

**Luke 1:26-38**  
**June 10, 2018**

**Open with Prayer**

**HOOK:**

Q: Has God ever showed up in your life in an unexpected way that changed the trajectory of your life, but looking back, you can clearly see His Hand in it and the guidance of the Holy Spirit? If yes, can you share what took place? [Let people engage]

God has a way of interrupting our lives, not just to get our attention, but to make sure we're staying on His path to accomplish His purposes in His way and in His timing. He's the only one who knows what He wants to do through each of us for whatever number of days He's ordained for us on Earth. I was the Minister of Missions and Outreach at WBC in Hutchinson, KS, so I enjoyed meeting the guests of our church and having coffee with them and finding out what they were looking for in a church, and pointing them to the right people, etc. And given that I have a love for golf, I spent my Saturdays cultivating friendships with golfers who either didn't go to church, or had stopped going to church. So I started an outreach SS class for golfers. I sent out emails to all of my lady friends, and said, "I want you to just check it out. If you leave dissatisfied, you don't have to come back." The first Sunday came, and I had a bagful of golf tees, and I sprinkled tees on the floor from the front doors to the SS classroom. Then arose a discipling relationship, then a decision for Christ, then an invitation to become a financial advisor/successor of her practice. Major changes were happening at the church I was serving in, and the timing of it all became clear. God was changing the trajectory of my life to help people in a different way.

One of my favorite mantras is "The Lord is the lord of my life, so He can interrupt my life any way He wants to." Moving me from a staff position in the church to becoming a financial advisor is a great example of this.

**Transition:** In today's storyline, we are going to read about God who changes the trajectory of Mary's life. I think there is much to learn in how she responds to it. How close are we to being like Mary? So it is my hope that after studying today's passage, all of us can say, "May it be as you say" when God chooses to interrupt our lives by embracing the TRUTHS about God and how He works that we'll see in today's passage. Let's begin.

**BOOK (NIV 1984):**

V.26:

- In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee,

V.27:

- to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary.

V.28:

- The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

V.29:

- Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be.
- V.30:
- But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found **favor with God**.
- V.31:
- You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus.
- V.32:
- He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David,
- V.33:
- and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end.”
- V.34:
- “How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?”
- V.35:
- The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the **power of the Most High will overshadow you**. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.
- V.36:
- Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month.
- V.37:
- For **nothing is impossible with God**.”
- V.38:
- “I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May it be to me as you have said.” Then the angel left her.

### **Process Observations/Questions:**

Q V.26-27: Let’s set the scene and nail down the who, what, when, and where. Let’s start with “who.” Who is mentioned first in this verse? [God]

Q: What did God do? [He sent His angel Gabriel to Mary to give her a message]

Q: Where is Mary located? [in a town named Nazareth in Galilee]

Q: What do we know about Mary in these two verses? [She’s a virgin pledged to be married to Joseph, a descendant of David. And it’s likely that she was a teenager when Gabriel appeared to her.]

Q: This is not in our text, but does anyone recall why the people of Judah had disdain for many of the Jews in Galilee, and especially the Nazarenes? [Not in text – They claimed that they were not “kosher” because of their contacts with the Gentiles, especially the people of Nazareth.]

Q: When is this event happening? [Six months into Elizabeth’s pregnancy with John the Baptist.]

Q V.28: What does Mary experience? [An angel goes to her and says, “Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.”]

Q V.29: Mary had a two-fold reaction. What were they? [1. Greatly troubled. 2. Wondered what kind of greeting this might be.]

Q: Let's pause here. If you were Mary, why might you be "greatly troubled?" [Let people engage]

Q: If you were Mary, why might you be "wondering what kind of greeting this might be?" [Let people engage; she might have thought nothing was unique about her from other Jewish girls.]

Possible Qs: Why would the angel come greet her instead of Joseph? In what way was Mary "highly favored?" How was God with her?

Q V.30: Mary hasn't said a word aloud, yet the angel knows what she's thinking. How does the angel comfort her? [He tells her not to be afraid because she has found favor with God.]

Q V.31: How will she find favor with God? [She will be with child and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus.]

Q V.32-33: The angel takes the time to predict *five things* about Mary's forthcoming Son. Let's identify them:

- He will be great.
- He will be called the Son of the Most High

[Mary could not have missed the significance of that terminology. The fact that her Baby was to be called the "Son of the Most High" pointed to His equality with Yahweh.]

- He will be given the throne of His father David.

[Jesus, as David's descendant, will sit on David's throne when He reigns in the Millennium (2 Sam. 7:16; Ps. 89:3-4, 28-29).]

