

The Annunciation

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 27 November 2022

Preacher: Jared Blankenship

[0 : 00] It's no surprise when we come to Luke's record of Jesus' birth and find that it is replete with angelic announcements of good news.

Luke chapter 1 and 2 is full of gospel news. Messengers from God sent to proclaim good news of great joy for all nations.

And that's actually the language that one of the angels uses in chapter 2. Just flip a page over perhaps from where you are. Luke chapter 2 and verse number 10.

This is when the angel appears to the shepherds near Bethlehem and the angel said to them, Fear not, for I behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all people.

And the truth is, God is still sending messengers, his messengers, into the world to proclaim the good news of great joy for all people.

[1 : 06] That's part of why we emphasize the Christmas season so extravagantly as Christians. And I know that we, even as believers, can tend to lose sight of this sometimes, but you would be hard-pressed to find a church building anywhere in this town or in this county today that is not in some way decorated or emphasizing in some fashion this Christmas story.

And will continue to do so over the next few weeks. One of the reasons that we're so intent on doing that as believers is because we are now his messengers, sent into the world with the good news that brings great joy for all nations.

Lots of people will recognize the Christmas season as a season of joy. But of course we understand it's not joyful because of family gatherings or presents under the tree, even though we enjoy those things.

Christmas is joyful because of the good news that God himself entered our broken world to save us from our sin and death.

So for the next six weeks, I want to examine a few portions of these chapters so that we might rejoice again in the good news of the gospel. Because the Christmas story is nothing if it's not about the gospel.

[2 : 34] And our text this morning is what is often referred to as the Annunciation. It's the record of the angel Gabriel announcing to the virgin Mary that she would conceive the Christ child.

But the passage is more than just a piece of beautiful narrative. And it is indeed that. Even the secular world around us might display in some way in their home or in their stores some picture of the nativity.

It's a beautiful story. Even without the incarnation, it's interesting. It's lovely in a sense. But it's so much more than a beautiful narrative. It's a reflection of the very gospel message that is, according to Romans 1, the power of God unto salvation.

And though there's helpful lessons that we can learn from Mary, these verses aren't really about Mary. What we know about her is only valuable insofar as it reveals to us and teaches us about the character and the power of God.

So I want us to take the Annunciation this morning, these verses that we just read, and I want to highlight three characteristics that makes the Annunciation good news of great joy.

[4 : 02] Number one, it's a message of grace. It's a message of grace. Look with me again at verse 26. In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary.

And he came to her and said, Greetings, O favored one. The Lord is with you. She was greatly troubled at the saying, tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be.

And the angel said to her, Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. It's a message of grace. Now, angelic encounters in the Bible almost always include a fearful response from the human individual involved.

There's something about the appearance of angels that's startling to people. Maybe it's a mixture of their sudden appearance in a place that there wasn't a person before, and now there's a person. That's a startling thing. We've all experienced that in some way before. Maybe it has something to do with actually the way that they look, not in the sense of horror, but in the sense of awesomeness, other worldliness, or their heavenly nature in that sense.

[5 : 29] But it always tends to come with an immediate response of fear within the people that they greet. These two chapters actually give a couple of other examples where that's exactly the case.

In chapter 1, Zechariah, who is the father of John the Baptist, the angel appears to him, and then the angels appear to the shepherds near Bethlehem in chapter 2, and we're told that they are overcome with fear at the sight of the angel.

But Mary's response is unique because it's not the sight of the angel, we're told, that troubles her. It's the greeting of the angel that seems to trouble her.

Look with me again at verse 29. But she was greatly troubled at the saying and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. I'm not saying that Mary wasn't afraid of the angel in the same way that all the others were at first as well.

I'm just saying that Luke doesn't emphasize the sight of the angel with Mary. He emphasizes something different. He emphasizes the saying, the greeting, being the thing that troubles Mary, the thing that in that moment she is trying to contemplate and discern what is this about.

[6 : 44] And it's this question of why that I want you to consider. Why is she troubled by the saying? What is it that is bothering her that she's confused about, that she's trying to discern?

I think the answer is that Mary, at least from a human perspective, didn't fit the description of the greeting. Look again at verse 28.

