

3

Luke's Good News

Chapter 1, verses 26-38

Does God really do important work through people who seem unimportant?

Five months passed, then God sent his messenger Gabriel to Nazareth, a village in the region called Galilee. God sent the messenger to a virgin who was engaged to be married. Her fiancé Joseph was a descendant of the famous King David who ruled Israel almost a thousand years before. God had promised that a descendant of David would reign forever, He would reign over all the nations, and He would reign in absolute justice. He would be the truly worthy king of all creation.

The virgin's name was Mary, and she was marrying into this ancient royal family. But those who had been kings were not worthy to rule creation; they struggled to rule even their tiny nation. And no descendant of David had reigned for nearly 600 years. Joseph was no king. Even if royal blood flowed in his veins, he was only a humble carpenter. How was God going to bring a worthy king out of this family?

God's messenger Gabriel went to Mary and said, "Joy! You have been graced! God is right here with you!"

Mary was upset and confused by this messenger. She wondered what was really going on. But the messenger said, "Mary, you can stop fearing. With God you find grace."

God is not the kind of authority who tells you it is good news when he plans to ruin you. He is a leader you can trust to be making bad situations better than you can imagine, because he really does love people who don't deserve it. That is what his grace means.

Of course, Mary wanted more specifics, and the messenger gave them: God would create, in Mary's womb, a new person, a second Adam, a worthy head of the human race. "You will be pregnant," Gabriel said. "You will give birth to a son. You will name him "God is Savior." In Mary's Hebrew, that name is Y'shua, Joshua; in Luke's Greek that name is Yesou, Jesus. It means, "God is Savior." He is a God who saves people. Salvation comes from him.

But the messenger had more to say about this son to be born: "He will be great. He will be called Son of the Highest. The Lord God will give him David's throne. He will reign over Jacob's people forever."

David was an overlooked shepherd, but God had chosen him to be Israel's greatest king. David's ancestor Jacob was an unworthy fugitive, but God had chosen him to father a nation. God does not need promising material to create great things. Now God is assuring this peasant girl that he can and does work in unexpected ways. He can bring from her the Son of God, the eternal king. "His kingdom will never end."

Mary asked, "But how is this possible? I am a virgin."

The messenger answered her: "The Holy Spirit will come over you. The power of the highest will envelop you. So the one born of holiness will be called Son of God. And look, even your old cousin Elizabeth is pregnant. The one they used to call barren is in her sixth month. When God speaks, He doesn't lack power."

Mary said, "Look, I am the Lord's servant. What you have spoken, may it happen to me." Then the messenger left.

God does not speak empty words. His people don't need the world's affirmation in order for their lives to matter. They need only God.