

Wondrous News for Mary

Christmas Series from Luke

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Bible Text: Luke 1:26-56

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Verse 26.

Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And having come in, the angel said to her, "Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!"

But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was.

Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end."

Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?"

And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible."

Then Mary said, "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

Now Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste, to a city of Judah, and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth.

And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Then she spoke out with a loud voice and said, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord."

And Mary said: "My soul magnifies the Lord, And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed. For He who is mighty has done great things for me, And holy is His name. And His mercy is on those who fear Him From generation to generation. He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has put down the mighty from their thrones, And exalted the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, And the rich He has sent away empty. He has helped His servant Israel, In remembrance of His mercy, As He spoke to our fathers, To Abraham and to his seed forever."

And Mary remained with her about three months, and returned to her house.¹

May God's blessing rest upon this portion of his inspired Word.

Let's pray.

Father, once again we acknowledge our utter dependence upon you. Take your holy Word and apply it to our hearts. Lord, remove from us anything that would prevent your Word from taking root within us and accomplish eternal things here this day. We ask it in Jesus' glorious name. Amen.

Most of us here have lived long enough to have heard stunning announcements of great importance. If you are a teenager or older you can no doubt remember where you were when you heard the shocking news that a plane had flown into the World Trade Center and the unfolding events of that tragic morning will long remain with you. Many of us remember where we were and what we were doing 46 years ago when we heard the announcement that President Kennedy had been shot in a Dallas motorcade.

Liberty member John Knox and I spoke with a woman at Terra Lutheran Village just this past week who has recently celebrated her 100th birthday. She has lived long enough to remember hearing the momentous news that what we now call World War I had ended in 1918. Each of these announcements proclaiming events of significance to the world, each one was carried to millions by telegraph or radio or television.

¹ Luke 1:26-56.

But the announcement of the event that has had the most impact on the world was made to an audience not of millions, but of one. We call it the annunciation from the Latin word for announcement.

Look at verses 26 and 27 of Luke chapter one.

Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary.²

Now in the sixth month, that is, six months from the time that Elizabeth conceived, she conceived the forerunner, John, the one we know as John the Baptist. This was in Galilee that this announcement came to Mary. Galilee, the most northerly of the three provinces of Palestine: Galilee in the north, Samaria in the middle and then Judea in the south. This province of Galilee was approximately 50 miles from north to south, about 30 miles east to west. So it is approximately equivalent to Carroll County, Howard Count, Baltimore and Harford Counties all together. It was populated by Jews with a mixed heritage. It was called Galilee of the Gentiles or Galilee of the nations.

Now Mary was from a town called Nazareth, a town in lower Galilee approximately 24 miles east of the Sea of Galilee.

Nazareth was a town so insignificant it is not even mentioned in all of the Old Testament. It was not mentioned in the Jewish Talmud. It was not mentioned by Jewish historian Josephus who names over 200 cities of Galilee.

You will remember Nathaniel asked, we read it in John chapter one, "Can any good come out of Nazareth?"³ That insignificant little town.

Mary saw the angel Gabriel. The angel Gabriel was sent to Mary with a message. His name means mighty one of God or God is mighty. He is mentioned four times in Scripture, each time bearing a momentous message. Twice in the book of Daniel he interpreted Daniel's vision of the ram and the goat, chapter eight of Daniel. He interpreted it to mean to the kingdoms of Greece and Persia. He interpreted Daniel's vision of the 70 weeks in chapter nine, the time table for the coming of the Messiah. And he is seen twice in Luke. We saw him already in the announcement to Zacharias that his wife Elizabeth would give birth to the forerunner, Luke chapter one. And then here again he announced to Mary that she would give birth to the promised Messiah.

The Scripture says he went "...to a virgin betrothed to a man."⁴

² Luke 1:26-27.

³ John 1:46.

⁴ Luke 1:27.

A virgin, παρθενος (par-then'-os), literally having been betrothed to a man. Betrothed is the word μνηστευω (mnace-tyoo'-o) and it means to be promised in marriage, to be formally betrothed. It usually began a year before the wedding.