What is the greeting? Greetings, O favored one. The Lord is with you. Now, interestingly enough, what's translated as greetings is actually an imperative form of the word for rejoice.

Cairo is the Greek word. Most other places you find it in the Bible, it's translated rejoice. And in this sense, in Luke chapter 1, it's actually in an imperative verb form.

So this is actually, you know, in the most literal possible way that you could translate it. This is actually a command coming from the angel. Rejoice, Mary.

[7 : 53] Rejoice, O favored one. The Lord is with you. Now, the confusion for Mary, I believe, is that there wasn't anything about her life that indicated blessing, favor, or the presence of God.

How could she rejoice in something that she didn't understand? So this angel appears to her. Rejoice, Mary. Greetings, Mary.

Favored one. The Lord is with you. And she's immediately taken aback, trying to discern what does this mean. Well, from a cultural perspective, Mary didn't seem to have the blessing of God on her life.

Most scholars believe that and agree that she would have only been somewhere between 12 and 14 years old. That's too young to have really learned much.

That's too young to have accomplished much. So there's no favor given to Mary here because of something she's done or a particular intellect that she has displayed.

[9 : 03] Though she was engaged, betrothed to Joseph, she didn't yet have a husband or any children that would elevate her status in the world, as would have been the custom of that day.

She was from Nazareth, a poverty-stricken village mentioned nowhere in the Old Testament. There's not even a mention of it in the contemporary literature of the day.

It was in a region of Galilee known as Galilee of the Gentiles, an area that was despised by the Jews because of the number of Gentile people that lived there.

You'll remember in John chapter 1, when Jesus begins to call some of his disciples, someone, I think it is Nathanael, goes to and says, We have found the Messiah.

It's Jesus of Nazareth. And you remember what Nathanael's response was. Can anything good come from Nazareth? The typical response of the people in that day was, This is a pagan area.

[10 : 00] This is an unclean area. And not only is Mary from that place, she's from a no-named village that nobody cared about, that historically seems to have been a pretty corrupt place.

She's poor. She has nothing. What blessing is there in her life? In the eyes of the world, Mary was a nobody that was about to marry another nobody.

They were going to have kids that were nobodies, and they were going to live, at least in the eyes of the world, a meaningless existence, absent from anything that might indicate favor from God.

But this is exactly why Gabriel's announcement was a message of grace. God sent him to Galilee, not to Judea, where you might expect.

He sends him to Nazareth, not to Jerusalem. He goes to Mary's home, not to the temple, not to a royal palace. Martin Luther said, He might have gone to Jerusalem and picked out Caiaphas' daughter, who was fair, rich, clad in gold-embroidered raiment, and attended by a retinue of maids-in-waiting.

[11 : 15] But God preferred a lowly maid from a mean town. It's a message of grace to Mary. It's a message of grace to us.

And as we examine this text, we must acknowledge an inescapable fact that the greatest news ever proclaimed in Israel came to the humblest of its people.

And that's part and parcel of the gospel message, even as Jesus proclaimed it. Remember what Jesus said to a group of Pharisees. It was on the day that he had called Levi, who we know as Matthew as well.

He calls Levi to follow him. Levi leaves the receipt of custom, and then he hosts a party at his home. He's been so impacted by Christ that he hosts a party at his home, and he brings the other publicans and some of the prostitutes in the town so that they might meet Jesus too.

And then the Pharisees come by, and they recognize that Jesus is not dining with who they would consider to be the righteous of the town. He's dining with sinners and publicans. And they confront Jesus about it.

[12 : 25] Remember what Jesus said. He said, I didn't come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. In other words, what Jesus was saying to the Pharisees is, I didn't come for you.

I came for them. Pharisees were often the wealthy, educated, fiercely devoted to the law, to their laws in particular.

Jesus didn't come for them. He came for the prostitutes, the publicans. But it wasn't the power and the wealth of the Pharisees that prevented them from receiving blessings from Christ.

It was pride. You see, God's grace isn't received by those who think they deserve it, but by those who know they don't.

That's Mary. Humble Mary. Lowly Mary. Remember what Jesus said in the Beatitudes. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

[13 : 37] And the angel made it clear in verse 30 that Mary didn't earn this favor from God. She found it. Look at it with me again. Verse 30. And the angel said to her, Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.

