

## EXPERIENCE GOD'S BEST LIKE MARY AND JOSEPH

DECEMBER 11, 2022

### WORSHIP

Hark, Infinitely Glorious,  
Hope Has Come, Amazing  
Love, Waymaker

### WELCOME

What are your plans for this Christmas season? How do you make sure that your plans are aligned to God's plan as we celebrate Christ's birth?

### WORD

#### LUKE 1:26-35

<sup>26</sup> Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth, <sup>27</sup> to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. <sup>28</sup> And coming in, he said to her, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." <sup>29</sup> But she was very perplexed at this statement, and kept pondering what kind of salutation this was. <sup>30</sup> The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. <sup>31</sup> And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. <sup>32</sup> 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; <sup>33</sup> and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end." <sup>34</sup> Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" <sup>35</sup> The angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God..

We all want what's best for our lives. For some, what's "best" is measured in terms of position, power, fame, riches, and the like. But these doesn't spell out true and lasting happiness, even if the world says that acquiring them will make one happy. We need God's best – the best from our Creator's perspective. God's best will always be the best for us!

For the next three weeks, we will discuss a new Sunday message series – CHRISTMAS UNWRAPPED. First, we look at how we could experience God's best from the life of Mary and Joseph. It starts with God's grace, then we take action--by responding in faith and obedience, and finally to sustain it, we rejoice in God and His Word.

**Luke 1:26-27** tells us the beginning of the story of Christmas. A story that begins from a virgin birth may not always be the best way to start this great Christian faith or any other religion for that matter, but God knows best. What do we learn from Mary and Joseph?

#### 1. REALIZE GOD'S GRACE

**Luke 1:28-30** shows us that God's best is anchored in GRACE. Grace is used many times in Scripture (in **Ephesians 2:8-9**, where *grace and faith are highlighted for salvation*; in **Titus 2:11-12**, where *grace not only brings salvation, but also instruction to live righteously*). Only God can change people's desires and plans. Grace is the desire and power that God gives us to do His will. Do we need God's grace? Yes, we do! Without God's grace, we will all be self-centered and selfish. Once we realize that grace is from Him and He is willing to give it to us, it changes our life story. That is the uniqueness of Christianity. It is a life with God by His grace, not by our performance. In our previous series we talked about the effect of grace in the Apostle Paul's life (**1 Corinthians 15:10**). There are hindrances to this grace, however. Peter instructed in **1 Peter 5:5** for Christ-followers to intentionally put on humility – not to draw attention to self, but to Jesus. Grace is given to the HUMBLE!

**Luke 1:31-33** covers the next events that Mary will have to face. She will be pregnant, she will name her Son, Jesus, and this child will be called the "Son of the Most High", and that He will be a King to reign forever and His kingdom will have no end. These are all prophetic statements, already prophesied in the Old Testament (**Isaiah 9:6-7**).

Is Jesus our Lord? Are we part of His Kingdom? We must make sure of it! God's best is not just for the "now", but it goes beyond towards eternity! What was Mary's reaction to this great blessing and revelation? She asked, "**how can it be?**" (**Luke 1:34**) – a question expressing her young and simple mind. The angel helped Mary believe that this is possible, giving her the "**how**", and giving her a proof as well in the pregnancy of Elizabeth, the barren relative of Mary, who was at this

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point pregnant for six months. **Nothing is impossible with God (v.37)** – this is the assurance given to Mary. Knowing all of these things, how did Mary respond?

#### 2. RESPOND IN FAITH AND OBEDIENCE

In **Luke 1:38**, she declared that she was a bondservant (**Gk. doulos**) of God – and therefore with all these uncertainties and challenges coming her way, she received God's plan with all her heart. This is difficult because their religious laws punish these cases (i.e., sex outside marriage) with death (**Deuteronomy 22:20-21**). She may be embarrassed and rejected by everyone –and yet she took the mission in obedience and faith. Faith pleases God (**Hebrews 11:6**). It was a great response to His call, and Mary did what was right.

#### 3. REJOICE IN GOD AND HIS WORD

Mary's response is recorded in this same chapter of Luke (**vv. 46-55**). Called the "Magnificat", Mary chose to worship God and rejoice in the Lord in this great prayer of faith and obedience. **Romans 12:2** emphasizes that the will of God is good, pleasing, and perfect – but this we will know only if we choose to live by His commands and His Word. The response of Mary is filled with verses from the Old Testament. It tells us that she grew up with God's Word, applying the Old Testament verses in her future pertaining to these things that the angel told her about. She personally experienced and encountered the Lord, living a life without compromise, and trusting God no matter what the consequence is. **A.W. Tozer** said, "**Salvation apart from obedience is unknown in the sacred Scriptures... Apart from obedience there can be no salvation, for salvation without obedience is a self-contradictory impossibility.**"

What about Joseph? **Matthew 1:18-25** tells us what Joseph did. As someone engaged to Mary, Joseph wanted to do things right. He did not want to disgrace Mary, and instead just send her away secretly. That act of kindness was also out of GRACE. He was, however, corrected by an angel of the Lord **AT THE RIGHT TIME**; Joseph was told about God's plan, and because he was assured of God's purpose and promise, he responded in faith and obedience as well. Joseph only consummated his marriage with Mary after the birth of Jesus, and they were blessed to have their other children as well. God's will is revealed step by step – we realize and experience it through obedience! **John. 1:1-3, 14** points to Jesus as someone who was there ever since the beginning. But Jesus as man appears in this humble story of Mary and Joseph's obedience.

Like Mary and Joseph, we need to know God's grace, respond in faith and obedience, and rejoice in God and His Word for us to experience God's best. May we celebrate this season with these lessons in mind and in our hearts.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

(Leaders: Please choose questions that are appropriate to the level of spiritual maturity of your members)

#### 1. Self-Check.

What does God's grace mean to you?

#### 2. Setting It Right.

What lesson from Mary or Joseph do you need to apply in your own life?

#### 3. Living It Out.

Is there any command from the Lord that you are not yet obeying? What do you plan to do with it?

### WORKS

#### PRAY CARE SHARE IN ACTION

Pray for a meaningful Christmas season for friends and family that surround you. Ask God to reveal Himself to them, and that they will respond in faith and obedience when they encounter Him this Christmas. Beyond the material gifts you give, share the love of Christ to others---impart the gospel to them! Make Jesus central in your Christmas celebration and let others know that He is the Reason for our hope and joy this season.

### WEEKLY PRAYER POINTS

#### I. Thanksgiving

- Worship God for who He is, what He has done, and what He will do in our lives

#### II. Country and the World

- Upright and moral governance of public servants; repentance and salvation for government leaders and citizens for a Christ-centered Philippines.
- God's provision for families deeply affected by inflation.
- War in Ukraine to end, loss of lives prevented; escalating tension in East Asian countries to stop.

#### III. Church

- That CCF Members would honor and love God and make disciples.
- Elders, pastors, deacons, and families (holy, humble, harmonious, happy, heart-working).
- Ministries and churches expansion worldwide.

#### IV. CCF Facilities

- Worship and Training Center
- Prayer Mountain

#### V. Personal Concerns

- Deeper intimate relationship with God.
- Righteous living.
- Salvation of family and friends.

### MEMORY VERSE

#### LUKE 1:37-38

<sup>37</sup>For nothing will be impossible with God.

<sup>38</sup>And Mary said, 'Behold, the bondservant of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word.'