This was as binding as marriage. It required a divorce to end such a betrothal. So it is much stronger than what we commonly think of as an engagement today.

This virgin's name was Mary, מֵרִיָּם (meer-yawm') in the Hebrew. There is no mention of her parents here. She was betrothed to Joseph who was of the house of David. That is, he was of the royal line, a descendant of the tribe of Judah.

And verse 28 we read:

“And having come in, the angel said to her, ‘Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!’”⁵

Rejoice, χαίρω (khah'-ee-ro) it is in the Greek. It is used as a greeting. It is a common greeting. Jesus used it when he greeted the women after his resurrection. Rejoice.

“And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, ‘Rejoice!’”⁶

The King James Version translates it, “Hail highly favored one,” that is, literally having been favored. Hail or rejoice you having been favored one. The word is derived from χάρις (khar'-ece), grace.

And what a favor, what grace, what abundant grace to be chosen to be the mother of the Messiah, an honor above even that of Eve. Thousands of young Jewish women were familiar, no doubt, with Isaiah's prophesy.

“Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.”⁷

“God with us.”⁸

How many of them must have hoped and dreamed that the Messiah might come in their generation and even that they might be chosen to bear the child. The young woman had to be one who had never known a man intimately, one who was humble, one who was godly. And at any given time there were surely hundreds who fit that description. Jesus might have been born to a Martha or a Sarah or a Hannah or a Rachel, but Miriam, Mary, I have wonderful news for you, Gabriel said. You have been much graced, highly favored. Blessed are you among women.

⁵ Luke 1:28.

⁶ Matthew 28:9.

⁷ Isaiah 7:14.

⁸ Matthew 1:23.

Look at verse 29.

“But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was.”⁹

She was troubled, διαταρασσω (dee-at-ar-as'-so) it is in the Greek. It is an intense form of the word to be troubled. You will remember we read in Matthew two Herod was troubled and all Jerusalem with him when he got wind that there had been a new king born. Well that is the word ταρασσω (tar-as'-so). This is an intensified form of the words. She was greatly troubled. She was highly agitated. She was disturbed, you might say, just as you would be if an angel popped in while you were doing the dishes one night.

Me, highly favored, much graced, a poor woman from a poor family in an insignificant town of Galilee? She was troubled. She was distressed. She wondered in her mind what manner of greeting this should be.

And then we read:

Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end."¹⁰

Do not be afraid, Mary, is what Gabriel said to Zacharias. It is what the angels said to the shepherds. Do not be afraid, fear not. You have found χαρις (khar'-ece), you have found grace with God. Grace, unmerited favor. God has chosen you, Mary, for a special role in his great redemptive plan.

“And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son.”¹¹

Those words would immediately bring to mind Isaiah’s prophecy.

“Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son.”¹²

Gabriel says to her, “And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS.”¹³

⁹ Luke 1:29.

¹⁰ Luke 1:30-33.

¹¹ Luke 1:31.

¹² Isaiah 7:14.

¹³ Luke 1:31.

See, that is what we call him, Jesus, transliterated and then brought into the English. But in the Hebrew it was יהוֹשֻׁעַ (yeh-ho-shoo' - ah), Jehovah saves.

“You will call his name, Jehovah saves.”

As far as we know, Mary was the first person to ever hear that name in reference to our Savior.

I know of a name, a beautiful name that angels brought down to earth.
They whispered it low one night long ago to a maiden of lowly birth.

And Gabriel says, he, this child who was to be born of you, he will be great. Amen. Great in his knowledge, great in his power. He will be great in his mercy, great in his compassion, great in his holiness, great in his humility. He will be great in his wisdom, great in his meekness, great in his zeal. He will be great in his prayers, great in his speech, great in his deeds. His sufferings would be great. His heartache would be great. And what a great day would be the day of his resurrection. Yes, he shall be great. He is the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ.