The Roman Catholic Church in particular has invented all kinds of heresies about Mary. They eventually find their root in a bad translation of this passage in the Latin Vulgate.

But Mary wasn't a perpetual virgin. She had other children with Joseph. She didn't possess all the spiritual and secular gifts.

She was not and is not a dispenser of grace or a mediator that brings us to Christ. She wasn't free from original sin and she wasn't kept sinless throughout her life.

Mary was a sinner like you and me. She was in much, as much in need of a savior as you and me. And she says as much in the passage we'll cover next Sunday.

[14 : 52] But remember, grace by definition is unmerited. In Mary's favor, it wasn't about her piety, but God's abundant and amazing grace.

Says Kent Hughes, Christmas is not for the proud and self-sufficient. The Lord comes to needy people. Those who realize that without Him, they cannot make it.

Those who acknowledge their weakness in spiritual lack. You see, the Christmas story, being a gospel story, confronts the spiritual pride that so many of us carry throughout our lives.

It confronts the pride that tells us that we are good enough for God. That we would be a blessing to God if He wanted to enroll us in His purposes.

That's not the story that we learn from Mary. It's actually the opposite. Now, if God was willing to use someone like Mary to bring His Son into the world, what would ever make you think that He's unwilling to supply His endless grace to you as well?

[16:03] Because if the gospel story of Christmas confronts those with spiritual pride, it may also confront those of us who think that we are just too far gone for God to save. We're not good enough for Him.

There's no way we can be what He wants us to be. We'll see what the Christmas story tells us is that it's not about what you can or can't be.

It's about the grace of our Lord. What do we learn from the Annunciation? That God is full of grace and He extends that grace to the lowliest of people.

It's a message of grace. Number two, it's a message of salvation. A message of salvation. Verse 31, the angel continues, And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son.

You shall call His name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High and the Lord God will give to him the throne of His father David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever.

[17:07] And of His kingdom, there will be no end. So Gabriel's greeting brings a measure of confusion to Mary, but then His announcement surely brings a measure of shock.

In the greeting, we learn that Mary is the recipient of God's grace. But here we find that this grace is displayed through the birth of a child.

And all the fast facts that are spouted out by Gabriel in this moment declare that and make clear to Mary that this child to which she's going to give birth is this long-awaited Messiah.

And the announcement of a Messiah means that this is a message of eternal salvation. What shock, what excitement even as this begins to process on Mary's mind.

Not only has God seen fit in His grace to send a messenger from heaven to speak to her, she's going to carry a child, but this child will be the one that my parents have been telling me my whole life that God has promised.

[18:19] This will be the one who will save us. This will be the one who will establish the kingdom forever. Salvation has come.

It's a message of salvation. Well, let's look at the pieces of what the angel says here. We don't have time to get into all of it, but let's note just a couple of things.

Jesus is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Yeshua, which means Yahweh saves or God will save. Now, Jesus probably was actually a common name in first century Israel, but it took on a literal meaning for the child in Mary's womb.

Here's what the angel said to Joseph later when he appears to him. In Matthew chapter one and verse 21, she will bear a son. You shall call his name Jesus for he will save his people from their sins.

Jesus would later teach that his purpose was to seek and to save the lost. This child in Mary's womb didn't come to testify of God's salvation.

[19:30] He was here to actually be God's salvation. He was a child born to die so that we who are dead in our sins might experience the new birth and eternal life.

First Peter chapter two, he himself bore our sins in his body on the tree that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.

By his wounds, we have been healed. This Messiah, this son of David here to save us. Well, then Gabriel continued his announcement by declaring the child will be great and will be called the son of the most high.

Then he summarized the Davidic covenant from second Samuel seven and stated that in Jesus, the covenant would be fulfilled. Look at it with me again in verse 35 or excuse me in verse 31.

Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, call his name Jesus. He will be great. He will be the son of the most high and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father, David.

[20:42] He will reign over the house of Jacob forever of his kingdom. There will be no end. It brings to mind another famous Christmas passage from Isaiah chapter nine.

Unto us, a child is born. To us, a son is given. The government shall be on his shoulders. His name shall be called wonderful counselor, mighty God.

Everlasting father, prince of peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace, there will be no end. On the throne of David and over his kingdom to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore.

