

## **God Breaks His Silence**

### **A Common People, An Uncommon Word**

#### Lesson 2: When God Speaks, We Should Trust (Luke 1:26-38)

God has broken His silence. He has spoken to Zachariah by way of His messenger, Gabriel. He promised him a son in his old age - one to be called John, the herald of the Christ. This was the first of many spectacular interventions on God's behalf – culminating in the birth, death, and resurrection of His Son.

Luke skips ahead six months later. No doubt the city of Jerusalem and those surrounding caught wind of what had happened. Although he was mute (and likely deaf according to 1:62), Zachariah must have communicated his experience in some way. When he exited the Holy Place and appeared before the multitudes that were praying, he “kept making signs to them” and they “realized that he had seen a vision” (1:22). Surely, stories and rumors were spreading. People knew something about the angelic visitation. Moreover, when John was born, the “neighbors and relatives” were with them rejoicing. They must have known (1:58).

Luke's narrative moves from Zachariah in Judea to Mary in Nazareth. She is about 60 miles north of Judea. Although a different time with different characters and places, the stories parallel in dynamic ways. They also have an interesting contrast – Mary's faith proves to be much stronger than that of Zachariah.

*Read Luke 1:26-38. Discuss your initial thoughts.*

### **A Common Girl**

Zachariah was a common priest, an unparticular person with an unparticular service. However, it is Mary who takes home the Most Insignificant Award. To begin with, Mary was from an obscure town. It was populated by about 2,000 people and was very plain. There were not many who knew of the town. In fact, Luke referred to it as “a city of Galilee” in order to help his readers identify where the town was. Galilee was better known.

The town was called Nazareth. It was plain then and it is plain now. It was an agricultural place and not particularly known for anything good. When Phillip was called by Jesus to follow Him, he found Nathanael and told him that he found the Christ. He says that He is “Jesus of Nazareth” (Jn. 1:45). Nathanael was puzzled at this and responded with, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” (Jn. 1:46)

Mary was from this town and she was no more significant than it. Luke wrote about Zachariah, saying that he was “righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the

Lord” (1:6). But of Mary, he wrote only that she was a virgin (1:27). Moreover, we read more about her husband-to-be than her (1:27).

She was a Jew living in a primarily Greek city. She was betrothed to a man named Joseph, who was also a Jew. Her people followed the Roman law in regards to how old you must be in order to marry. It was twelve. Since puberty occurs for females around that age, the normal adult passions were beginning to rile. So the Jews practiced early marriage. They believed that there was no reason to try and restrain your passions. So they just married as soon as possible. So, engagements began at the beginning of puberty. A year later, they would marry. So Mary was likely 12 or 13.

Girls her age tended to domestic duties. Unlike Zachariah, when the angel appeared to Mary, she was not in the Holy Place. She was not even in a popular city or even in a place with God’s chosen people – the Jews. She was alone and likely in her parent’s home preparing dinner for the family. She was not doing any priestly things and no one was spiritually relying on the work of her hands. There were a few reaping the fruit of her labor and they were hungry, that’s all.

1. What comes to your mind when you read this about Mary? Is there something about her that God admired or wanted to reward?
2. Luke calls her a virgin. This is the Greek word “parthenos” which means “one who has had no sexual relation.” It is never used of a married woman. Why is this important?
3. Luke mentions Joseph’s lineage as “of the house of David.” Why is this important?

### **A Common Service**

Mary is tending to her daily domestic duties. She is probably cleaning and preparing food for dinner. She does this every day. It has become her ritual. No one else is in the home and so it is likely between the hours of the afternoon.

If you imagine the story unraveling, maybe she has her back to the entrance of the home. She is so preoccupied that she doesn’t even hear anyone enter. Rather than she approaching Gabriel, he approaches her – that’s how busy she was.

He said to her, “Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!” She must have thought for a moment before turning toward the voice. Luke says that she was troubled at what the angel said and not at the angel himself. The greeting in Greek is the word “Chario!” which is a calm, impersonal and very common salutation. It is today’s “Hello.” She doesn’t have the experiences of an adult and so she is easily startled – especially in the presence of a holy angel.

He then calls her “favored one” which means “grace, benefit, gift.” It literally means to be graced or to benefit from favor. It is the word used of God’s benevolence and how he acts toward His children – God gives to those He favors. In other words, He graces those to whom He has chosen to be gracious. It doesn’t imply that Mary did anything to deserve such favor. Rather, the opposite is true. She is favored because God will have her do something for Him that is favorable.

Later, we learn from Luke that she was righteous in the site of God, just like Zachariah (1:47). So, the angelic voice might have startled her as she thought about her own sin. Maybe she feared something more. Regardless of what troubled her, she required the same calming words that Zachariah required. And so the angel said, “Do not be afraid.”

Gabriel continued to speak to her telling her God’s message. Like Zachariah, her message was that she would have a son and name Him Jesus. But, He would not be like any other child, He would be 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 of his kingdom there will be no end” (1:31-33).

She responds to Gabriel with a question of how the word of God would be accomplished. He explains to her that God would overshadow her which is why “the child to be born will be called holy – the Son of God” (1:35). It was going to be miraculous because “nothing will be impossible with God (1:37). In this promise, Mary simply trusted saying, “let it be to me according to your word.” The angel left.

4. God’s favor is not like ours in many ways. Can you list some?
5. What do you think that this young Jewish girl thought as the angel was describing her soon coming child to be Jesus, the Son of God?
6. What is the connection of her child being called “holy” and the way the child is conceived?
7. Why do you think that angel mentions that her child will receive “the throne of His father David”?
8. There are many similarities in this story and that of Zachariah’ encounter. List those and discuss them. Do also with the differences.

### **An Uncommon Word**

Was the message all that different from that which Zachariah received? Didn’t they both receive a message of a child being born into their household? Both pregnancies would be miraculous. Both would take part in God’s redemption plan. Both would turn hearts back to God. Both would represent the Father.

Sure, these and many others are true. However, Zachariah' son would bear the herald of the Christ. Mary's son would be the Christ. John would proclaim the Word of God. Jesus was the Word of God. When we say that this was an uncommon word, we can mean it in almost every way.

Mary was going to give birth to Jesus "who will save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:20-21). He is the perfect expression of God's mind. He is God articulated, God imagined. He is real and His past period of silence has ended. He will speak soon like no other time in history or thereafter.

This child would be great. Unlike John, who would be "great before the Lord" (1:15), Jesus would be great – period (1:32). That is to say, He is the greatest and by Him and in Him greatness is measured. He sets the standard. He decides who is great and who is not.

In closing, discuss the reasons why Jesus is great (according to our text):

9. Because He is God (1:32). Compare with John 14:7.
10. Because He is man (1:31). Compare with Galatians 4:4; Hebrews 4:14-16.
11. Because He is Sinless (1:35). Compare with 2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 7:26.
12. Because He is King (1:32b). Compare with Matthew 1.
13. Because He is Savior (1:31). Compare with Luke 2:29-30; 19:10.

### *Closing*

Mary's response to the Word of God is one to be modeled. We should humbly believe and submit to God's Word just the same. And when doing so, we should never think highly of ourselves for our belief or for the promises of which it speaks. We are still lowly and deserve nothing. We are given much and considered favored for the Lord has decided to give us great things based purely on his prerogative. Of these great things, Jesus is the greatest. Therefore, we must be satisfied in His greatness.