He will be called the son of the highest, the son of the most high God.

Mark 5:7.

“What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?”¹⁴

The demoniac of Gadara, the demon spoke from the mouth of the demoniac of Gadara.

“What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?”¹⁵

Is this the title, we wonder, that is commonly used of Jesus by angelic beings? Is that how they refer to him, the Son of the most high?

“And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever.”¹⁶

Jesus would be an everlasting king with his people.

Psalm 45.

“Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre.”¹⁷

¹⁴ Mark 5:7.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Luke 1:33.

¹⁷ Psalm 45:6.

However, this prophecy may yet be fulfilled as regards a restored Israel. It is certainly true that Jesus is presently reigning over the true house of Jacob, is he not? That is, Abraham's seed, Abraham's redeemed people.

The Shorter Catechism says he subdues us to himself, he rules and defends us, he restrains and conquers our enemies. He is reigning over us even now and his kingdom will have no end. His kingdom will have no end. Every other kingdom known to man, the pharaohs, the caesars, all emperors, all potentates, every sovereign over whatever nation had one thing in common. They each came to an end.

“...and of His kingdom there will be no end.”¹⁸

Look at verse 34.

“Then Mary said to the angel, ‘How can this be, since I do not know a man?’”¹⁹

It is quite clear from Gabriel's reaction that her response did not indicate a lack of faith as evidently Zacharias' response some months earlier. This was a very practical rationale question.

“I am not yet married, not in the fullest sense. I do not yet have a marital relationship with a man? Will this conception be by natural means? How is this going to happen? I am not yet married,” in other words. “Is this to happen after Joseph and I consummate the marriage? Is that what you are talking about?”

And then Gabriel explains in verse 35.

“And the angel answered and said to her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.’”²⁰

“...the power of the highest will overshadow you.”²¹

Matthew Henry writes, “The immediate energy of the godhead, conveyed by the Holy Spirit will overshadow you.”

It reminds us of Genesis where the Spirit of God moved or brooded over the face of the deep.

“...the power of the highest will overshadow you.”²²

¹⁸ Luke 1:33.

¹⁹ Luke 1:34.

²⁰ Luke 1:35.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

One scholar writes, “What exquisite delicacy is there in the use of this word, suggesting how gentle while yet efficacious would be this power and its mysterious secrecy, too, as if withdrawn by a cloud from human scrutiny.”

“...therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.”²³

John the forerunner would be great in the eyes of the Lord. He would be filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother’s womb. But he would not be holy from his mother’s womb in the same sense that Jesus was holy because John’s birth, as wondrous as it was, came through natural means. And he inherited a sinful nature from his father Zacharias who inherited it from his father, et cetera, et cetera, extending back to Adam, the father of us all.

To be the sin bearer for us, the Redeemer had to be without sin. To be without sin, he had to avoid the sinful nature inherited, evidently, from our human father. So the human father was simply taken out of the equation.

“...and the power of the Highest will overshadow you.”²⁴

Therefore that holy one who will be born of you will not be called the son of Joseph. He will be called the Son of God.

Look at verses 36 and 37. Gabriel goes on.

Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible.²⁵

As evidence of God’s power to do what men believe to be impossible, your relative Elizabeth has conceived a son in her old age and she who was called barren is now in her sixth month, sixth month of pregnancy.

“For with God nothing will be impossible.”²⁶

Verse 38.

“Then Mary said, ‘Behold the maidservant of the Lord!’”²⁷

The servant of the Lord, the slave of the Lord. You could translate it, “Behold, the servant of the Lord.”

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Luke 1:36-37.

²⁶ Luke 1:37.

²⁷ Luke 1:38.

“‘Let it be to me according to your word.’ And the angel departed from her.”²⁸

The δουλῆ (doo'-lay), the slave maid. Let it be to me according to your Word. What meekness we see here, what humility, what faith. Certainly she could see that this was, though a great blessing, yet nonetheless, a mixed blessing for a chaste young unwed Jewish maiden to be found to be with child, to be though by others to be defiled, impure, to be thought to have entered into an intimate relationship with a man to whom she was not married, either her betrothed or another. Surely this would be a great trial.