- He will reign over the house of Jacob forever.

[Jesus' reign over the nation Israel as her King will begin in the Millennium and continue on into the eternal state.]

- His kingdom will never end.

[These promises must have immediately reminded Mary of the promise of Yahweh to David (2 Sam. 7:13-16). Mary would have understood that the angel was speaking to her of the Messiah who had been promised for so long.]

Q V.34: Mary asks a practical question. What is it? [How will this be since I'm a virgin?]

Observation: Mary doesn't seem to be surprised that the Messiah was to come. If anything, she was surprised that she would His mother since she was a virgin.

Q: The angel didn't rebuke Mary for asking "how will this be?" Why do you think that's the case? [Mary didn't doubt the angel's word, but merely wanted to know how it would be accomplished.]

Q V.35-37: How did the angel respond to Mary's "how" question? [The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth is going to have a child in her old age because *nothing is impossible with God.*]

Q: How are you feeling just reading the angel's response? [Let people engage]

Q V.38: How did Mary respond? ["I am the Lord's servant; may it be to me as you have said it."]

Q: Now that you've seen Mary's response, how would describe it? [Very accepting; trusting; submissive to God's plan]

Q: Let's do some reflection. How open are we to how God is at work in our lives? Are we able to say with complete resolve "I am your servant. May it be as you said?"

**LOOK:**

Invite learners to put their name in this passage wherever it says "Mary" starting with verse 30. It might read "Do not be afraid, Lee Ann, you have found favor with God. You will be or do (fill in the blank with whatever God's purpose is). The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. For nothing is impossible with God." Never lose sight that God wants to do extraordinary things through ordinary people like you and me. Look for His opportunities!

**Close in Prayer**

### **Commentaries for Today's Lesson:**

**Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Vol. 1, pp. 171–173). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.**

### **Faith (Luke 1:26–38)**

In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, Gabriel brought a second birth announcement, this time to a young virgin in Nazareth named Mary. At least there was variety in his assignments: an old man, a young woman; a priest, a descendent of David, the king; the temple, a common home; Jerusalem, Nazareth; unbelief, faith.

The people in Judah disdained the Jews in Galilee and claimed they were not "kosher" because of their contacts with the Gentiles there (Matt. 4:15). They especially despised the people from Nazareth (John 1:45–46). But God in His grace chose a girl from Nazareth in Galilee to be the mother of the promised Messiah!

When it comes to Mary, people tend to go to one of two extremes. They either magnify her so much that Jesus takes second place (Luke 1:32), or they ignore her and fail to give her the esteem she deserves (Luke 1:48). Elizabeth, filled with the Spirit, called her "the mother of my Lord" (Luke 1:43); and that is reason enough to honor her.

What do we know about Mary? She was a Jewess of the tribe of Judah, a descendant of David, and a virgin (Isa. 7:14). She was engaged to a carpenter in Nazareth named Joseph (Matt. 13:55), and apparently both of them were poor (Lev. 12:8; Luke 2:24). Among the Jews at that time, engagement was almost as binding as marriage and could be broken only by divorce. In fact, the man and the woman were called "husband" and "wife" even before the marriage took place (compare Matt. 1:19 and Luke 2:5). Since Jewish girls married young, it is likely that Mary was a teenager when the angel appeared to her.

**Mary's surprise (vv. 26–33).** When you consider Gabriel's greeting, you can well understand why Mary was perplexed and afraid: "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you!" (The phrase *Blessed art thou among women* is not found here in many Greek manuscripts. You find it in Luke 1:42.) Why would an angel come to greet *her*? In what way was she "highly favored" ("greatly graced") by God? How was God with her?

Mary's response reveals her humility and honesty before God. She certainly never expected to see an angel and receive special favors from heaven. There was nothing unique about her that such things should happen. If she had been different from other Jewish girls, as some theologians claim she was, then she might have said, "Well, it's about time! I've been expecting you!" No, all of this was a surprise to her.

Gabriel then gave her the good news: she would become the mother of the promised Messiah whom she would name *Jesus* ("Jehovah is salvation"; see Matt. 1:21). Note that Gabriel affirmed both the deity and the humanity of Jesus. As Mary's son, He would be human; as Son of the Highest (Luke 1:32), He would be the Son of God (Luke 1:35). "For unto us a Child is born [His humanity], unto us a Son is given [His deity]" (Isa. 9:6). The emphasis is on the greatness of the Son (cf. Luke 1:15), not the greatness of the mother.

