

Receiving God's Promise

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Date: 04 December 2022

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[0 : 0 0] and as she comes shall we pray loving father speak to us through your word speak as the word is read speak as tim brings the message you've put on his heart and we pray that as your word is heard that you would create something new in us thank you that when you speak things change we come with expectation and wait upon your your word lord amen good morning everybody our passage this morning is from luke chapter one starting to read at verse 26 we've just seen a most helpful video haven't we and this is a passage of scripture that's going to just give a few more details to it so let's listen and i know it's found on page 125 in our pew bibles so it's headed the birth of jesus foretold in the sixth month of elizabeth's pregnancy god sent the angel gabriel to nazareth in a town 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 conceive and give birth to a son and you are to call him 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 jacob's descendants forever 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 on 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 unable to conceive is in her sixth month for no word from god will ever fail i am the lord's servant mary answered may your word to me be fulfilled then the angel left her amen well good morning everybody it's lovely to see you here today my name's tim for those of you who don't know me i'm a member of the church family here it's um union um it'd be really helpful if you could have luke chapter one open in front of you uh page 1025 we're in the second week of advent advent means arrival and we're going through the story of jesus's

arrival as a baby and luke writes his gospel because he wants us to know who jesus is if you look with me at verses three and four luke says with this in mind since i myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning i too decided to write an orderly account for you most excellent theophilus so that you may have certainty of the things you have been taught so luke wants to persuade us to convince us that what happened in israel two thousand years ago really is true and worthy of our trust and he starts his account with the birth of two miraculous children last week malcolm shared with us about the first baby who was going to be born john the baptist when god sent the angel gabriel to zechariah who told him that his wife who was well beyond the age for having children would conceive and give birth to a son wow and in verse 17 look with me the angel says this about the child he says he will go on before the lord he will go on before the lord zechariah and elizabeth's baby was a miraculous gift from god but his purpose was to prepare the way for another for someone greater the lord god himself so let's look at our passage verse 26 in the sixth month of elizabeth's pregnancy 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 so six months later god sends gabriel to someone else to mary and luke tells us quite a bit about mary uh he tells us that she's pledged to be married to a man named joseph uh we could say that they were engaged uh but in those days being engaged was something more serious than it is today it had a legal status attached to it but they weren't married yet uh also we learn that uh mary is in the line of king david she's descended from royalty uh and we might see later that come up again uh and thirdly we see that she lives in a place called nazareth a town in galilee now this is quite striking because you would expect maybe a royal family to be found in jerusalem the capital city uh but galilee is on the outskirts of israel uh in fact people called it galilee of the gentiles uh

because its links with jerusalem were so weak and nazareth to be honest it wasn't seen as that greater place uh the people thought that nothing good can ever come out of nazareth uh you know so luke is setting the stage for us jesus will come into the world as an outsider born in an unremarkable town to an unlikely family this who god sent the angel gabriel to and what does the angel say to her verse 28 the angel went to her and said greetings you who are highly favored the lord is with you it's actually a remarkably gracious greeting we don't know a whole lot about mary's life before