Yet her response is:

“Behold the maidservant of the Lord!”²⁹

Now let's meditate on some of the truths in this passage which is rich with them. This passage describes what might be called the bedrock of the Christian faith, the bedrock of the Christian faith. I have pointed out before that it has been pointed out before that it has been reported. I think Robbie Zacharias mentions it one of his books that CNN interviewer Larry King was once asked, “If you could interview anyone in history, who would it be?”

And he responded, “Jesus of Nazareth. I would ask him,” Larry King said, “Were you really virgin born? Because the answer to that question would define all of history. The answer to that question would define all of history.”

But our rational minds respond, how can this be? How can a child be born of a virgin? How can this be?

“The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.”³⁰

That is the answer the Scripture gives.

Like many of you, I have seen mentioned before the Hall of Presidents in Disneyworld. I really enjoy it. If I ever make it down to Disneyworld again I want to see the Hall of Presidents. Disney's imagineers developed the Lincoln animatron, they called him, through painstaking trial and error back in the early 60s. It might have even... planning might have started in the late 50s.

I think I saw it first at the New York World's Fair in 65-65. I can't remember what pavilion, but I think that Disney shipped Lincoln up there and maybe the USA pavilion. Some of you might remember, 64-65. I would have been negative 10, I think, at the time. And Lincoln stands up and he gives a six minute oration and he does it several times a day to an audience of hundreds each time.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Luke 1:35.

Having seen what Disney's engineers could do with technology that is now almost 50 years old, I would have no trouble believing it if Sean and Amy Huey who just got back from Disneyworld or Mike and Karen Blackburn who are always getting back from Disneyworld, returned from a trip to Florida and said, "Hey, guess what, pastor? Lincoln not only speaks now, they have made him sing. He stands up and he sings."

Well, once I have seen what his creators have already done, I believe they could make him dance or jump or, you know, or play the *Battle Hymn of the Republic* on his teeth. Why not? I have seen what they can do in creating this animatron.

Well, the point, of course, is that once you acknowledge the wonder of what God has done in creating humans who not only can stand up and speak for six minutes, but, as you are well aware, for much longer, and, you know, all of those other things that we have mentioned before, you know, if I get cut my body heals itself and I can dream and I can write songs and poetry and we can imagine things and create things and Lincoln can't do that, not the animatron.

But what I am saying is once we realize what the creator can do, then certainly he can do something like cause a virgin to bear a son. You can readily see how nothing is impossible with God.

Had you told Joseph or Mary or Dr. Luke who wrote this gospel that the time would come when a doctor could actually extract a vein from a woman's leg and use it to bypass an obstruction in her heart, they would have found it next to impossible to believe. If a surgeon can do that, cannot the creator of the human reproductive system choose to bypass it if it chooses, if it suits his purpose? Of course it can. Is anything too hard for the Lord?

Secondly, let's think about, again, let's think about the quiet humility of Mary which really comes across in this passage, in what she said.

"Behold the handmaid of the Lord. He has regarded my low estate. My spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior."

And in what she didn't say, what is not recorded for us. For example, on that arduous trip to Bethlehem, though she was great with child, we don't hear any complaints from Mary, nor when she had to place her newborn child in a feeding trough where the animals would come to feed. There is no hint of complaint, nothing like if this is what life is going to be like with you, Joseph, then I made a horrible mistake.

Rather, she was adorned, the Scripture says, in the hidden person of the heart with the incorruptible beauty of a gentile and quiet spirit which is very precious in the sight of God, 1 Peter 3:4.

So, ladies, let me ask you. Is this how those who know you best will describe you? Her beauty is not just on the surface, but she is adorned in the hidden person of the heart with the beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit which is very precious in the sight of God. Is that how your husband or your children or your friends will describe you?

