



First Baptist Church At The Villages

Christmas 2019 • Gabriel Visits Mary • Luke 1:26-28; Matthew 1:18-25 • 12/27/2019

MAIN POINT

The primary thing God calls you to give to Him is yourself; nobody modeled this more than Jesus.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What's the craziest home light display you've ever seen at Christmas? What's the craziest decoration you've ever put up at your home?

Do you ever find yourself competing with your neighbors to have the best Christmas lights or decorations?

What's one way we typically think more about ourselves at Christmas than we do at other times of the year?

Why do you think we are prone to letting Christmas become "all about us"?

It's all too easy to let Christmas become about being the best, having the most, or competing with others. We all know that deep down this is far from the true meaning of Christmas, but we still tend to think of ourselves more often than others. In the passages we'll study today, we see that God called Mary and Joseph to give of themselves in sacrificial service to Him. God Himself modeled what this looks like by giving us His Son.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| Have a volunteer read Luke 1:26-38.

Describe Mary's initial reaction to the angel Gabriel (v. 29).

Earlier in Luke 1, the angel Gabriel appeared to Zechariah to tell him about his wife, Elizabeth's, unexpected pregnancy. This time God sent Gabriel to prepare Mary to be the mother of the Messiah. Gabriel's visit represents the heavenly council bringing God's news to God's people, revealing what God is about to do. We read that Mary was "deeply troubled" by the angel's sudden announcement. Gabriel's presence created fear and awe in Mary, and his message was troubling because of its supernatural nature.

What does the angel tell Mary about her relationship with God?

What qualities of God's character are on display in His choice of Mary?

In the angel's opening statement to Mary, he referred to her as "favored" (v. 28), and in verse 30, he added that it was God with whom she had found favor. God's favor was evidence of His grace in Mary's life.

What do we learn about Jesus from the angel's message?

What are the implications of these pronouncements for you and me?

The name Jesus means "Deliverer, Savior." Mary's Son would be great, He would be called "the Son of the Most High," and God would give Him the throne of David to rule over. The reference to his father David reminds us of Jesus' royal lineage. Luke identified Mary's husband, Joseph, as a member of the house of David (v. 27). This connected Jesus, by adoption, to the promise God made to David in 2 Samuel 7:12-13. Here was the promise of a king from David's family who would establish a forever kingdom. Jesus was the ultimate fulfillment of that promise.

What lesson about giving more of ourselves do we learn from Mary in this text?

| Have a volunteer read Matthew 1:18-25.

What catches your attention most in this very familiar account of the birth of Jesus?

What do you learn about Joseph from these verses?

As a righteous man, Joseph was not perfect but sought to keep the law. He also knew that under the law, Mary could be stoned to death for adultery. He must have loved Mary deeply, for he combined compassion with his determination to do the right thing. He felt he could not go through with the marriage, but he did not choose to be harsh with Mary. He would do what

was right but in a way that would protect Mary.

According to verses 20-21, what two responsibilities did the angel give Joseph? How would it cost Joseph something of himself in order to do what was asked of him?

Through the angel, God asked Joseph to do two crucial things. First, He cleared the way for Joseph to go ahead and marry, assuring him Mary was still a virgin, and this baby was a miracle of God. Second, God gave Joseph the responsibility of naming the child “Jesus.” It was Jewish custom for naming a child to be the father’s job. The fact that God chose Jesus’ name authenticated the baby’s miraculous origin to Joseph: Mary’s pregnancy was a work of the Holy Spirit. As we will see in verses 24-25, Joseph embraced his role as trainer for the child and example of fatherly love to Him.

What can you surmise about the faith of Joseph from Matthew 1:18-25?

How did Joseph thoughtfully give of himself in obedience to God?

In verses 24-25, we read that Joseph obeyed everything God asked Him to do, with his whole heart, right then. He didn’t just follow instructions; he honored everything God was doing to the best of his ability. Joseph yielded his fear of others’ criticism, his husbandly desires, and the right to name the child to the Lord. In his obedience, Joseph revealed that God’s unfolding plan was worth more to him than anything else. He adjusted every aspect of his life to follow. He modeled for us the obedience and the sacrificial giving that should characterize Jesus’ disciples.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Why is it important for us to discuss the whole idea of sacrificial giving at this time of year?

What most frequently stands in the way of you thinking of others before yourself?

What opportunities to give more of yourself do you anticipate having this week? How will you take advantage of them?

PRAYER

Close in prayer, thanking God for the ultimate example of giving more that He has shown us through Jesus. Also pray that God would convict your group members of areas in their lives in

which they are focused on themselves rather than on others.

COMMENTARY

| Luke 1:26-38

1:26-27. The announcement of Jesus' birth carried the authority of God. It came in the sixth month, a reference to the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy with John the Baptist. The term virgin emphasized the purity associated with a young, unmarried woman. Although engaged to a man named Joseph, Mary did not yet live with Joseph. In first-century Jewish culture, engagement (or betrothal) bound them together legally as husband and wife. The wedding and consummation of the marriage, however, followed at a later time. Luke identified Mary's husband, Joseph, as a member of the house of David. The Jews knew from the Scriptures that the future Messiah would be a descendant of the great King David. This fact supported the identification of Jesus as King. The Child to be born, then, would be identified with the lineage through which the Messiah had been promised (see Isa. 9:6-7; 11:1-5).

1:28-30. Mary was favored because the Lord set His undeserved grace upon her, not because she had earned good standing. Understandably, she was deeply troubled (Gk *diatarasso*; "confused, perplexed") by Gabriel's visit and greeting, wondering how she had come to receive such an honor. Gabriel's admonishment that Mary not be afraid was the same thing he said to Zechariah (v. 13).

