

The sermon

Intro

In our world today there's a longing for something better. A sense that something's wrong. A lack of satisfaction. A lack of contentment.

Many today are after justice. A perfect society where no one is wronged, no one is abused, no one is held back by unjust structures.

Some long for peace. A people united and not divided by partisan politics.

Some long for community. A sense of belonging. A people you can be real with. A people committed to you.

Some long for health. Whether a cure for cancer or attempting to defy the aging process.

Some long for security. Whether it's home security systems, a good school for your children, or a sizable 401K.

All these longings will ultimately be realized in the reign of one person. Jesus of Nazareth. This morning we learn that...

BIG IDEA: God keeps his promises in the person of Jesus

READ PASSAGE

Body

Passage Focus

A prophet is coming. But that's not all.

Point 1: God is with us in everything he brings into our lives (1:26-30)

"In the sixth month"

The sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy.

Nazareth

The middle of nowhere. Not the first place one would expect the Messiah to come from.

virgin

Mary's a female who's past puberty, of marriageable age, isn't married, and has never had sexual relations.

betrothed

The betrothal period lasted around a year and was a legally binding agreement that could only be terminated by death or by divorce. And sexual infidelity during the betrothal period was a legitimate basis for divorce. Betrothed couples did not live together or have intercourse. Marriage was consummated on the wedding night when the bride left her parent's home to live with her husband.

"of the house of David"

The promised Messiah would come from David's line. Having Joseph as his earthly father makes Jesus a descendant of David.

“O favored one, the Lord is with you”

favored = an undeserved kindness or benefit. Mary didn't merit this unique responsibility. God in his kindness chose to bless her in this unique way.

And Mary isn't alone. God is with her right now. God will be with her throughout Jesus' life and beyond. This is where we get the principle, “God won't call you to a task without giving you everything necessary to do it.” *“The Lord is with you”* is a different way of saying *“steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the LORD”* (Ps 32:11).

“greatly troubled”

Deep inner disturbance because of mental confusion. Why is an angel appearing to me?

“Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God”

Gabriel reassures fearful Mary. “Favor” is the word usually translated grace meaning **God's kind disposition that isn't obligatory.**

Ironically Mary found favor, or grace, without looking for it.

Application

My point here is **God is with us in everything he brings into our lives.** God was with Mary throughout her pregnancy and beyond.

For example:

- 1) God sent an angel to Joseph to ensure his support of Mary (Matt 1:19-21). Joseph had to know she wasn't an adulteress.
- 2) God sent an angel to Joseph to get Jesus to Egypt (Matt 2:13-15). To prevent Jesus from being killed by Herod's decree.

God brought unimaginable blessing into Mary's life through Jesus. He was with her through every trial.

So it is with us. How do I know? *“steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the LORD”* (Ps 32:11). Wherever we're at, God is present guiding, instructing, strengthening, comforting, correcting us. He doesn't leave us to ourselves. He doesn't abandon us. He provides what's necessary for us to do what he calls us to. Parenting, singleness, relational hardship, health problems, serving God and neighbor.

The same goes in the church. God calls us to tasks. He helps us in them. He equips us to fulfill our ministry together. There's confidence in God's presence!

How favored we are

Sometimes I feel like it's criminal how favored we are by God. Forgiven. Cleansed conscience. New heart to fight sin. God's wisdom to do life well. An eternal hope beyond this life.

Feel it's unfair given the lives of relatives, friends, co-workers. How ravaged they are by sin and confusion and addiction while God's steadfast surrounds me all the days of my life. Why am I blessed while others are cursed? (not a boasting, but a sadness – Rom 9:1-3)

Here's an exercise for you this afternoon, evening, or tomorrow morning. Meditate on the blessings and kindnesses God has chosen to give you. Do you see yourself as favored?

Point 2: Our hopes are realized in Jesus' reign (1:31-33)

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

Jesus

The way Greeks pronounced the Hebrew name Joshua. The name means “Yahweh saves” or “the LORD saves.” Jesus is a first name. Christ is a title, not a last name. Jesus’ earthly last name is unknown to us.

5 things

Four things are said about this child:

- 1) “He will be great”

Great in terms of status and importance.

- 2) He “will be called the Son of the Most High”

It’s not that Jesus will become the Son of God. It’s that he’ll be called the Son of God. Jesus has forever been, and will always be, God the Son. In time Jesus will be recognized as who he’s always been.

Surely Mary didn’t grasp the fullness of this statement. But it was clear this is no ordinary child.

- 3) “God will give to him the throne of his father David”

Jesus will reign on David’s throne. A king. Thoughts of a revived Israel with independence and military power would have come to mind.

- 4) “he will reign over the house of Jacob forever” (& a kingdom without end)

Forever = something beyond an earthly kingdom must be in mind.

These statements recall God’s promises to Israel.

To David, God promised:

“And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.” – **2 Samuel 7:16**

To the prophets, God promised:

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷ Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this. – **Isaiah 9:6-7**

“Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. ⁶ In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: ‘The LORD is our righteousness.’” – **Jeremiah 23:5-6**

I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. ¹⁴ And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed. – **Daniel 7:13-14**

And considering Ezekiel 37:21-28, which Darryl read, that’s...

- 1) A descendant of David reigning on David’s throne forever.
- 2) A child born into this world who is God.
- 3) All the people of Israel (the believing remnant) dwelling securely = no more enemies around to threaten.

