

Further up, Further in

Resources for Continued Study



LOOKOUT
MOUNTAIN
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH

"ADVENT: THE STORY OF GOD'S GRACE"

For individual study or discussion

As we begin our *Advent* sermon series in the first chapter of Luke, we encounter the angel Gabriel announcing the incarnation to Mary (v. 31). We marvel at God's grace that the incarnation transcends human wisdom (Isaiah 55:8-9) as God the Father reconciles the world to himself through his Son, by miraculously causing a young, teenage girl from an obscure town called Nazareth to conceive "*the Son of the Most High*" (v. 32).

The Reality of God's Grace (vv. 26-29)

God's grace works in unexpected places. John 1:46 records the incredulous response of Nathaniel upon hearing from his friends that the Messiah is a man called Jesus of Nazareth, "*Can anything good come out of Nazareth?*" The village of Nazareth, located in Galilee, "*was the subject of abiding Jewish contempt because of its mongrelized population. Nazareth was a 'non-place'...a shoddy, corrupt halfway stop between the port cities of Tyre and Sidon overrun by Gentiles and Romans soldiers.*"¹

- God chose Galilee over Judea, Nazareth over Jerusalem, as the birthplace of our Savior. From your previous studies in Luke, discuss how God's unexpected choice of Jesus' birthplace harmonizes with your understanding of the "upside-down" Kingdom of God.
- Read John 1:43-51. Reflect on Nathaniel's skepticism, "*Can anything good come from Nazareth?*" Can you think of some similar modern examples of objections that people have with Christianity?

God's grace works through unlikely people. God's people had not seen nor heard from an angel for over four hundred years. Then within the course of a few months, God's messenger, Gabriel, appears two times. In his second announcement, Gabriel comes to Mary, a poor teenager in a backwater town. And to this confused girl the angel announces, "*Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!*" Martin Luther acclaims, "*O Mary, you are blessed. You have a gracious God. No woman has ever lived on earth to whom God has shown such grace. You are the crown of them all.*"²

- How does God's choosing of Mary to be the mother of Jesus transcend human wisdom? (cf. 1 Corinthians 1: 27-29)
- Like most Jewish women of her time, Mary was probably familiar with the prophecy of Isaiah 7:14. Why do you think she was still surprised when the angel Gabriel came to her (v. 29)?

The Response to God's Grace (vv. 30-38)

Believing God's Word in the midst of legitimate questions. Mary's reflective heart can be seen in her question, "*How will this be, since I am a virgin?*" Confused, Mary asks for clarification as to what she is to do in order to cooperate with the purposes of God. Gabriel explains to Mary that she doesn't need to do anything, because the conception will be the result of God's intervention.

- Compare Mary's response to Zechariah's (v. 18). How are their responses different?

Entrusting ourselves to God in spite of incomplete knowledge. Note in verse 35, the doctrine of the Trinity present in Gabriel's words, "*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.*" Incomprehensibly, we encounter the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit working in unison, as the Father unconditionally elects Mary to be overshadowed by the Holy Spirit for the express purpose of bearing the Son of God. And to this Mary says, "*Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your Word*" (v. 38).

- What progression do you see in Mary's responses from verses 29, 34, and 38?
- How can Mary's incredible response (v. 38) be a model of faith in your life?

DATE: December 1, 2024

SPEAKER: Wil/Frank

SERIES: Advent

PASSAGE: Luke 1:26-38

Family Dinner Table

DAY 13: The Fruit of the Spirit— Peace

PRAYER: Prince of Peace, our world is full of trouble, division, and disorder. It is as if the earth is giving way underneath us, as if the mountains are falling into the heart of the sea and the waters are roaring over us. Grant us stillness to know that you reign and that you have overcome the world. We beg you to lift your face upon us and give us your peace. Wherever there is injustice and hatred, let the peace of Christ rule in the hearts of your people since we know that we are members of one body. Wherever there is the approaching storm of war and death, speak as you did to the violent waters: "Peace, be still." Wherever there is relational bitterness and division, convince us that deceit is in the hearts of those who plot evil, but those who promote peace have joy. Enable us as your followers to cast our anxiety on you when we face unrest within us and around us. We confess that we far too often try to fix the turmoil according to our own wisdom. Sadly, we then diminish our joy and increase our strife by fragmenting your world into godless factions that pursue our agendas over your law. Forgive us, by the mercy of Christ, and show us the way to peace that is found in knowing you through your faithful and timeless Word. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we pray. Amen

PRAY FOR HOME MISSIONS

The Salvation Army, supported missionary partner

PRAY FOR WORLD MISSIONS

Evangelism Network in Asia, world missions partner

¹⁻²Ryken, Philip. *Luke: Reformed Expository Commentary*, Vol. 1. 2009, Philipsburg, NJ. P&R Publishing. 29, 32