

Christmas Characters

Message Two

Mary

Luke 1: 26-38 In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth,

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

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

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

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

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

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,

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

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

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.

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.

37 For nothing will be impossible with God."

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.

Introduction:

Let's call this guy in this story, Dave Richards.

Dave Richards was raised in a strong Christian home.



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When sharing his testimony with others he sometimes refers to himself as a “lifer.”

You see, Dave decided to trust in God when he was eight years old, making him a lifer.

Dave’s family was always in church.

His parents were involved in different ministries in the church from leadership positions, to missions, to children’s ministry.

The youth ministry in his church was very strong.

Dave needed this ministry in his life while he attended a local public high school.

This group was very active, and they spent countless hours hanging out with one another.

As Dave and his friends neared graduation, life started to get serious as the future beyond high school was approaching.

When Dave graduated, he had no idea what to do in life.

He attended college for a year and half with no real vision or direction.

Dave had no idea what God’s will was for his life.

Let’s move to our next character of Christmas, Mary, the mother of our Lord.

One day God interrupts Mary’s life with a powerful and revealing plan that was determined in eternity past and is now about to become a reality.

We will discover that when God’s will is made clear in life and we obey, nothing is impossible.

A Divine Plan is Set in Motion

In Luke's gospel, we find a powerful discussion between two people, Mary and Gabriel.

At a precise moment in time, God sends Gabriel to the unpopular city of Nazareth, to a young girl, probably around fourteen years old, named Mary.

Mary is recognized as a virgin.

This detail which Luke adds to the story can be quickly overlooked but is important.

Isaiah tells us when the Messiah comes to earth, he will be born from a virgin.

Paul tells the Galatians that God sent his Son, at a precise time, born of a woman, under the law. (***Galatians 4:4***).

This detail about Mary being a virgin, is the central topic of conversation between Mary and Gabriel.

We also learn in the text that Mary is betrothed to Joseph.

In the Jewish custom, this means they are legally married but have not had a marriage ceremony nor consummated the marriage.

The betrothal period will last about a year.

Gabriel shows up when Mary's relative Elizabeth is six months pregnant with John the Baptist.

Take a step back.

As believers in Christ we often want to know what God's plan is for our lives.

We pray about it, study God's Word to see it, and sometimes we are left confused and without answers.

I do not think Mary asked God to choose her to bring the Messiah into the world.

Gabriel has shown up in her life at God's command, identified himself, is about to address her in a way that is completely astounding, and with a plan that seems virtually impossible.

When God's plan is revealed in our lives, we may think it's an impossibility, but when God's will is made clear in life and we obey, nothing is impossible.

A Divine Plan Is Communicated and Explained

In the humble town of Nazareth, Gabriel appears to Mary and says, "Greeting O favored one, the Lord is with you."

Talk about a powerful introduction!

This greeting is so powerful that Mary herself is said to have been "greatly troubled."

She is confused and perplexed at this address and Gabriel continues by calming her fears and telling her that she has "found favor with God."

There is nothing in Mary life's that warrants God's favor.

Mary is not a perfect human being—she is simply the recipient of God's grace.

This is how salvation works.

By God's grace, faith is possible, and God makes a way for a fallen human, ravaged by sin, to have a personal and intimate relationship with him through the child that Mary will bring into the world.

Stop and ponder for a moment God's amazing grace!



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Returning to Dave's story for a moment; throughout high school and into college, church, especially youth ministry, was very close to Dave's heart.

When he graduated from high school and upon returning from college, he spent his time serving in youth ministry.

Since God's plan was unclear, Dave worked various jobs while serving high school students.

Throughout his days as student, and into his days as a volunteer leader, he traveled on mission trips.

Some overseas and others not far from home.

One mission trip would change Dave's life forever.

On the van ride home, after working with junior high students to conduct a week-long vacation Bible school at a small rural church, God would speak into Dave's life and call him to ministry.

This was a significant moment, because there was a calm quietness that seemed to last hours despite a van ride with ten junior high students.

The quietness was interrupted when Dave heard these words from the youth pastor, "I think some of the kids' lives were changed this week."

Many times, God shows up with his plan when we least expect it to arrive.

