

# God In Your Midst

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Preacher: Jeremy Martinson

[ 0 : 0 0 ]     you can turn in your Bible to Luke chapter 1. Luke chapter 1, not Hebrews tonight, today. Luke chapter 1, and really only one text.

You don't even have to put your finger somewhere else. That feels new also after the last several weeks where we have opened to Hebrews and then stuck our fingers somewhere in Genesis.

Just Luke chapter 1 today. And Amy is going to read starting in verse number 26. Here is Luke chapter 1, verse 26.

Amy is going to serve us from the New American Standard. If your version is a little different, that's all right. If you want to follow what Amy is reading, it will be on the screen. Now in the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David.

And the virgin's name was Mary. And coming in, he said to her, Greetings, favored one, the Lord is with you. But she was very perplexed at this statement and was pondering what kind of greeting this was.

[ 1 : 0 4 ]     And the angel said to her, Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and give birth to a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High.

And the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever. And his kingdom will have no end. But Mary said to the angel, How will this be, since I am a virgin?

The angel answered and said to her, The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. For that reason also the Holy Child will be called the Son of God. And behold, even your relative Elizabeth herself has conceived a son in her old age.

And she who was called infertile is now in her sixth month, for nothing will be impossible with God. And Mary said, Behold, the Lord is with me, may it be done to me according to your word.

And the angel departed from her. Thank you, sister. What is the best announcement that you have ever heard?

[ 2 : 0 6 ]     The best announcement. The greatest invitation that you have ever heard. Maybe it's to a birthday party, or maybe a wedding, or maybe like a 50th anniversary celebration for grandparents or something like that.

Some announcements are save-the-date type announcements, where you just get, you know, the date and the people's names, and they're sort of sparse.

I've heard that Tim is good at making announcements. His reputation precedes him all the way from Iowa. Some announcements are like this. They are sort of sparse, save-the-dates.

And then there are other announcements, like I think kids' birthday announcements are this way, where you get a date and a time and a location and what the event is going to be like and the theme of the party, and all of it is just spilled out there in the announcement that you receive.

This text is the announcement of the most wonderful event that has ever occurred in the history of the world.

[ 3 : 26 ] The most wonderful, astounding, worship-inducing event that has ever happened on earth. And I wonder, if you were God, if you would have made this announcement this way.

God sent the angel Gabriel to a region called Galilee. Now, this was a region that was looked down upon with contempt by the Jews because the people who lived here were often descendants from mixed marriages or actually participating in mixed marriages.

And so the Jews looked down, generally speaking, on Galilee. But in addition, God sends Gabriel to Nazareth. Now, Nazareth is an interesting place.

It's not even mentioned in the Hebrew Scripture. It is a miserable, rubbishy... That was a new one to me this week.

Did you know rubbishy is a real word? You should try using that one this week. A miserable, rubbishy kind of a town. Corrupt. It's the halfway point between two port cities, Tyre and Sidon.

[ 4 : 53 ] And so as a result, this place of Nazareth, this town of Nazareth, this shoddy, rubbishy town was overrun with Gentiles and Roman soldiers.

If you are into piratey-type movies, this would be one of those piratey-type towns. Dark, dingy, not a place that you would want to be sent to, not a place that you would want to be known for being from.

But more surprising, I think, than the location of this announcement is the person to whom this announcement came. She is a young teenager, perhaps 12 to 14 years old.

Her family is likely poor. She has no social status to speak of. Probably illiterate. That means she can't read.

But she is betrothed to a man. That means she is promised in marriage. Soon her groom will come and will take her to be his wife.

[ 6 : 11 ] And so her prospects are to bear many children, raise them probably here in Nazareth, never travel more than 100 miles likely from this place of Nazareth, and probably die and be forgotten.

That's who God sent Gabriel to. And that's where God sent Gabriel.

I suspect that this teenager is at home when she receives this announcement. You'd expect for an announcement this wonderful in the land of Israel that you would receive it in the temple, right?

In Jerusalem. And you would expect this teenager to be the daughter of a wealthy high priest. Certainly the daughter of an influential Pharisee.

But here she is. Not in Jerusalem, but in Nazareth. Not in the temple, but likely in her home. Paul writes, Verse 26.

[ 7 : 45 ] In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary.

And he came to her and said, Greetings! Rejoice! You could swap that in there. That would also be a great translation of this word. Greetings!