Well, pastor, you don't know me. That is just not me. That is now who I am. That is not my personality.

Well, it should be. It is not optional. Do not let your adornment be merely outward, the Bible says, arranging the hair, wearing gold or putting on fine apparel. Rather, let it be the hidden person of the heart with the beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit which is very precious in the sight of God.

Now we can chalk up almost any sin to personality, couldn't we? Husbands who are distant and surly. That is just the way I am. Children who are loud and unruly, employers who are harsh and unreasonable, employees who are shiftless and undependable. Well, maybe your personality does incline you in some sinful direction. No doubt it does. Well, work on it. Walk in the Spirit and you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh, Galatians 5:16. Put off concerning your former conduct the old man who grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts and be renewed in the spirit of your mind and put on the new man which was created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness, Ephesians 4:22-23.

Mary's humility was precious in the sight of God.

So, ladies, let me ask you. Is yours? Is your humility precious in the sight of God?

Later in life during Jesus' public ministry think about it. Mary did not take center stage. She received no special favors, no honors. There is no record of anyone coming to her trying to use her unique position trying to gain favors.

Churchill made it a point of honor to refer to the queen in all of his public addresses as prime minister, but Peter, Paul, John, James do not mention Mary once in their New Testament letters. In fact, her last recorded words are found in John chapter two. And what did she say? Referring to Jesus she said, "Whatever he says to you, do it. Whatever he says to you, do it."

She sought no position of influence and she had none. She was a woman of low estate, a humble, godly woman who was blessed of the Lord, who received grace from the Lord. She was blessed, of course, in the miraculous birth of her firstborn son Jesus. She was blessed by God afterwards with at least six other children that we know of by her husband Joseph.

Mark six.

“Is this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary, and brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us?”³¹

Yet because the mind of man is an idol factory, it was only a matter of time before some attempted to grant more honor to Mary than she was due. In fact, even while Jesus was on the earth we read:

And it happened, as He spoke these things, that a certain woman from the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, "Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts which nursed You!"

But He said, "More than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"³²

Luke 11:27-28.

Jesus evidently sought to nip this in the bud. Any misguided attempt to ascribe any special honor to Mary other than the honor that she was due as a humble, godly woman who received a wonderful gift from God, to receive the opportunity to have role in bringing the Messiah to the earth... Think about it. Surely such a humble woman would be aghast if she knew what silly superstitions have arisen around her, that she was immaculately conceived, that she was a perpetual virgin, that she was sinless, that she ascended into heaven.

As you know, there are people who actually believe they can pray to her and she will hear them and intercede for them. Listen, only God is omniscient, that is all knowing. Only God is omnipresent, that is everywhere present. Only God can hear the prayers of worshippers all over the world at the same moment. No mere human in his natural state or in his glorified state in heaven has such divine attributes.

Listen well. To ascribe the attributes of God to one who is not God is idolatry. Nowhere in the Bible are prayers offered to anyone but God unless they are being offered to false gods, idolatry.

Friend, let's give Mary her rightful place, not at the left hand of God interceding for us, but at his feet rejoicing in God her Savior where you will join her one day at Jesus' feet if you are, in fact, his child.

Husbands, imagine that you gave your wife a beautiful diamond necklace for Christmas. This may be impossible for the wives to imagine, so I am speaking to the husbands here. And imagine that she took this diamond necklace out of this box that has some fancy name on it in gold, you know, gilt or something on the front and she takes the necklace out of the box and tosses the necklace into the drawer and she takes that box and puts it

³¹ Mark 6:3.

³² Luke 11:27-28.

up on the mantel and she takes it out from time to time and adores it and looks at it and... but the necklace itself is thrown in a drawer.

She... friends come over, she shows them the box. Look at the beautiful box my husband gave me for Christmas.

As I said, the last time we considered this passage I think the point should be obvious. This is why we don't buy you diamond necklaces. No, actually the point is the church is and the Christian's emphasis should be on the gift, Jesus and the giver, the Father and not on the humble package in which the gift came.