- 4) An obedient people present (the believing remnant).
- 5) Universal rule over all peoples = not just Israel. Gentiles joining Israel in worship of Jesus.
- 6) God in their midst forevermore (Rev 21:3-4). That's everlasting life.

Gospel

All of these promises, all of our good yearnings (righteous rule, no more being sinned against, no more fighting against our own sin, no more Alzheimer's, reunited with dead, believing loved ones) come to a head in one person. Jesus Christ. In other words, every promise God's made finds its end in Jesus' rule (2 Cor 1:20).

What's the climax of the gospel? Jesus ruling over his people in a renewed earth.

The gospel is the good news of everlasting life in a world ruled by Jesus! The gospel is the good news of God restoring a broken, fallen world.

This world will always be broken. Never a utopia. Sin won't cease in this age. The utopia comes when Jesus returns.

Point 3: Ask the right questions (1:34)

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

Mary understands Gabriel's talking about a virgin birth. So she asks, "How is this even possible?" Note how Mary differs from Zechariah. Zechariah asks for a sign and doubts that Elizabeth will give birth in her old age (Luke 1:18). But Mary says, "How?" Mary doesn't doubt Gabriel's message. It's just the idea of a virgin giving birth seems impossible.

Application

Mary's a positive model in how to respond to God. Zechariah's a negative model. Instead of doubting and demanding signs, we ought to ask the question how.

How is it true that your steadfast love surrounds me while my spouse has Alzheimer's? Not your steadfast love can't surround me because my spouse has Alzheimer's.

What are you wrestling with? Ask God how is this so? Don't conclude what God says can't be so.

Ask God for help in understanding his commands and promises. Open your Bible for understanding. Ask me. It's good to wrestle with life's hard issues. Ask how?

Point 4: Nothing is too hard for God (1:35-37)

"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."

Gabriel explains the how: conception by the Holy Spirit. Mary is a passive recipient. There's no physical contact. Just the creative work of the Spirit.

"therefore" explains the implications of the Spirit's work: divine conception ensures a holy human nature for God the Son. As a result, God the Son who always has been took on a full human nature. But a human nature that wasn't tainted by sin like us. Making Jesus unaffected by Adam's sin and unlike every other human born into our world.

To illustrate God's ability to do the impossible, Gabriel notes that Elizabeth is in her six month of pregnancy, despite her old age (1:36).

Relative = unspecified relative.

"For nothing will be impossible with God."

Elizabeth's pregnancy isn't too hard for God. Because nothing's impossible for God, you will conceive while a virgin.

Trusting God's ability

We can trust God's promises. We can trust in accounts of the miraculous.

People are so quick to doubt. Miracles can't happen. Virgin births can't happen. Men can't rise from the dead.

Yet some who are skeptical of the Bible's miracles have no problem with worlds and universes existing without an intelligent life source behind those worlds and universes. Some appeal to aliens. There needs to be a miracle somewhere!

Miracles are no problem for the Christian. If God can set the stars in place, he can make virgins conceive. Through creation God has revealed his divine nature and power. Not to mention fulfilled prophecies and the resurrection.

The fight of faith is a struggle to agree with Gabriel. *"Nothing will be impossible for God."*

Do we trust God does the impossible in response to prayer?

Do we trust God can save our loved ones?

Do we trust God can give us victory over enslaving sins?

The same Spirit who gave the Son a sinless human nature works inside us to conform our hearts to Jesus' sinless character. Changing human hearts is a miracle too!

Point 5: Submit to God's will (1:38)

"Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word."

Mary says, "You're my Lord, my master. My life is at your disposal. Whatever you have for me, I'll follow you."

If we understand what's going on, this blessing wasn't going to be easy for Mary.

When family and friends and neighbors found out she was pregnant, everyone was going to think adulteress. When she said, "The Holy Spirit impregnated me," I don't think many would buy it. How many called her a liar? In giving her a unique, one of a kind blessing, God put her in a position where she had to deal with insults, accusations, and shame. Fear what Joseph and her parents and future in-laws would think. Blessing brought intense hardship. And it had to happen this way for Jesus to take on human flesh without being contaminated by sin.

Mary's submission to God's will rings similar to Jesus' resolve at Gethsemane.

"My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will." – **Matthew 26:39**

"My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done." – **Matthew 26:42**

The agony of dying for our sins on the cross weighed on Jesus. He submitted to the Father's will despite the pain and shame involved.

Obeying when it's hard

Part of following Jesus is obeying when it's hard. The same goes for us as a church. Sometimes following God's commands makes life harder. Church discipline. Having hard conversations. Following ideals that aren't popular.

But God is with you makes all the difference. Mary could endure because God was with her every step of the way. Even sending an angel to get Joseph on her side.

Non-Christian

God keeps his promises in the person of Jesus.

Perfect justice, peace, community, health, security are coming when Jesus returns. Our right longings are realized only in Jesus. Jesus ends the curse when he establishes his eternal reign.

We become numbered among those who will serve Jesus in his kingdom through faith and repentance.

We receive God's forgiveness by confessing our rebellion and trusting in Jesus' perfect sacrifice in our place. That's faith.

We say with Mary, "You're my Lord, my master. My life is at your disposal. Whatever you have for me, I'll follow you." That's repentance.

In trust and turning we become heirs of the kingdom.

The Christian hope is a world where Jesus reigns. Forever. God with us today. God with us forever.