Rejoice! Oh, favored one! The Lord is with you. But she, Mary, was greatly troubled at the saying and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be.

Now, if I received this announcement, if I received this greeting, I would be stunned by the messenger. But not Mary. She somehow seems to look past the messenger, as it were, to this message, and she is trying to discern the nature of this greeting.

Favored one? Me? Here? Are you new to town? Why am I an object of God's grace?

[ 9 : 19 ] Why am I receiving this announcement? The angel Gabriel continues. Notice, as we read this text, how this announcement keeps getting more and more and more wonderful.

Verse 30, And the angel said to her, Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.

And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son. So far, nothing too astounding.

And you shall call his name Jesus. Also, so far, not too astounding. A common name. Means Savior.

This probably isn't stirring her up yet. He will be great. Hmm.

[ 10 : 25 ] And will be called the son of the most high. What is going on here? Now, Mary's brain is seriously running, isn't it?

It's doubtful that Mary fully understood this last one. That he would be the son of the most high.

But Gabriel is not done talking. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father, David.

My son is going to be king? king. And he will reign over the house of Jacob forever.

And of his kingdom there will be no end. What a wonderful announcement.

[ 11 : 35 ] What an astounding announcement. not even! An illiterate teenager could miss this.

Mary knows there is only one who will reign as king forever. It must be the promised Messiah.

Let's sit with this for just a moment. the Messiah. This is the hope of every Jew. A prophet like Moses.

A priest like Melchizedek. A king like David. The shoot from Jesse's stump.

The branch from Zechariah's prophecy. children.

[ 12 : 40 ] Children, what do you want to be when you grow up? Do you ever get sick of answering that question? What do you want to be when you grow up? I think the older you get in school the less you like hearing that question.

What do you want to be when you grow up? The dream of every Jewish woman. What do you want to be when you grow up?

I want to be the mother of the Messiah. Somebody had to be the Messiah's mother. This is the dream of every Jewish girl.

To be the one who would bring the Messiah into the world. and not just the mother of the Messiah.

Mary now also understands that the Messiah will also be the Son of God. Mary thinks carefully.

[ 13 : 46 ] But notice that there is no hint of unbelief in her question. But she is curious about the how? How? How can I have the life of God in me?

How could that be possible? Verse 34. And Mary said to the angel, how will this be since I am a virgin?

I tried to think of some alternatives that she might have said here for verse 34. you must have the wrong person. You must be joking, right?

That's not possible. That is not Mary's response. There is no hint of unbelief, no hint of doubt in her response.

She simply wants to understand how. And the answer to Mary's question, how, is found in one being. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

[ 14 : 57 ] You say, well, that is three beings, not if you bundle them. Verse 35. the angel said to her, 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. Boom!

Gabriel dumps Trinitarian truth right into Mary's mind. How can I have the life of God in me?

God will do it. God will do it. Did you notice that Mary doesn't laugh like Abraham and Sarah?

she weighs the apparent impossibility of her giving birth to a son with the actual impossibility that God's messenger would lie or deceive or somehow exaggerate this announcement.

[ 16 : 26 ] and she says, if I have to choose between this apparent impossibility and an actual impossibility that God's messenger will lie, then I choose to believe God's messenger.

Mary's response to this announcement confirms her humble faith. She is, as the early church declared when defending the deity of Jesus, the mother of God, but she is also by her own confession the disciple of our Lord.

Look at verse number 38. and Mary said, behold, I am the servant of the Lord.

Let it be to me according to your word. And the angel departed from her. Mary doesn't ask for a sign.

Did you notice that? She doesn't ask for evidence or proof, but the angel kindly gives it to her anyway. Your old barren cousin Elizabeth, the one with the nickname Barren.

[ 18 : 03 ] She has also become pregnant. Apparently, Zechariah and Elizabeth did not post their ultrasound photos to social media and Mary did not know this.

And so Mary leaves Nazareth and makes the three to four day journey to visit Elizabeth. We pick up the story in verse number 39. In those days, Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country to a town in Judah.

And she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb.

And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and she exclaimed with a loud cry, Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb.

And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come visit me? For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.

[ 19 : 16 ] Now, I don't know exactly how this went down, but using a little imagination, here is what I imagine. Mary is standing outside of Zechariah and Elizabeth's house and she's knocking on the door, probably calling out, Zechariah, Elizabeth, but we have to remember that Zechariah is mute.