1:31-33. Mary's conception would be miraculous because she was still a virgin (v. 34). The name Jesus is equivalent to the Hebrew *Yeshua* (Joshua), meaning "the Lord saves." In Genesis 14:18, God is referred to as "God Most High." Humanly speaking, Jesus' lineage would be traced legitimately through the royal family of David because Joseph, Jesus' adoptive father, was a descendant of David. This made Jesus heir to David's throne according to God's eternal covenant (see 2 Sam. 7:13,16).

1:34-35. The difference between Mary's response ("How can this be?") and Zechariah's (v. 18) is that Mary asked her question not from unbelief but from puzzlement (v. 38; see note at v. 20). The answer to Mary's question about how she could get pregnant without being intimate with a man is that the Holy Spirit would overshadow her and cause her to conceive. Because the Holy Spirit was the agent of conception, the child (the holy One; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15) would be the Son of God.

1:36-38. If ever Mary was tempted to doubt God's promise to her, she could recall Gabriel's words that nothing will be impossible with God, as had been shown in the lives of Abraham and Sarah (see Gen. 18:14). Mary's response is a classic model of humble commitment ("I

am the Lord's slave") and willing obedience ("may it be done to me according to your word").

| Matthew 1:18-25

1:18. As Matthew launched the account of Jesus' birth, note that he was careful to highlight the title Christ—the title he used in the preceding passage that demonstrated Jesus had the right to claim deity. Watch for Matthew's use of this title throughout his Gospel. His purpose in writing was to make the case for Jesus as the promised King.

To understand the significance of some statements in this passage, it is necessary to understand the Jewish marriage customs of the day. The bride and groom went through a period of betrothal or engagement. In that culture and time, betrothal was virtually as binding as marriage. In this waiting period, Mary was found to be pregnant. Matthew was careful to protect the virtue of Mary and the supernatural origin of Christ.

Why is it so important that the Christ, the promised King, be born to a virgin? The virgin birth is more than a miracle to draw attention to the unique nature of this child. Because Mary was a virgin, only God could have been the father of Jesus, making Jesus the one and only God-Man in all the universe. God's plan would have been impossible if Jesus had been anything less.

1:19. A betrothed couple was as good as married, and breaking off the relationship was seen as divorce, even though the couple had not yet been married. It also helps us gain a better perspective of the emotional state of Mary and Joseph when we realize that she was probably in her teens at the time of these events. The minimum marriageable age in Israel was twelve for women and thirteen for men. To remain unmarried as late as one's twenties may have been cause for social embarrassment.

1:20-21. Mary, initially fearful of being an unwed mother, accepted God's revealed intentions for her. And Joseph, initially not all that sure himself about the "virgin birth," was originally thinking divorce, albeit quietly and with no public scandal. But when Joseph was approached by God through the angel, he accepted his role and did precisely as he was instructed by God. He kept Mary a virgin until after Jesus was born, after which their normal marital relations produced other children who were the half-brothers of Jesus. And Joseph, as the legal heir to the throne, named their son "Jesus" as he was told. Mary and Joseph learned that the only way to follow God was to "trust and obey" His word. The character of these two young adults reminds us that God fulfills His purposes by using people of strong character and unquestioning obedience.

The name Jesus chosen by God for His Son (1:21) was, in that day and for centuries before, a common name with special meaning. Jesus is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew Joshua, meaning “Yahweh saves.” Jewish boys for centuries had been given this name Jesus with the frequency of today’s John or Mike. This reflects, in part, the hope of Jewish parents for God’s salvation from centuries of oppression under a succession of world powers. God’s choice of such a common name, when He could have chosen something unique, also emphasized that Jesus came in a way that identified with the average Joe. He came in love to become one of us, that we might be drawn to Him and become one of His. Jesus was approachable and touchable. He was one of us. “We do not have a high Priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses” (Heb. 4:15). Jesus did everything to build bridges to us.

Yet, while the name Jesus was common, only this child was qualified as the God-Man to save His people from their sins (1:21). Jesus came at the strategically appointed time to seal the eternal salvation of all whom the Father had chosen.

1:22-23. In these verses Matthew provided the first of many direct quotes from the Old Testament, and the first of many Old Testament prophecies fulfilled by the earthly life of Jesus. These Old Testament quotes and prophecies show, in part, the linkage and unity between the Old and New Testaments, helping us understand how God was preparing the way for the Christ from centuries past. They also validate the identity of Jesus as the promised Messiah, strengthening our faith in Him. And their perfect fulfillment in Jesus gives us confidence that God is faithful and mighty to keep His word to us today.

Matthew is quick to support the doctrine of the virgin birth, and his quote in 1:23 is from Isaiah 7:14, originally written by the prophet Isaiah over seven hundred years before Jesus’ birth. This verse in its original Old Testament context seems to be referring to a child who was to be born in that setting of Isaiah’s day, rather than centuries later. However, Matthew’s inspired revelation fills the original statement out to its full intention. God is never so clearly present with His people as He is through His virgin-born Son, the Messiah of Israel. Jesus is Immanuel! The linguistic components of the name Immanuel and their individual translations—Im = “with,” anu = “us,” and el = “God”—make it clear that Isaiah’s original prophecy could refer in its fullest sense only to the promised Messiah. This name of Jesus is a strong argument for His deity.

1:24-25. The dream that had begun for Joseph in verse 20 ends in these verses with him waking and choosing to obey everything the angel had told him to do. This fine man had learned to “trust and obey.”

