

## 2—Advent—The Great Gift of Christmas

### I. Introduction

- a. There it is. Nothing is impossible with God! As we prepare for Christmas, this is great news because our need is impossible to fix. But God's plan to rescue his people is at the heart of the Christmas story. And nothing is impossible for God!
- b. Sometimes you don't know that something is possible until it happens. I was driving down that road behind Regions Bank that has the narrow railroad underpass. I didn't think it was possible for two vehicles to pass through without hitting each other. I had always stopped and waited my turn like most people. But one day when I took my turn someone from the other side never checked up. I learned that two vehicles can pass through with no exchange of paint.
- c. Mary was given a message from the angel, Gabriel, that stated she would bear a Son even though she had never known a man. This is not only possible but is in fact the reality in which we live. God sent his Son into the world who took on flesh to be our Savior and King.
- d. (Gal. 4:4-5) <sup>4</sup> But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, <sup>5</sup> to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.
- e. Let's see how God is accomplishing this adoption for misfits like us.

### II. Main Point

- a. This is probably by far one of the most important truths in the Bible that God sends his Son in the form of a man to save his people from their sins! That's what Christmas is about in that God loved the world by giving the greatest gift possible—his Son.

### III. Outline

- a. Gabriel was sent with a message of grace
- b. Gabriel announces the birth of the Christ Child
- c. Mary's Response

### IV. Exposition

- a. We left off last week, after the angel of the Lord came to announce the birth of John, Elizabeth was five months pregnant even though she had been barren her entire life and was past the age of having children. In her sixth month, the angel, Gabriel, was sent from God with a message of grace.
  - i. One simple but profound thing we need to keep in mind is that God is the One doing these things. God sent Gabriel to Zachariah and now he has sent him to Mary. He will bring about this great salvation.
  - ii. So, this teenage girl to whom God sent an angel lives in a city of Galilee named Nazareth.
    1. The first description of this young girl is that she is a virgin.
      - a. In fact, her name is the last thing we are told about her in this long opening sentence. even then she's described as "the name of the virgin was Mary."
      - b. This is an important fulfillment of one of the Advent promises.
        - i. (Isa. 7:14) <sup>14</sup> Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.
        - c. And there's more things to consider but we will discuss those later in the text.
      2. She's also described as being engaged to a man named Joseph from the house of David.
        - a. This engagement is somewhat different than how we understand engagement.
        - b. The father of Joseph would have went to the father of Mary to make this arrangement. If Mary's father accepted this request, then Joseph's father would pay a bridal price.
          - i. Since Mary's family would be losing a daughter and a helper (yes she would have had plenty of chores to do in the family) and Joseph's family

- would be gaining one, then a payment was required to make this arrangement.
- c. Also, this engagement was more than I've promised to marry this person at a future date. This agreement would have been as binding as a marriage.
    - i. We know that because to break this agreement was described as divorce in Matthew when he found her with child.
    - ii. And to have sexual relations during this time would have been considered adultery.
  - d. And of course, we need not think being betrothed to Joseph was something they were being forced to do.
    - i. You might recall Rebekah was asked if she was okay with this arrangement to be Isaac's wife in Gen. 24. And she said yes!
- iii. The angel of the Lord greets Mary and then tells her who she is.
1. In v. 28...having come to her said, "Greetings, favored one, the Lord is with you."
    - a. That's an amazing greeting! The word favored is the same word used for grace. It could say, Greetings, graced one.
      - i. That means God's disposition towards Mary is according to his grace. Grace is always understood as God's free choice of favor. There's nothing about her that forces or compels God's hand of favor. If so, then it's not grace; it's earned.
        1. "Grace isn't opposed to working; it is opposed to earning."  
Ligon Duncan
      - ii. Mary is just a teenager certainly living at home with her family awaiting the day of her marriage.
      - iii. In other words, she hasn't done anything.
      - iv. She's not sinless or perfect. But she is favored by God.
      - v. And all of God's grace or favor rests on the person and work of Jesus Christ. He's the only one who (at this point) will earn it and has earned it.
      - vi. And God can act in grace on the certainty of what Jesus will do even before he accomplishes it.
        1. If this isn't true then Abraham could not have been declared righteous by faith long before Christ comes.
    - b. But let's not miss the obvious. Mary is not looking to save the world. She's looking for the Savior of the World. There's been too much made of her throughout history. She's a recipient of grace!
      - i. God came to Mary. She didn't pray for God to come to her. God knows her and sought her.
    - c. So, God's grace is upon her and because of that grace God is with her.
      - i. This is one of the most basic but glorious promises God gives us. She will not be alone like an orphan.
      - ii. This is how Gabriel begins...with grace and a promise to be with her.
      - iii. It must begin here. To start with here's what I want you to do and if you do everything I tell you then I will like you is backwards to how God works.
      - iv. When God works, he does the humanly impossible so that grace remains grace!
      - v. That's good news for sinners! All praise to God!