The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this. This is the one, the angel says. The one you've heard about. The one you've prayed about.

The one you've longed for. The salvation has come. Based on what historians tell us, it's likely that Mary was mostly illiterate.

[22 : 00] Even if she could read, she wouldn't have been able to own a copy of the Old Testament. But you can be sure that she heard these passages read over and over again as she went to synagogue week by week.

Perhaps if her father was faithful, she would have heard these passages recited, these promises told again and again in her home as he obeyed the Shema from Deuteronomy chapter 6.

Not only were they to love the Lord their God with all their heart, but they were to take all the things that God had told them and they were to pass it down to their children. They were to teach it to those in their house. They were to talk about it all the time.

She probably couldn't comprehend the full impact of everything that this child would be. But she understood enough to know that God was bringing salvation through this baby boy.

Again, Kent Hughes is helpful. He says she understood the gist of the angel's announcement.

You're going to become pregnant. You're going to call his name Salvation.

[23 : 09] He's going to be the Son of God and he will be the Messiah. What an earful for Mary. What a heartful for Mary, he says.

You see, this is why Christmas is a story of good news that brings great joy because it's the message of salvation for all who will believe and follow Christ.

It's the good news that God sent his own Son into the world to save sinners. Christmas is joy because salvation has come. But then it's also a message of incarnation.

So it's a message of grace. It's a message of salvation. It's a message of incarnation. Now betrothal in Mary's day was quite different than modern engagements.

It was a formal marriage contract that could only be broken by death or by legal divorce. The betrothal period would last about a year in most cases during which time the young man would go and prepare a home for his new wife and the young lady would prepare herself for this wedding event and for this new life with the young man.

[24 : 28] And then the year would culminate most likely in a seven day wedding feast. Some of you are stressed out for your three hour wedding feast. Can you imagine a seven day wedding feast?

And it's at this wedding feast that the marriage would be celebrated and consummated by the bride and groom. Joseph and Mary are at some point in this betrothal period where they were generally regarded as husband and wife but they had not joined in a physical union.

And it's this circumstance that produces Mary's logical question in verse 34. Look at it with me.

Mary says to the angel, how will this be since I'm a virgin?

Now this is exactly what we should expect Mary to ask right now. And she's not asking it out of unbelief. If you go back earlier in Luke chapter 1 you'll see when the angel appears to Zechariah he's actually overcome with a bit of unbelief and doubt in the message of the angel and he faces the consequences.

He's stricken mute for the entire duration of his wife's pregnancy. Can't talk until the day that John the Baptist is born and dedicated to the Lord. That's not the same thing that's happening with Mary.

[25 : 44] It's not that she's doubting the message. This is a question of confusion. She'd never known a man in intimacy so she asked for clarification about how it was even possible.

And the answer is wonderfully mysterious. In fact that's exactly the language that the New Testament uses over and over and over again regarding the incarnation of Christ and the gospel message.

It's not that it's un-understandable but it is mysterious. The early church perhaps this was a hymn that the early church would sing in 1 Timothy chapter 3.

Great indeed we confess is the mystery of godliness and it begins with he was manifested in the flesh. This whole thought of incarnation is a mystery. We can understand the logic of it as it's described in the scriptures but the fullness of Christ's divine and human identity is really beyond our ability to comprehend.

So the angel helps Mary he answers her in three distinct ways that I think will be helpful to us. First he gave her an explanation. He gave her an explanation.

[26 : 59] Verse 35 and the angel answered her the Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you therefore the child to be born will be called Holy the Son of God.

He says here's how it's going to happen Mary. This will be a creative act of the Spirit of God. Incarnation. What does incarnation mean?

It simply means God takes on flesh. God becomes a man and in doing so God does not stop being God.

That's the mystery of it. Jesus Christ fully divine truly God truly man and he had to be born of woman.

It had to be incarnation first because he had to be born under the law in order that he might fulfill the law on our behalf.

[28 : 10] Second he had to have had flesh and blood to actually be a sacrifice for sin. The incarnation is absolutely essential to the gospel message.

Without it we have no gospel. But this was not the divine human cohabitation that is so often reflected in pagan religions.

