house of David who she was to be married to.

Well, the angel Gabriel appears to Mary and greets her, we see in verse 28, telling her that she is a favoured one, that the Lord is with her and fear seizes her.

She's perplexed by it all. After the angel reassures her and telling her not to be afraid, he informs her that she will have a baby and the baby will be God's son.

[6 : 56] Look there in verse 32, the way he describes the one who will be named Jesus. He will be great and he'll be called the son of the Most High and the Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David.

He will roar over the house of Jacob forever and his kingdom there will be no end. Well, Mary, she ponders over these things and she says to the angel, look, I'm a virgin.

How can this be? And the angel informs her in verse 35 that it is by God's Holy Spirit that this will happen. The angel in verse 36 goes on to tell her that she can be assured of these things.

And now your relative Elizabeth in her old age has conceived a son and this is the sixth month for her who is said to be barren for nothing will be impossible with God. She needs to be assured that God will bring about these things.

Well, right at the end, Mary gives her response. Here I am. The servant of the Lord, let it be with me according to your word. Then the angel departed from her. An amazing story.

[8 : 10] But it's a story that comes straight after last week's sermon, after last week's story between Zachariah and Gabriel. The stories are very, very similar.

There are many similarities between the two different stories. So, the author is putting them side by side for us to look at them, to compare them. And when we compare them and put them side by side, there are a number of things that we do see that are the same.

It's the same angel, Gabriel. We both see that both Zachariah is troubled and Mary is troubled by the encounter. In both instances, we see that the angel responds, do not fear.

We see there that the angel gives the announcement of the unexpected birth of a son. For Zachariah, he was old and his wife Elizabeth was old. She was barren.

Yet the angel tells him that she's going to have a son, John. For Mary, she's going to have Jesus. The angel declares what the son's name will be, one John, one Jesus, and that they will be great.

[9 : 18] Then we have the angel connects child's conception and the fetal life of this child with the Holy Spirit. The announcement of the child, the angel announces that the child's future role in God's saving purpose.

For John, it was to be the forerunner. For Jesus, to be the Lord. Both respond with a question. Zachariah asks, how can it be?

Elizabeth asks, how can it be because I'm a virgin? We see there that both of them recognise that it is not humanly possible for their situations.

Mary is a virgin. Elizabeth is barren and old. The angel then gives a sign both to Zachariah and to Mary. For Zachariah, he has a temporary punishment put on him where he is not able to speak. For Mary, the example is of Elizabeth and Zachariah themselves. When we hold them up, we can see that there are many similarities between these two stories and they show that there is a unity between the two.

[10:27] That they are not two separate stories, but one story. The story of God working in history, of stepping into history at a key moment in time.

Both John and Jesus are part of the same single divine purpose. we see the unity between these two stories.

They are one story, but they are put up there also so that we can see the contrast between them. Like a counterfeiter might hold up two \$5 notes to check the differences aren't too much.

When we hold up the two stories, there are differences between the two stories. And when we look at them, we are able to compare them, we are able to see what the differences are. And see what they are highlighting.

Well, when we hold the two stories up, like diamonds, one a diamond and one a zirconium, is that right? If you hold them up, I guess a person with the right eye can see the differences.

[11:32] When we hold them up, the obvious difference that we can see straight away is that the angel speaks to, first of all, a male, Zachariah, but in the second story it's Mary.

We also see that the differences in the settings. For Zachariah, he is in the temple. He is at the centre of Israel culture.

Mary. Mary is in an obscure Galilean village of Nazareth. Very humble circumstances. For Zachariah, it's a very public place.

For Mary, it's a very private place. But the real highlighted difference between the two stories is that between John and Jesus.

We're able to see the superiority of Jesus to John. In verse 15, we saw last week, we saw that John would be great in the sight of the Lord.

[12:33] In verse 32, tonight, we see that Jesus will simply be great. John is the promised forerunner of the Lord, the one to prepare the way for the people of Israel of the Lord, we see in verse 16.

He is the one to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. In verse 17, this is John's role. But Jesus, he is the Lord.

Note there in verse 32, he will be great and he will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord will give him the throne of the ancestor of David.

Here we see in these two passages here and also in verse 35 where he is called the Son of God.

Here we see allusions back to the Old Testament to 2 Samuel 7 where we see David there speaking with God and God speaks to David and God says, when your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your ancestors, I will raise up from your offspring after you who shall come forth from your body and I will establish his kingdom.

He shall build a house for my name and I will establish his throne of his kingdom forever. Here is the one that is establishing that kingdom.

[13:53] Jesus is the great promised Messiah, the great King of Israel. He is the one to bring in a kingdom that would never end. Notice also in verse 33, he will reign over the house of Jacob forever.

All these titles for the original readers would have had great significance for them. They would have understood these titles. They would have understood that he was the one they were looking for.

He was the one. It would have reassured them that God was revealing his promised one. But also notice the difference between John and Jesus in their birth.