- iv. But this greeting troubled her greatly.
  - 1. It seemed clear that Zachariah was troubled by the angel but Mary the saying caused her to be greatly disturbed.
    - a. We need to be reminded that we are afraid of good things too. For example, we will often be troubled about a new job opportunity. Change, even when it's for our good, scares us.
    - b. Nothing the angel has said is bad news. They are words of grace from God delivered by one of the most powerful angels in the all of creation.
    - c. The saying caused her to consider carefully within to herself what sort of greeting this might be.
    - d. I think we struggle to be this too. If you have turned from your sin and are trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ then this same greeting and promise is true of you.
      - i. You are "O favored one, the Lord is with you." Live like this is true.
      - ii. You are a servant of the Most High and child of God.
      - iii. I think Mary's troubled heart makes a lot of sense. That's a big identity change. The fears that come with being adopted into the family of God are real even though they are really good!
- b. Well as we all know, Gabriel has more than a greeting and promise. He has come to deliver the birth announcement of the Christ Child.
  - i. If God has come to unveil his rescue plan, then it must be more than saying hello to a scared teenage girl from Nazareth.
  - ii. Gabriel commands her not the fear. Why? Why shouldn't she be afraid? Why shouldn't we be afraid?
    - 1. Notice the reason Gabriel gives there in verse 30: because you have found favor with God.
      - a. The next time you are troubled, ask yourself why and then remind yourself that God has set his grace upon you! You are loved.
  - iii. Now, as Mary stands struck by the amazing grace of God, Gabriel said: "You will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus."
    - 1. As Mary heard this and as you hear it, what possibilities come to mind at this point?
      - a. If Gabriel had stopped there, and maybe as Mary hears this she too thinks, "Okay, I will be married soon and we will have a son." Got it.
    - 2. But there's more:
      - a. This one will be great
      - b. He will be called the Son of the Most High
      - c. And the Lord will give to him the throne of his father David
      - d. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever
      - e. And of his Kingdom there will be no end
    - 3. What does this young teenage girl who is only engaged at this point understand about this announcement?
      - a. These may be high hopes for any future parent. We would love to know instead of imagining that our children will be great and useful in the world. But as you know, we cannot determine what our kids will do and be.
      - b. But notice how I ended that sentence...do and be. We often think of someone on the grounds of what they do. In other words, if I can say this in a strange way: what we do is what we be. Many will even say...you can be anything you want. I don't find that statement very helpful.