Overshadow here comes from the same word used to describe what took place on the mount of transfiguration. You remember Peter and James and John are with Jesus on the mountain. Jesus is transfigured and then when they are made aware of what is happening they are overshadowed by the presence of God, the spirit of God.

It's the same idea conveyed in the Old Testament when at the dedication of Solomon's temple.

Remember the temple was filled with the spirit of God. It's that same idea of being overshadowed engulfed with the presence and the power of God.

That's what the angel is saying. You will be engulfed by the presence of God, overshadowed by his glorious presence. There are no physical relations between God and Mary.

[29 : 22] This was the creative act of the spirit of God and it was absolutely necessary. MacArthur, had Jesus been conceived by the act of a man, whether Joseph or anyone else, he could not have been divine and could not have been the Savior.

His own claims about himself would have been lies and his resurrection and ascension would have been hoaxes. Mankind would forever remain lost and damned.

the fact of the incarnation is essential to the gospel and it's affirmed again and again in the New Testament. John 1 14, the word became flesh and dwelt among us and we have seen his glory as of the only son from the father, full of grace and truth.

Philippians 2 6-8, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself by taking on the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men, and being found in human form.

He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on the cross. Hebrews chapter 1 in verse 3, he's the radiance of the glory of God.

[30 : 45] He's the exact imprint of his nature and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. God in the flesh. You see, the fact is that Jesus didn't begin to exist at the moment he entered Mary's womb.

Jesus has always been. He's the second person of the Trinity, co-equal, co-eternal with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. And this miraculous conception simply marks the moment that he entered our brokenness and suffered for our sins.

Gabriel's message is not only one of salvation, but salvation through incarnation. God himself has become man.

Emmanuel, God is with us. He gives her an explanation. Then he gives her a sign. A sign. Look at verse 36. And 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. God is so gracious to give us signs that strengthen our faith in his truth. And that's precisely what he did for Mary.

[32 : 00] If you read through the beginning of chapter one, you'll see exactly how this story unfolds. Zechariah and Elizabeth, the parents of John the Baptist, were well beyond child bearing years.

the angel appears to Zechariah and says, your wife is going to be pregnant. You're going to have a baby. He's so old and she's so old that he doesn't even believe this heavenly being who has suddenly appeared to him with this message from God.

That's how old they are. And then it comes to be that Elizabeth is pregnant. And the whole point of the sign is this. If God was able and willing to bless Zechariah and Elizabeth with a child through natural means, there would be no reason for Mary to wonder if he could do the same with her through supernatural means.

So he gives her a sign. And then finally, he gives her an assurance. An assurance. Verse 37, for nothing will be impossible with God.

Nothing will be impossible with God. Now, secularists will deny the virgin birth of Jesus because it is not scientifically possible for such a thing to occur.

[33 : 19] And of course, as long as they're removing God from the equation, they're exactly right. It's not possible. The problem is that there's no basis for their denial of God's existence existence outside of the fact that they just don't want to believe it's true.

In other words, they cannot prove that God doesn't exist. They can only operate under the assumption that he doesn't. And if this is the foundation of your belief, this verse won't mean anything to you.

But then there's another type of person who is open to God's existence, but is skeptical of anything supernatural, that might require faith that stretches beyond our capacity for understanding.

Most of us probably at some point in time have either fallen into that category or maybe routinely slip into that category even still. We have a faith in God's existence.

We're not willing to deny that. There's too much evidence to the contrary. But when it comes to the things when the Bible talks about virgins being made pregnant, when it talks about people being raised from the dead, when it comes to some of these things that are difficult for us to explain by scientific and natural means, we really begin to struggle with what the scripture tells us.

[34 : 45] Now, if that's you, this verse is exactly for you. You should be able to take comfort in it actually. As long as we attempt to understand the things of God from purely a natural perspective, our doubts will never go away.

But there's tremendous comfort in recognizing that the God who gave us this truth is able and willing to perform this truth. I'm thankful for God's explanations.

It's actually not all that common that God deals in explanations in the Bible. He deals in promises, not explanations for the most part. But even in this case, he gives an explanation because the explanation is so necessary for us to understand.

I'm thankful for that. I'm thankful for the signs as well. I'm thankful that when we come to the scriptures, we can find all of the ways, the factual historical events that unfolded that point to the truth that Jesus is indeed who he says he was and that he did these things and it's undeniable some of these things.