But He would also be a King, inherit David's throne, and reign over Israel forever! If we interpret literally what Gabriel said in Luke 1:30–31, then we should also interpret literally what he said in Luke 1:32–33. He was referring to God's covenant with David (2 Sam. 7) and His kingdom promises to the people of Israel (Isa. 9:1–7; 11–12; 61; 66; Jer. 33).

Jesus came to earth to be the Saviour of the world, but He also came to fulfill the promises God made to the Jewish fathers (Rom. 15:14). Today, Jesus is enthroned in heaven (Acts 2:29–

36), but it is not on *David's* throne. One day Jesus will return and establish His righteous kingdom on earth, and then these promises will be fulfilled.

**Mary's surrender (vv. 34–48).** Mary knew *what* would happen, but she did not know *how* it would happen. Her question in Luke 1:34 was not an evidence of unbelief (cf. Luke 1:18); rather, it was an expression of faith. She believed the promise, but she did not understand the performance. How could a virgin give birth to a child?

First, Gabriel explained that this would be a miracle, the work of the Holy Spirit of God. Joseph, her betrothed, would not be the father of the child (Matt. 1:18–25), even though Jesus would be legally identified as the son of Joseph (Luke 3:23; 4:22; John 1:45; 6:42). It's possible that some people thought Mary had been unfaithful to Joseph and that Jesus was “born of fornication” (John 8:41). This was a part of the pain that Mary had to bear all her life (Luke 2:35).

Gabriel was careful to point out that the Baby would be a “holy thing” and would not share the sinful human nature of man. Jesus knew no sin (2 Cor. 5:21), He did no sin (1 Peter 2:22), and He had no sin (1 John 3:5). His body was prepared for Him by the Spirit of God (Heb. 10:5) who “overshadowed” Mary. That word is applied to the presence of God in the holy of holies in the Jewish tabernacle and temple (Ex. 40:35). Mary's womb became a holy of holies for the Son of God!

The angel ended his message by giving Mary a word of encouragement: her aged relative Elizabeth was with child, proving that “with God nothing shall be impossible.” God gave a similar word to Abraham when He announced the birth of Isaac (Gen. 18:14). That our God can do anything is the witness of many, including Job (Job 42:2), Jeremiah (Jer. 32:17), and even our Lord Jesus (Matt. 19:26). I personally like the translation of this verse found in the 1901 *American Standard Version*: “For no word of God shall be void of power.” God accomplishes His purposes through the power of His Word (Ps. 33:9).

Mary's believing response was to surrender herself to God as His willing servant. She experienced the grace of God (Luke 1:30) and believed the Word of God, and therefore she could be used by the Spirit to accomplish the will of God. A “handmaid” was the lowest kind of female servant, which shows how much Mary trusted God. She belonged totally to the Lord, body (Luke 1:38), soul (Luke 1:46), and spirit (Luke 1:47). What an example for us to follow! (Rom. 12:1–2)

**Martin, J. A. (1985). Isaiah. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 205)**

## 2. THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE BIRTH OF JESUS (1:26–56).

### a. *The introduction of Mary and Joseph (1:26–27).*

1:26–27. **In the sixth month**, that is, when Elizabeth was in her sixth month of pregnancy, **God sent ... Gabriel to Nazareth.**

**Mary** had not yet had sexual contact with a man, for Luke called her a **virgin** (*parthenon*; cf. 1:34) and noted that she was **pledged to be married to ... Joseph** (cf. 2:5). In Jewish culture then a man and woman were betrothed or pledged to each other for a period of time before the actual consummation of their marriage. This betrothal was much stronger than an engagement period today, for the two were considered husband and wife except that they did not live together till after the wedding.

### b. *The angel's announcement of Jesus' birth to Mary (1:28–38).*

1:28–31. **The angel** said that **Mary** was **highly favored** (*kecharitōmenē*, related to the noun *charis*, “grace”; the verb *charitoō* is used elsewhere in the NT only in Eph. 1:6). Also Mary had **found favor** (*charis*, “grace”) **with God**. Obviously God had bestowed a special honor on her. She was a special recipient of His grace.

Gabriel’s admonition (Luke 1:30–31) was the same as to Zechariah: **Do not be afraid**, for **you will have a Son** (cf. v. 13). As with John (v. 13b), the naming was by the angel (v. 31).

1:32–33. The angel predicted five things about Mary’s Son.