Notice how John is born to old parents. Elizabeth who is barren. But look at Jesus, his miraculous birth.

Born to a virgin. Mary makes the point to Gabriel. She says, how can this be? I am a virgin. And Gabriel makes the point that God provides his special divine involvement right from the very start of Jesus' life with the Holy Spirit.

[15:07] Here we see God in his creative power bringing about life from the virgin's womb. Many doubt the virgin womb's birth.

Many doubt this, that Jesus was born to a virgin. It's a world view that is held by many. It's this world view that says God is unable to do this. That he is just a spectator.

He doesn't participate in life. But the scriptures tell us that this is the way that God works. That God did in fact work this way.

So when we compare these two stories, we put them up side by side. We see here the greatness of Jesus. His superiority to John. Here is Jesus, the great Messiah, the one to bring freedom for his people.

Yet both stories work together to show God's fulfilment of his promises, showing God's saving purpose. I want to make three points briefly about this passage.

[16:13] passage. The first thing to notice from this passage is the humble setting of this passage. This humble setting of the town of Mary, it reveals the character of God's heart.

Here we see God's son, the great king of Israel, the promised one of all time, humbled himself to be born, born of a humble country maiden.

Philippians 2 verse 6 says this, Though he was in the form of God, he did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness and being found in human form.

He humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Here we see a God who humbles himself.

Here we see Jesus emptying himself. This may seem really strange to us. I mean, if we were to plan Jesus arriving, we would have it a spectacular event.

[17:30] But God in his wisdom sends him into humble circumstances. Jesus, we see God identifying himself with the most humble people on earth.

Here is a great and powerful God humbling himself. A God getting on his hands, getting on his own hands, getting his own hands dirty and getting alongside little people like a father or a friend.

God. But also look at the way that God uses humble people. Look at Mary. She doesn't have an outstanding resume.

She's not put up as one of the great ones of intellectual power or anything like that. She was a humble servant. Spiritual greatness is not found by being in the right social class or having monetary clout or having a degree background.

Spiritual greatness is about a function of the heart. It's not the external world credentials. It's not what the world sees as great.

[18:50] That's not what spiritual greatness is about. Spiritual greatness is about those who trust in him. These are the humble settings that God chose to reveal his character, his own heart.

That's my first point. The second point I want to look at here is the way that the certainty of God's promises that nothing is impossible for God.

As we read through this story we see the narrative patterns of the Old Testament of women who weren't able to have children of Hannah, Sarah.

We see the language found within this passage very similar to that of the Old Testament. We see the great promises coming to fulfilment. First we saw last week of the forerunner of John and tonight we see of the Messiah.

We also see within these passages fulfilment, immediate fulfilment. Within the stories we saw how Zachariah could not speak.

[20:01] We saw Elizabeth being pregnant. God, there is nothing for him that is not impossible. He is a God of truth and integrity completing his promises in his own way and in his own time.

His promise to bring freedom came in Christ's death on the cross as we see later on in Luke. Christ's promise to return will happen. Why do we know this? Because our God is a God of truth. Nothing is impossible for him. Christ will return again on that great and glorious day. We can be certain of God's promises. The third point I want to make is we need to follow Mary's example of faith.

Let me read to you again what Mary said at the end of this. Here I am, the servant of the Lord. Let it be with me according to your word. Then the angel departed from her.

She simply trusts in God. She takes on the role of the servant. The servant role is not one that is looked upon highly nowadays. It's a fairly low rating task.

[21 : 20] It's better to be served rather than to serve others in our society. It's better to have ourselves at the centre rather than serving other people.

Yet Mary gives us an example here of faith, of trusting God, of being a servant. may we be like that, be people of faith, people who trust God and the way that he works, seeking to serve him instead of ourselves.

For me Christmas is a great time. I love Christmas. There's the Christmas trees but there's the presents also. All those presents under the Christmas tree, just fantastic.

The other great thing that I enjoy at Christmas time is those family and friend get-togethers. They're great aren't they? Where you sit around, you talk about all the things that are happening, where you share all the great news, catching up on bits of news, on the holidays that you've got planned, of the great sales that are coming up, of the great birth announcements, of young adult get-togethers, all sorts of great news.

You share it with one another. May Christmas also be a time when we stop and look at the wonder of the great news that came to us in the birth of Christ.

[22 : 53] May we look at it afresh again. May we see there a great God, a God who humbles himself. may we see there a God reaching out to bring salvation to the world.

May we see a God who fulfills his promises. And in light of these things, may we live a life that pleases him of humble service.

Let me pray. Father, we do indeed thank you for this story of Mary and the announcement to her from Gabriel. Father, we do indeed thank you for the love that you have shown us in Christ, the way that you sent him into this world.

Father, we thank you for this great miracle. We pray, Father, that you help us to live lives that bring honour and glory to you in light of this.

Amen. Amen.