Thirdly, I think the greatest truth from this passage is the one that is self evident to believers present, but may have been missed by others. This passage describes God becoming flesh and dwelling among us.

In the beginning was the Word and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”³³

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.”³⁴

“For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given.”³⁵

You will call his name Immanuel, God with us.

Thou shalt call him יהוֹשׁוּעַ (yeh-ho-shoo' - ah), Jehovah saves.

You will call him Jehovah saves for he shall save his people from their sins.

Well, who is he, then? He is Jehovah.

“...Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father.”³⁶

We don't celebrate the birth of a baby. We celebrate God becoming flesh and dwelling among us. Until you are prepared to acknowledge Jesus not just as a Savior, but as Lord, you cannot have life.

“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”³⁷

Acts 16:31.

³³ John 1:1.

³⁴ John 1:14.

³⁵ Isaiah 9:6.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Acts 16:31.

Christian, there are many voices today, as you know, voices which presume to declare that neither the Scriptures nor Jesus ever really declared his deity. This is merely a misunderstanding that has crept into the Church over the years.

Well, let me remind you again that our faith in the deity of Christ is not derived from one or two verses here or there, but from the clear declarations of Old Testament prophets, New Testament apostles and the Lord Jesus himself. It is evidenced by what Jesus said. It is evidenced by what Jesus did. It is affirmed by numerous eye witnesses, eye witnesses who had nothing to gain and everything to lose by declaring these things to be true if they knew them to be false.

In your bulletin you should find today a half sheet providing just a portion of the evidence for the deity of Christ. I have got one here.

What I would encourage you to do—you can do with these whatever you wish—but I would encourage you to actually put it in your Bible, maybe keep it. I tape mine in the back fly leaf of my Bible and I have to turn it down a little bit. But this can be of great help to you, first of all, if you ever begin to doubt. You know, if the enemy comes alongside and gets you to start to question or doubt the deity of Christ, or if someone comes to your door and a couple of people probably and they try to get you to doubt the deity of Christ, or, better yet, you can use this to help proclaim Christ's deity to someone who has not yet seen it clearly established in the Word of God.

But, fourthly, there is a great example of faith in this incident.

Elizabeth said, "Blessed is she who believed."³⁸

There are at least three other ways Mary might have responded to Gabriel. Think about it. She might have responded to Gabriel with unbelief. There must be some logical explanation for this. You know, perhaps I fell and hit my head. This is just a dream. Maybe it is a sorcerer's trick. She could have responded with fear and worry. She could have fretted. What about the consequences? What are my parents going to say? How is Joseph going to understand this? What will people say? She could have responded with pride. Gabriel, you know, tell God thanks, but no thanks. I don't need him and I sure don't need to spend nine months carrying someone else's child and I am not interested in the position. I am not going to let my reputation be destroyed. I am doing ok on my own. Thank you, but no thanks.

Listen. There are at least three ways that we can respond to the message of Christmas. And what is that message? The message that we sinned against the Creator. We have sinned against our Creator.

"All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way."³⁹

³⁸ Luke 1:45.

³⁹ Isaiah 53:6.

“There is none righteous, no, not one.”⁴⁰

“The soul who sins shall die.”⁴¹

God is so holy that one sin is sufficient to keep me from him. The message is that God’s love is so great, however, that he had a plan to bring us back, a plan to bring me back into a relationship with him. This plan involved a sinless substitute. The innocent would have to die for the guilty.

Well, who is innocent? I can’t pay for your debt, nor could you pay for mine. I have a debt of my own, as do you. No mere man could do it. God would send his own dear Son. He would not inherit our depraved nature. He would be virgin born. He would be holy, harmless, undefiled, the spotless Lamb of God. He would keep every single law that I ever broke, every single law that any offender ever broke he would perfectly keep.