- c. But this child to be born of Mary will be great. That's the nature of this Child. And this is different than what John the Baptist would be. He would be great before the Lord...in the Lord's presence. This child will be great like the greatness of God. Not in the presence of God but as the Son of God.
  - i. (Ps. 48:1) Great is the LORD and greatly to be praised in the city of our God!
  - ii. And because of his being...his nature...that he is divine...he is God...he will then do this: he will be King forever and his Kingdom will have no end.
- d. I think Mary understood the announcement. And she is ready to believe that her son will be just as God has said through his messenger.
  - i. But what is beyond her comprehension is how she will conceive a child in her womb when she has never known a man.
  - ii. Other than the creation of Adam and Eve, there is but one way for a child to be conceived. It is God's design.
  - iii. So, Mary asks for an explanation not about what this child will be but how can she conceive a child in her womb without following God's design from the beginning.
- iv. Gabriel's response tells us how he understood Mary's question which is different than Zachariah's question.
  - 1. He sought a sign. He sought proof. Mary seeks an explanation. Zachariah acted in unbelief. This teenage girl acted in faith.
    - a. That's supposed to be the other way around. Right?
  - 2. The messenger's reply is this: (Lk. 1:35) <sup>35</sup> 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.
    - a. The explanation lacks the fine details that we all might want to know. But the emphasis is not on the how but the who.
    - b. If God can create the world out of nothing, then causing a virgin to conceive isn't an impossibility.
  - 3. What are the important things we must believe about this?
    - a. "It shows that salvation ultimately must come from the Lord. Just as God had promised that the 'seed' of a woman (Gen. 3:15) would ultimately destroy the serpent, so God brought it about by his own power, not through mere human effort. The virgin birth of Christ is an unmistakable reminder that salvation can never come through human effort, but must be the work of God himself. Our salvation only comes about through the supernatural work of God, and that was evident at the very beginning of Jesus' life." (Grudem 530)
    - b. "The virgin birth made possible the uniting of full deity and full humanity in the one person. This was the means God used to send his Son into the world as a man. It happened this way to show his full humanity would be evident to us from the fact of this ordinary birth from a human mother, and his full deity would be evident from the fact of his conception in Mary's womb by the powerful work of the Holy Spirit." (Grudem 530)
    - c. I also believe "the virgin birth also makes possible Christ's true humanity without inherited sin. All human beings have inherited legal guilt and corrupt moral nature from their first father, Adam. But the fact that Jesus did not have a human father means that the line of descent from Adam is partially interrupted.

Jesus did not descend from Adam in exactly the same way in which every other human being has descended from Adam. And this helps us to understand why the legal guilt and moral corruption that belongs to all other human beings did not belong to Christ." (Grudem 530)

- i. I think that's what it means when Gabriel concludes with a therefore in verse 35.
  - ii. "Therefore the child to be born will be holy, the Son of God."
4. What massive hope for us to believe in the One born like this! These truths assure us that we trust in the One who has always been worthy of our trust.
- a. Jesus doesn't have a questionable past that we need to be ashamed of.
  - b. He is the God-Man and he is holy! Immanuel is the Son of God. He is God!
  - c. And his coming in the flesh this way makes certain that salvation is of the Lord. And because it is of the Lord then it can save us.
  - d. (Lk. 1:37) <sup>37</sup> For nothing will be impossible with God."
- c. That makes Mary's response all the more clear. And it should make it clear for us to respond like this too.
- i. (Lk. 1:38) <sup>38</sup> And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word."
    1. Let it be to me according to your word!
      - a. Have you responded to the Lord like this?
      - b. "Come, thou long expected Jesus,  
born to set thy people free;  
from our fears and sins release us,  
let us find our rest in thee."
      - c. "Born thy people to deliver,  
born a child and yet a King,  
born to reign in us forever,  
now thy gracious kingdom bring.  
By thine own eternal spirit  
rule in all our hearts alone;  
by thine all sufficient merit,  
raise us to thy glorious throne."
    2. We sinners come broken by the fall. We are in union with Adam, our father, and there is no hope and no rescue possible.....except in seeking amnesty with this King.
      - a. May we come repentant and low before the King.
      - b. And there is no salvation apart from repentance and faith in this One named Jesus which means Savior. And this Savior is also King. We should have no problem submitting to this King forever!
      - c. For this King is holy and his rule and salvation will endure forever!

#### V. Response

- a. May you receive the greatest gift ever known to man, Jesus Christ. (Matt. 1:21) <sup>21</sup> She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."
- b. "The Son of God came to dwell in human flesh for us in order that he might come to dwell in us by his Spirit." (Sinclair Ferguson)

Benediction: (Num. 6:24-26) <sup>24</sup> The LORD bless you and keep you; <sup>25</sup> the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; <sup>26</sup> the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.