1. **He will be great.**

2. **He will be called the Son of the Most High** (cf. v. 76). The Septuagint often used the term “Most High” (*hypsistou*) to translate the Hebrew *‘elyôn* (cf. v. 76). Mary could not have missed the significance of that terminology. The fact that her Baby was to be called the “Son of the Most High” pointed to His equality with Yahweh. In Semitic thought a son was a “carbon copy” of his father, and the phrase “son of” was often used to refer to one who possessed his “father’s” qualities (e.g., the Heb. translation “son of wickedness” in Ps. 89:22 [KJV] means a wicked person).

3. He will be given **the throne of His father David**. Jesus, as David’s descendant, will sit on David’s throne when He reigns in the Millennium (2 Sam. 7:16; Ps. 89:3–4, 28–29).

4. **He will reign over the house of Jacob forever**. Jesus’ reign over the nation Israel as her King will begin in the Millennium and continue on into the eternal state.

5. **His kingdom will never end**. These promises must have immediately reminded Mary of the promise of Yahweh to David (2 Sam. 7:13–16). David understood the prophecy as referring not only to his immediate son (Solomon) who would build the temple, but also to the future Son who would rule forever. David stated that Yahweh had spoken of the distant future (2 Sam. 7:19). Mary would have understood that the angel was speaking to her of the Messiah who had been promised for so long.

1:34–38. **Mary** did not seem surprised that the Messiah was to come. Rather, she was surprised that she would be His mother since she was **a virgin** (lit., “since I do not know a man”). But **the angel** did not rebuke Mary, as he had rebuked Zechariah (v. 20). This indicates that Mary did not doubt the angel’s words but merely wanted to know how such an event would be accomplished. The answer was that **the Holy Spirit** would creatively bring about the physical conception of Jesus (v. 35). This miraculous conception and Virgin Birth of Jesus Christ was necessary because of His deity and preexistence (cf. Isa. 7:14; 9:6; Gal. 4:4).

Like Zechariah, Mary was given a sign: **Elizabeth ... is going to have a child**. Mary affirmed her part in her Son’s subsequent birth by assenting to the plan of God: **May it be to me as You have said**. She willingly submitted to God’s plan, calling herself **the Lord’s servant** (*doulē*, “slave”; cf. Luke 1:48).

**Cabal, T., Brand, C. O., Clendenen, E. R., Copan, P., Moreland, J. P., & Powell, D. (2007). *The Apologetics Study Bible: Real Questions, Straight Answers, Stronger Faith* (pp. 1510-1512). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.**

**1:26–38** There is no reason to doubt that an angel announced the virgin birth to both Mary and Joseph (Mt 1:18–24). Because of the arranged nature of marriage in first-century Palestine, we have no idea how much contact Mary and Joseph had with one another prior to their wedding. On the other hand, Joseph’s acceptance of the fact that Mary conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit seems next to impossible without his own angelic vision.

**1:27** Luke presented Jesus as descended from David through his stepfather, Joseph. As a relative of Elizabeth (v. 36) from the “daughters of Aaron” (v. 5), Mary had Levitical ancestry. It may have been that her bloodlines were mixed with Davidic heritage, but we are nowhere told this (unless Rm 1:3 can be taken as affirming it). Nevertheless, as the adopted son of Joseph, Jesus was legally a descendent of David. The NT consistently understands Jesus as a son of David (vv. 32, 69).

**1:32** “Son of the Most High” may merely be a designation of the royal Messiah (2 Sm 7:14; Ps 2:7; Mk 14:61), but the further explanation of conception by the Holy Spirit in verse 35 argues that the title refers ultimately to Jesus’ divinity.

**1:33** God’s promise to David that his son would reign forever (2 Sm 7:13) grounded the Davidic messianism in the OT and early Judaism. According to 1 Co 15:24–28, the initial phase of the kingdom will end when the Son hands the kingdom to the Father. The Son will thereafter reign with the Father for eternity (Rv 22:1, 3).

**1:35** Some scholars have understood the conception of Jesus by the Holy Spirit to be a late invention of the early church, especially since it appears explicitly in the NT only in Lk and Mt. Most contemporary scholars dismiss as baseless, however, theories that the story was developed from or in response to pagan legends of supernatural conceptions, since suggested parallels bear little resemblance to the Gospel narratives. But there was no theological need to invent the virgin birth; other avenues for asserting the divinity of Christ (such as adoptionism, the view that Jesus the man became divine by adoption) were open and less fraught with the danger of inviting the charge that Jesus was illegitimate, which was in fact the pagan and Jewish response to the stories. In the end, the only real reason for rejecting the historicity of the virgin birth is a philosophical denial of the supernatural in general and of the incarnation in particular.