We didn't read that, but that's what happens in the first part of chapter 1. And so Zechariah in his head is thinking, I'm coming to the door, but he can't actually say, I'm coming to the door.

And so meanwhile, I picture Elizabeth doing all of the things in the house and she's like, that's right, he can't go to the door, he can't holler out, I'm coming, I'm coming.

So here comes Elizabeth and as she is coming, have her hearing Mary's voice, the baby inside of Elizabeth leaps for joy.

Now, this word leaps, I think, is really interesting. It is no ordinary baby kick. Some of you who are mothers have felt that, the baby kicking inside of your womb.

[ 20 : 28 ] that is not at all what is happening here. The word is an exuberant springing motion. Like when your team scores a touchdown.

This, right? When your parents say we can go out for dinner. When you get that promotion that you've been waiting for at work and you are excited.

Baby John the Baptist does a vault like Simone Biles inside of Elizabeth's womb. Let's not miss this.

Mary has been pregnant for three to four days. And yet, John the Baptist vaults joyfully in his mother's womb because of his proximity to the promised one.

This is John the Baptist's first prophecy of the arrival of the promised one. And he's not even born yet. Luke tells us earlier in chapter one.

[ 21 : 52 ] He's already filled with the Holy Spirit. Another sermon for another day. Even though the body that God has prepared for Jesus amounts to 70 to 100 cells at this point, Elizabeth rightly calls Mary, the mother, present tense, of my Lord.

Elizabeth is right. Mary is blessed among women. Of all the women who have ever existed on this earth, God chose her.

By one man, darkness, sin, and death entered the world. And through one woman, God brought light and righteousness and eternal life into the world through the birth, through the gift, through the birth of his only son.

No woman was ever so highly honored by God. And I love how Elizabeth confirms Mary's faith in verse 45.

blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by from the Lord.

[ 23 : 59 ] Verse 46. And Mary said, My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.

For he has looked on the humble estate of his servant, for behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed.

for he who is mighty has done great things for me and holy is his name and his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.

In the first half of her song, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Mary's heart overflows with worship. That's what it means when she says, my heart, my soul magnifies.

She means, I want to make God great. That's what we do when we worship. We sing about how great our God is.

[ 25 : 10 ] We celebrate his greatness. We remind one another, our God is great. My soul magnifies the Lord.

My spirit rejoices. Why would Mary make God great? Why would she rejoice in him? Well, first, because of his power.

He who is mighty has done great things for me. But second, for his holiness. Holy is his name.

He deserves to be made great because he is holy. And third, he deserves to be made great. we should make much of our God because he shows mercy to those who deserve judgment.

it. In light of the sermon series that we just finished together, the second half of Mary's song fascinates me.

[ 26 : 25 ] Here's why. Mary repeatedly uses the prophetic past tense past tense. Now, think about what we learned and grew together in thinking about those characters from Hebrews chapter 11.

What did they do? They reached into the future, grabbed hold of God's promise that was there, and drug that promise into the present, and then responded as though God's promise was already true right now.

That's what it means when she uses this prophetic past tense. She speaks as though these events have already happened, but they haven't happened yet.

What would we call that? Faith. Look at verse 51. He has shown strength with his arm, and he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

Notice this moral reversal that she's singing about. The proud are scattered. They are still thinking arrogantly about themselves.

[ 27 : 48 ] They're still putting others down, but God has scattered them. Verse 52.

He has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate. Notice this social reversal. The powerful ones are reduced.

And those that have been beaten up and stepped on and trampled on and abused by powerful ones, the humble ones, they have been exalted by God.

verse 53. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty.

Notice this material reversal. The poor, the destitute, the hungry are filled with good things. But the rich, those who don't think they need any help, those who don't think they have any need of God, those who give God the stiff arm, refuse his grace, refuse his mercy, refuse his help, they go away empty handed.

[ 29 : 14 ] Verse 54. He has helped his servant Israel in remembrance of his mercy as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever.

Notice this spiritual reversal. Those who are helpless in their sin and willing to own it, that I am helpless in my sin, that I deserve God's judgment, those receive God's mercy.

mercy. And those who say, you know, I'm doing okay. I'll add a little Jesus to my life. They do not receive God's mercy.

Mary's prophetic word here, her prophecy is nothing less than revolutionary. Her prophecy ought to terrify the powers of darkness.

Her prophecy ought to terrify the doers of wickedness, the instigators of injustice, the abusers of the weak, the ignorers of the outcast.