And then he would pay the debt that I owe. He would pay the debt that I owe. He came to fulfill all righteousness. He always loved God with all of his heart, soul, mind and strength. He always loved his neighbor as himself. He perfectly kept the law and then he went to the cross and he paid the debt that I owed. The judgment of a holy God, separation from God, God’s wrath, God’s anger poured out upon him instead of me. God raised him from the dead. God gloriously raised him from the dead. The debt has been paid. It is sufficient. I have accepted it. And he raised him from the dead.

And then Jesus told his apostles, “Go into all the world and proclaim this good news, the good news that if you will repent of your sins and lay hold upon Christ alone, trust in me, my finished work for you, all your sins will be forgiven and you will have everlasting life. You will be with God in heaven and he will be in your life right now to strengthen you, to sanctify you, to answer prayers, to work within you to accomplish his purposes.”

We can respond to this message with unbelief. That is foolishness. I don’t believe it. Only a moron would believe it.

Well, the Bible says if you respond to God’s announcement that way, if you respond to his announcement that way, you will perish.

“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness.”⁴²

Moronic it is in the Greek.

“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness.”⁴³

Only a moron would believe it. That is what they think.

⁴⁰ Romans 3:10.

⁴¹ Ezekiel 18:4, 20.

⁴² 1 Corinthians 1:18.

⁴³ Ibid.

You could respond with fear and worry and fret. Well, what will my parents say? What will my fiancé say? What about my husband? What about my wife? What about my friends? What will the consequences of such a decision be for me? What about my lifestyle? What about my pleasures? What about my habits? What about my goals? What is going to happen to all of that if I believe?

You could respond with fear, worry, fret.

Thirdly, you could respond with pride.

I don't need saving. What are you talking about? I am not a murderer. I don't rob banks. I am not a vile sinner like these people I read about in the paper or see on the news. I don't do that sort of thing. I am pretty good. I don't need some sort of new birth. I was born ok the first time. I am a good person. Ask my friends. I am kind. I am honest I am faithful.

God says there is none righteousness, not one. God says by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in his sight. God says not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us. The Bible says there is a way that seems right unto a man, but he ends thereof are the ways of death.

The fourth way is Mary's way. It is the way of faith.

Lord, I believe. Be it unto me according to your Word.

One final thought from this passage, a thought for believers. You know, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to the town of Nazareth. God's messenger was sent to an insignificant town with a message of eternal significance.

Christian, you are God's messenger, sent from God to a Maryland town, for most of you a town that many would consider to be insignificant [?], Eldersburg, Randallstown, [?], Ownings Mills, Westminster, Finksburg, [?], Woodstock, Ellicott City [?] or Woodbine, Marysville or Elk Ridge. You name it, a town not listed among America's top 200. Yet you have a message of eternal significance for your town. You have a message for that neighbor who lost his job. You have a message for that fellow at work whose wife has left him. You have a message for that aunt who is facing chemotherapy before that healthy successful satisfied friend who seems to have it all together, but who has no hope beyond the grave, the friend who is without God living for self. You have a message for your humble town.

“...behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”⁴⁴

Let's pray.

⁴⁴ Luke 2:20-11.

Father, what a glorious announcement this was. How we rejoice that you have preserved for us this record of how it happened. Lord, we rejoice with Mary at this grace that was bestowed upon her. But most of all, Lord, we rejoice at this grace that was bestowed upon this whole world, that Christ would leave the glory above and come here for sinners who deserve your wrath. And, Father, I pray, we pray if there be anyone here this day still dead in sins, anyone within the sound of my voice still dead in trespasses and sins and without hope, without God in this world, anyone dwelling in darkness rather than light, Lord, please open their eyes. Give faith. Give sight. Give redemption. Bring this miracle of regeneration into that heart. And, Lord, those of us who know you, forgive us for not proclaiming this news from the housetops. We have sinned against a holy God, but God loved us and sent his own Son to die for us if we but repent of our sins and lay hold upon him we are forgiven and granted everlasting life. Father, may we declare this message here and around the world with all the strength that we have in all the time that you give us. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.