she was visited but we do know that god is with her and that he's chosen her for a special task but how did mary react uh verse 29 mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be i don't know if you've ever got a text or a phone call from someone who you weren't expecting uh someone you don't normally speak to and you think oh goodness what are they going to tell me and you feel troubled and that's a little bit like what mary was feeling um there are a few times in the bible where angels will appear to people and they always come with a mission or a message or quite often both of those things uh and so mary's quite right to be wondering what's this angel going to say next well let's see what he has to tell her uh look at verse 30 but the angel said to her do not be afraid mary for you have found favor with god you will conceive and give birth to a son and you are to call him 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 jacob's descendants forever there's a lot packed in there so let's look at it bit by bit uh firstly he says again you have found favor with god mary if god is for you then who can be against you you are on the side of god and god will protect you now this isn't something particularly special about mary as an individual uh it's actually true of all of god's people uh if you are a christian if you are trusting in jesus then you also have found favor with god and it's not something that you or i or mary have works out to earn for ourselves we could never earn his favor but he gives it to us as a gift because he's good uh next angel gabriel says you will conceive and give birth to a son and you're to call him jesus mary is going to have a son and his name will be jesus this is amazing and and actually it might have sounded familiar to mary because about 700 years earlier god gave this message to the prophet isaiah he said the virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and will call him immanuel that's isaiah chapter 7 verse 14 immanuel immanuel means god with us so this son who was going to be born of a virgin was not going to be just another regular human being he would be god himself come in the flesh to dwell among the people he created as a human being and the angel also tells mary notice what to name the child you're to name him jesus there he is the main character of our story coming as a baby and the name jesus has a special meaning as well it means the lord saves so this son he's not going to be just another moral teacher or just another prophet he's going to be a savior he's going to be a rescuer

uh look at verse 32 he will be great and will be called a son of the most high god again he's not going to be just a human king but he's going to be god himself the lord god will give him the throne of his father david we saw earlier that mary was descended from david and you might have been wondering why is this important why is he mentioning this again well it's actually because of a promise that god made to king david about a thousand years before when david was king of israel he wanted to build a house a temple for god but god said to him effectively you will not build a house for me david but i will build a house for you and he makes this promise to david in 2 samuel chapter 7 he says to david your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me your throne will be established forever now there have been many royal kingdoms but how many of them have lasted forever i can't think of very many but god has promised to david to send a special son of david one who will reign forever and now in luke chapter 1 we see that promise coming near its fulfillment about a thousand years later look again at verse 32 he will be great and will be called a son of the most high the lord god will give him the throne of his father david and he will reign over jacob's descendants forever his kingdom will never end that is who mary's child is going to be he's going to be a king over jacob's descendants that's referring to the israelites or more broadly god's people made up of anyone who trusts in jesus and also he'll be a king forever jesus is not going to step down from being king and his reign is not going to be ended by his death jesus will be king forever jesus came to earth to die yes to die for the sins of his people but death did not end his reign he rose from the dead and to this day he sits enthroned as king so we don't need to wait for another one to come we can follow jesus today so yes there's quite a lot packed into the angel's message um but it looks like mary gets stuck uh right at the beginning if we look at verse 34 how can this be she asks because i'm a virgin hang on a second how is this going to happen now if you