[ 30 : 38 ] You ought to be terrified by this prophecy that Mary gives. And conversely, Mary's prophecy is hope nourishing and courage giving and faith inducing to every broken hearted loser, to every lonely loner,!

to every grieving sufferer, to every hungry beggar, every lost wanderer, to every guilty sinner.

I wonder which side of this revolution are you on? God if you expect to be on the side of those for whom the mighty one does great things, if you want to be among the humble, hungry, and helpless, those whom God exalts and fills and forgives, then like Mary, you need to ask this question, how will this be?

How can I experience the life of God in me? How can the perfect obedience of Jesus be mine?

How can the atoning death of Jesus satisfy God concerning my sin? How may I have a right relationship with God?

[ 32 : 34 ] How can Jesus' resurrection power be at work in me? And the answer to these questions is essentially the answer that Gabriel gave to Mary's question.

The answer is the wonderful announcement of God's gospel of grace. how can I have the life of God in me?

The Holy Spirit will come upon you. The power of the Most High will overshadow you. And in that moment you may truly say what we read in Galatians chapter 2 and verse 20 I am crucified with Christ.

It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

And in that moment as Paul tells us in Romans chapter 8 the Holy Spirit himself will bear witness with your spirit not that you are with child like Mary the Holy Spirit will bear witness with your spirit that you are God's child you say but I have lots of unanswered questions and I have been hurt by the church and I don't even know what I believe anymore and I have guilt and shame and you don't know anything about my sin dear friend as the angel said to Mary nothing is impossible with

[ 34 : 51 ] God did God keep his promise to Sarah when the angel of the Lord said to Sarah nothing is impossible with God he did didn't he God kept his promise to Sarah did God make good on his word to Mary he did through the gift of his son the Lord Jesus God fulfilled his promise to Abraham Isaac and Jacob and this time not the promise of descendants not the promise of land but the promise that in you through your people all of the nations of the earth shall be blessed every nation on earth blessed because God in his kindness sent his son to be born of the

Virgin Mary all nations of the earth blessed this is the gospel this is the good news that God has come to dwell with us that God has come to rescue us that God has come to redeem us and to reconcile us to the father this is the gospel is the most wonderful astounding worship inspiring announcement that ever was made have you received the gospel is Jesus your savior children have you been born again do you know God's grace have you received it are you trusting in

Jesus as your only hope for salvation followers of Jesus life is hard but Mary teaches us and models for us that humble faith receives sufficient grace even if your life is full of hardship and you never experience one more blessing from God if you never receive one more good gift from the father in heaven or what if like Mary a sword pierces your soul and you suffer irretrievable loss and immeasurable grief and unbearable reproach humble faith receives sufficient grace

God's grace is always sufficient it is never less than what you need isn't that good news there is never a lack follower of Christ you will never have a lack never a deficit never a deficiency of God's grace but you'll also never have more grace than you require to persevere in faith in this very moment that's what it means when we read God's grace my grace is sufficient for you always exactly what you need for the moment so if God is in your midst by the indwelling spirit then I wonder if you will say with our sister Mary

I am the servant of the Lord let it be to me according to your word life is hard bring it on let it be to me according to your word and I wonder if you will say with our savior the Lord Jesus Christ not my will but yours be done this is humble faith that receives sufficient grace let's pray father we are grateful to receive your word to us this morning from this beautiful text in Luke chapter 1 thank you for the things that you have helped us to learn and to understand and perhaps just to think about again father you know the weakness of our hearts you know the weakness of my heart you know the sin that is lodged deep within my heart that still needs to be exposed to the light of the gospel and the cleansing work of the word and the power of the holy spirit you know our sin would you please help us as we take a few moments right now to examine our hearts and to prepare to receive the lord's supper in a worthy way father we confess none of us deserve a symbol of your grace and yet you have lavished your grace on us through the life the death the resurrection and the intercession of our savior the lord jesus and by sending us the holy spirit you have lavished us with sufficient grace and so we claim the precious blood of our savior the lord jesus as our only hope for forgiveness as the only answer to our sin as the way that we have been redeemed and reconciled to you thank you for your good promise to us from romans chapter 8 that there is now no condemnation for those who are in christ jesus we claim that promise today help us as we now continue in our worship gathering as we take time to break the bread and take the cup in remembrance of our savior jesus it's in his name we pray amen