

## A Strange Advent for a Strange year

Christmas 2020

Sermon 1 – Luke 1;26-38

This year is strange but the first Christmas is down right weird. Think about it. Angels, virgins getting pregnant and giving birth, more angels, wise men, special gifts, Herod going crazy. Just weird.

Babies promised by Angels

Angels announcing babies birth.

*Luk 1:26 In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth,*

*Luk 1:27 to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary.*

This is the introduction. New Testament is great at setting the scene and putting perspective around its stories.

Ok here is the scene Gabriel, an important angel type personage is sent (Sent by God !!) to Mary. Young woman, a virgin just engaged.

A couple of things:

Angels are: heavenly beings some call them supernatural! The word basically means; Messenger of the Lord.

Mary is engaged (Betrothed!!) She is referred to as a virgin.

Yep, that means what we think it means – she hadn't had sex.

Many people have tried to debunk this part of the story.

Each of us have to come to grips with what we believe.

Is it possible that she was a virgin yet still gave birth to Jesus?

What do you think. Could this just mean a young woman?

Could it all be wrong?

Well, I look at it this way. If God is God, He can choose to do things differently if He chooses to. And it appears that He did in this case. Why do I say that? The historicity of the bible is accurate in everything. It has credibility, you can test it and see if you like. Alongside that, the story is still valid today. Still to this day, this story speaks to us, speaks to us with credibility even within its amazingness. More about that later.

*Luk 1:28 And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!"*

Now this is a great greeting. Greetings o favoured one, the Lord is with you. .

*Luk 1:29 But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be.*

Now here we have the rubber hit the road.

Mary is stressed by all this, and who wouldn't be. I think our translation underplays it a bit "Greatly trouble" could be read "totally freaking out".

And trying to discern what it was about could be read "Her brain going a million miles an hour to sought it out.

What I like is the fact that we can recognize that freaking out about something is ok. Trying to work things out is ok, being stressed out is ok.

*Luk 1:30 And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.*

The angel recognizes the stress and says don't be scared. Not only that you have found favour with God.

Significant pastoral care going on here. The angel seeks to settle Mary and start doing his job which is giving Mary a message. (Remember an angel is a messenger from the Lord) All the angels in the bible are messengers!!! (They are also all male but that is a different topic)

Example: Isa 6

*Isa 6:2* Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.

*Isa 6:3* And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!"

What is their message here? The character of God is Holy.

Back to Mary - The message is that she has found favour with God. That is a cool message!!!!

Now the next bit.

*Luk 1:31* And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.

OK, this bit is a freak out. It is one of those "really, your'e joking times".

But let's not get freaked out by the obvious and look at the detail.

Mary will give birth to a boy.

His name will be Jesus. Jesus means God saves. Inferring that this child will be a saving person. OK, it's easy to focus on the virgin birth stuff, but let's bring the message out here. Right from the outset Jesus is about saving people.

*Luk 1:32* 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,

*Luk 1:33* and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

Now these verses really hit on how specific Jesus is to the saving role.

But look at the credentials here.  
He will be great  
Called son of the most high  
He gets the throne of David – This kid will be king!  
He will reign over God's people forever  
His Kingdom will be eternal.

This is some introduction, this is going to be some kid.

Logically, Mary questions.

*Luk 1:34 And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"*

She doesn't just say "Yeh, whatever"  
She wants to know how? Listen to this answer:

*Luk 1:35 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."*

It's a God thing.

Now here we get to a big issue. Do we believe this? Can we believe this. How does it work in everyday kind of life?

Now a couple of things here. It doesn't happen that way usually. I've worked that bit out. Actually, other than this time, it has never happened before or since.

The world or our society doesn't really believe it. They'll take the holidays but not the belief structure that goes with it.

Can we really believe it?

Well I repeat what I said earlier.

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accurate in everything. It has credibility, you can test it and see if you like. Alongside that, the story is still valid today. Still to this day, this story speaks to us, speaks to us with credibility even within its amazingness.

Your belief in this event is in some ways dependent on your belief in a miracle working God.

**Could the God you believe in do this?**

The angel is one a roll now, he says and look at this, your old relative Elizabeth is having a kid too! You know the one who is old and never had kids and never thought she would – yep – her.

*Luk 1:36 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.*

*Luk 1:37 For nothing will be impossible with God."*

Sometimes, God clarifies stuff for us. God gives us an insight into His capacity. God pastorally cares in the most bizarre ways sometimes.

And Mary's reaction is????

*Luk 1:38 And 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.*

OK God I'm in. If this is where you want to take me, bring it on.

How do we respond to God when He places thing in front of us. Are we in?