were around last week this might sound a bit familiar to you uh we've got the angel gabriel uh coming to deliver a message to someone that they're going to have a son even though it looks impossible and then in reply uh he gets a question uh and last week we saw zechariah ask a very similar question to gabriel but it's not quite the same question uh zechariah asks how can i be sure of this in verse 18 while mary asks how will this be see zechariah isn't really sure if he can believe the message that the angel is saying his question shows an unbelief but mary's question is a bit different she wants to know how this is going to happen how can this be how am i going to conceive a child since i'm a virgin and this shows us something about asking questions i think as we come to read the bible and when we think about god it's quite normal to have questions come up in our minds and i think this shows that it's good for us to ask those questions and to seek good answers so luke's example luke's gospel is an example of this his account is concerned with reporting what is true and if you're a christian you should be concerned with wanting to know what is true and loving the truth and wanting to shed light on things that we don't know yet but at the same time we can sometimes use questions as a bit of a shield or an excuse for not really believing what god is saying to us and so it shouldn't be surprising uh surprising for us to be amazed and confused sometimes as we think about the god of the universe but there are some things that we can know about him for certain because he's revealed them to us and we shouldn't doubt them and the message of this passage is that god always keeps his promises and so if he promises he will do it and so we can take him at his word what a great thing that is and yeah we see this in how gabriel responds to zechariah and elizabeth he answers both of their questions but the angel closes zechariah's mouth because he did not believe what was spoken but mary speaks so let's look at what the angel's answer was to mary verse 35 the holy spirit will come on you and the power of the most high will overshadow you so the one holy one to be born will be called the son of god now that might not seem like a very clear answer to us but the angel is referring to something in the old testament right at the beginning of the bible genesis chapter one when god creates the world he says this he says in the beginning god created the heavens and the earth now the earth was formless and empty darkness was over the surface of the deep and the spirit of god was hovering over the waters so just as the holy spirit hovered over a barren earth to create out of nothing now he will hover over mary's womb and conceive a child from nothing and not only does gabriel answer that he also gives her a sign in verse 36 even elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age and she who is said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month for no word from god will ever fail remember your relative elizabeth i promised that she would have a baby and now she's six pregnant so just as god kept his promise to give elizabeth a son he will keep his promise to you mary and he says this in verse 37 no word from god will ever fail other translations say nothing is [20 : 29] impossible with god there is nothing that god cannot do friends some people uh doubt the virgin birth they think do we really need to believe this um but should we really doubt uh that god could do this if he wanted to if he can create the universe out of literally nothing it should be easy for him to conceive a child out of nothing surely maybe a better question would be why would god want the virgin birth so i thought let's explore that for a bit why would god want a virgin birth why would it be needed well it's because jesus is part of a new family uh people call jesus a second adam so when god made adam and eve he made them good but when satan tempted them they gave in they chose to go their own way they broke god's command and were banished from god's presence and ever since then all of adam's children have done the same thing as we've spread across the world and made great breakthroughs in science and governance and producing great art and music and literature as we've tended for the sick and given to charity and done all manner of great things all of us deep down have the same problem we are all children of adam we want to do things our way and not god's way but jesus is the start of a new family line he's a second adam he was conceived differently to how each of us are because he's the start of a new family we naturally want to do things our way but jesus lives god's way in a perfect relationship with him and when satan tempted jesus jesus resisted and continued to trust in god and when he died on the cross and rose from the dead he made a way for us too to have a restored relationship with god by offering us forgiveness for the times when we've gone our own way and he offers us adoption out of the family of adam and into his new family romans 5 verse 19 puts it like this for just as through the disobedience of one man that's adam the many were made sinners so also through the obedience of one man that's jesus the many will be made righteous so this miracle the virgin birth gives us a great foretaste of the gospel message and so it's right for us to cherish it and treasure it so let's look

at verse 38 let's see how mary responds to this she's still standing there and there's quite a lot for her to take in from this angel so how does she respond let's see mary responds with faith she simply trusts god verse 38 i am the lord's servant mary answered may your word to me be fulfilled we could have forgiven her for maybe responding with fear what's joseph going to think

about this will we still get married or is the wedding off or what about the other people in my town what are they going to think about me am i going to be shunned for seeming to be unfaithful and we might think that these are good reasons to be afraid but no mary leaves that to god she knows that he is with her and she doesn't just accept god's promise passively notice but she's eager for it to be fulfilled she said may your word to me be fulfilled so what a great example that is of someone who receives god's promises with joy at this point mary saw only a shadow of what her son would later grow up to be but we know what happens next we know we have seen how he grew up how he lived a perfect life died for sinners and rose again how much more of a reason do we have to trust god's promises to us in 2 corinthians chapter 1 paul writes this he says for no matter how many promises god has made they are yes in christ that's one corinthians 2 corinthians 1 verse 20 jesus shows us all the more clearly more clearly than anything else that god always keeps his promises let's pray together father god thank you that you always keep your promises and that we can trust you completely whether things look good for us right now or not at all and thank you for sending your son into the world to be our rescuer to make a way for us to be made right with you again by offering us your forgiveness and please help us to be like mary confident of your promises please increase our faith help us when we find it hard to believe your words and please help us not to forget the many promises that you make us please help us to live in light of them this week and we ask in jesus name so that you might get the praise amen you you you you you you you