I'm thankful for those signs. But nothing should bring us more comfort and assurance than the fact that nothing is impossible for him. At the end of the day, the God who spoke this world into existence, who holds it in his hand, who knows you, who knows everything there is to know about you.

[36 : 18] as I think it was R.C. Sproul said, who in his power, there is not one maverick molecule in the entire universe. That as the Bible says over and over and over, all things are from him, all things are through him, all things are to him and to his glory.

That same God, this is nothing for him. We understand that, right? There is comfort in that. And when we come to these difficult things that we cannot explain and that we cannot fully comprehend, just because we cannot comprehend it does not mean that it is not true.

Because with God, nothing is impossible. He's proven it time and time again. You can step outside these doors and look around you this morning and you will see that God is there and nothing is impossible for him.

I thought about it when I drove the truck here this morning with the trailer and I was getting out and it was raining so hard. And I don't know why this was on my mind, but I thought about my grass. And I thought this is so good for my grass.

And then I thought, you know, if I was really thirsty right now, I could probably, I don't know why I thought about this, this is weird, but I did. And I thought, if I was really thirsty right now, I could dump out my coffee and I could just stick it out here. I could have something to drink.

[37 : 35] And then it kind of hit me there for a moment. The God that we're preaching about today, the God that we're studying today, he designed all of this. He designed our bodies to function in the way that we do.

And then he designed an environment in which we can live that perfectly is suitable for the bodies that he created us to possess. That God, nothing's impossible for him.

He can make the virgin conceive. He created her. This is all his plan. It's all within his power. And in the moment this Christmas season that you begin to doubt the facts of this story again, go to this verse and remind yourself, with God, nothing is impossible here, of course.

Let's finish with verse 38. Mary said, Behold, I am the servant of the Lord. Let it be to me according to your word. And the angel departed from her.

This is really amazing coming from a 12 to 14 year old girl, isn't it? If you think that's amazing, wait till next week when we get to the Magnificat later on in this chapter and it's going to blow your mind.

[38 : 49] I don't even think this way as a 35 year old, much less as a 12 year old. The announcement of Gabriel is truly good news that can produce everlasting joy.

We've established that. Mary's response reflects the faith necessary for salvation.

She believed the word of God. She turned away from whatever personal ambition she might have had. And she surrendered wholly to the Lord's work in her life.

Is that not what the Lord Jesus calls us all to? Believe his word, surrender self, turn from sin, and wholly follow him with our lives.

That's the call to salvation. That's what Mary's doing here. But think about what this faith and surrender meant for her. At least for a little while, her future husband thought to divorce her.

[39 : 56] We learn about that in Matthew 1. He was a just man. He wasn't going to make a show of her. But it wasn't until the angel Gabriel appeared to him that he decided to continue on with the marriage.

The penalty for adultery was death. It wasn't typically applied in her day. But there was always the possibility of Mary being killed if people didn't believe her story.

And they didn't believe her story. Last week at the Thanksgiving fellowship, it was Scobie that was telling me about being in Israel one time and he experienced something where because he or somebody around him was violating the Sabbath regulations that people began to throw rocks at them.

That's for violating the Sabbath. Now, the death penalty may not have been applied in an official sense very often in Mary's day. But if you're from a little town that cares about those kinds of things and you turn up to be pregnant out of wedlock, maybe there's some stones that got thrown her away.

Maybe that's why she went to live with Elizabeth for a while. Who knows? This was great cause to her. Apparently many people didn't believe her as is indicated by the times that Jesus' enemies implied his illegitimate birth.

[41 : 21] Obeying the Lord and following him in faith came at tremendous cost for Mary. It always does. But what we have in Mary's example is the kind of faith that God requires of us all.

Abandon self, turn from sin, trust his word, follow his son, whatever the cost may be. And there will be some cost in your life.

It may be a family cost, it may be a job cost, it may be friendships, it may be lots of things. But it will always come at a cost. And the question is, is the cost worth it?

For Mary, it was worth it. The story of Christmas is indeed good news of great joy. it's a message of grace and salvation through the incarnation of Jesus.

And all that's left for us to do is believe it and receive the grace that only comes through this salvation, Jesus Christ alone.