When God's plan arrives, it may not be with neon signs but in calm quietness.

We must learn to listen and hear what God is saying.

God had finally given clarity to Dave concerning his plan, just as Gabriel will give clarity to Mary and God's plan to save the world.



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Gabriel shares the details of God's plan, that she will conceive and bring forth a Son.

Gabriel provides, what I like to call, a divine ultrasound.

He gives specifics to Mary like an ultrasound would give parents specifics concerning their child.

Read Luke 1:31-33 And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.

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,

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

If Mary wasn't sitting down prior to Gabriel showing up, she may have at this moment.

Still uncertain about how this will come to be, she asks Gabriel how this can even be possible since she is a virgin.

Gabriel explains how this will happen, **"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" (Luke 1:35).**

This statement sets Jesus Christ apart from any other human being ever born.

His was a divine conception and not a human conception.

While Jesus will be born as every human being is born, he will live in perfection as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

There is so much packed into these verses, that if we are not careful, we can allow the information to pass by unconsciously because we are so familiar with the story.

The power of the description comes from Gabriel.

Earlier in Luke, Gabriel tells Zachariah, John the Baptist's father, that he "stands in the presence of God and I was sent ..." (Luke 1:19, ESV).

Gabriel confirms where he stands and what he does, being sent to communicate what God wants to be known.

With that understanding, what Gabriel communicates to Mary is not his own interpretation of who Jesus is, but instead, a direct communication from God himself identifying his Son.

Contemplate this powerful communication Gabriel has with a young girl chosen to carry the King.

Stop once again to ponder and meditate on these powerful words describing the Savior!

A Divine Plan Is Obeyed

Luke's gospel brings the conversation Mary has with Gabriel to a close.

What seems like an impossible reality in Mary's eyes is not impossible when God is working.

After Mary understands what is to be done, and her role in this divine plan, she humbly identifies herself as a bond servant of the Lord.

She commits her life to fulfilling his plan exactly as the Lord has called her to fulfill.

As Mary comes to this conclusion and obeys the command of God, Gabriel departs from her.



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Nine months from this moment Mary will give birth to her Messiah and Savior.

Dave finally had clarity concerning the Lord's direction for his life.

The van ride home that important day took about eight hours and for eight hours Dave would get some guidance from his youth pastor that set him on the correct path.

As the van pulled into the church parking lot, Dave went home and immediately told his closest friend concerning the Lord's calling.

Later that week, Dave would set up a meeting with the department chair for youth ministry at the local Bible College, and as the cliché states, "the rest is history."

Dave was humbled that God was going to use him in ministry.

This was a monumental task that only the Lord could accomplish through him.

Not only was Dave humbled by this, he was also committed to obey God's call.

As Dave was studying youth ministry, he was given the opportunity to serve his home church as the youth director.

This was Dave's dream job, to serve the church he grew up in, which would also be the place where Dave would meet and marry his beautiful bride and partner in ministry.

Dave was quiet growing up, hated to speak in public, could not stand reading in public, yet God would use that weakness to make his name known.



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Conclusion

How often do we sit around waiting for God to show up?

As believers, we need to consider the times God did show up, but we either failed to see because it was not a dramatic revelation, or we failed to obey because it appeared to us as an impossibility.

God's will is not always discovered in dramatic invitation, but instead through simple obedience.

As we obey the Lord and live transformed lives, we will be able to discern the will of God.

Romans 12:1-2 I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

As we have seen in Mary's story, her invitation comes from one who stands in the presence of God.

I think we would all wish God would do that today, has he?

God may be showing you exactly what he wants you do, but in your mind, you believe the task is impossible and you continue looking.

Perhaps that impossible task that you sense you need to do, may in fact be that dramatic invitation from the Lord to partner in his will.

As we seek the Lord through prayer and through reading his Word, we need to ask God to make us sensitive to his leading in life, no matter how difficult the task may seem.

We must contemplate the words of Gabriel to Mary, “with God, nothing is impossible.”

Mary took the words of Gabriel and was obedient to be what God called her to be.

She was able to personally watch the impossible become possible.

When God’s will is made clear in life and we obey, nothing is impossible.



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