

Advent in Biblical Perspective
The Spirit of Christ at Christmas
“The Holy Spirit and Mary”

Luke 1:26–38

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December 11, 2016 – Morning sermon

Luke 1:26–28 says [26] *In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, [27] to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. [28] And he came to her and said, “Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!”*

The grass withers, the flower fades, God’s Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

This is our third Sunday of Advent and we’re looking at the life of Mary and the work of the Holy Spirit. We have been focused on the ministry of the Holy Spirit in this last year with the focus being on Romans 8 and our expositional study in John 13–17. Our topical expository focused on what it meant to walk in the Spirit and that all led to this Advent season of the Spirit of Christ in Christmas.

In the last study we looked at when the Holy Spirit is doing something around you that is for you by His grace, He will also do something in you that will be seen from you for His glory. When God is doing a big story He is also doing what seems to be a little back story at the same time and the back story is crucial to the big story. Here we are looking at a big story at Christmas and that is the Virgin birth. The Holy Spirit is miraculously causing a Virgin to conceive with a seed, miraculously given that is the Son of God so that now the Son of God has been incarnated and will come forth as Jesus, a Man. By the first Adam came death but by the Second Adam will come our life as He comes to take our place to pay for our sins and provide for us a perfect righteousness so that we can be forgiven and accepted. There is one Mediator between God and man and it is the Man Christ Jesus.

So how does God become a Man? He can’t quit becoming God so God humbles Himself to become a Man, in the act of humiliation. So that He could come as our Prophet to bring us the Word of Salvation and our King to subdue us and defeat our enemies in our salvation. This is not a humiliation by subtraction but by addition. He doesn’t subtract His deity. He is still God and we don’t have 33 years without a Trinity. He has laid aside privileges to humble Himself and the humbling is the taking upon Himself humanity. Philippians 2:8 says [8] *And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*

While He does big stories and up to this moment there is not a bigger story that the Holy Spirit has done than the Incarnation, He is doing back stories. There are some big stories to come called the resurrection, regeneration etc. What is the Holy Spirit doing with Joseph, with Mary and with Simeon? For instance when God does a big story like a great awakening throughout a nation He is doing a little backstory as people are sharing the Gospel one by one which is personal evangelism and that is how you get the big story. How does God get people worshipping and assembling in Spirit and truth? It is because God has a backstory where He is working inside of His people. The outside story always has an inside story. The big movement story comes because of the people stories.

So here is this big story of the Incarnation through the Virgin but there are these back stories we can take a look at. In the last study we took a look at Joseph. We learned that Joseph was marked by two things: grace and truth. A Jewish marriage had three steps; a commitment (covenant of vows), a ceremony with the marriage feast, then the marriage bed for the consummation. With Mary and Joseph, these seemingly two insignificant people, with both being of the line of David, they have been betrothed and are moving toward their wedding.

Word gets to Joseph that Mary is with child. To him that probably meant she had been unfaithful. He is a man of God who then would need to obey Deuteronomy 24 which would be to give her a writ of divorce. In the Old Testament when Israel ruled itself and wasn't under the dominion of other nations like Rome, the penalty for adultery would have been death. Then the marriage would be over. Now they are ruled by other nations so they don't have that power and that's why they will have to go ask for permission to crucify Jesus. Because they no longer do the civil penalty of death they would make it embarrassing with public shaming. Joseph's plan is to obey God and give her a writ of divorce but he is not going to shame her. He is going to do it privately. We see his commitment to truth and grace.

Then the angel comes to Joseph. The angel tells Joseph that Mary is with child but she is still a Virgin and what is within her is there by the power of the Holy Spirit. She has conceived in obedience and in fulfillment of God's Word. It did not happen through marital intimacy but through the immediate act of the Holy Spirit circumventing that and that is why a virgin will give birth. Joseph is to keep her a virgin so that the prophecy will be fulfilled. So the angel informs Joseph of this big miracle. The woman who does not have a seed will have a seed and then the woman will give birth as a virgin. Joseph honors his covenant commitment and in obedience to the angel he will call His name Jesus meaning Yahweh will save. The miracle is not the virgin birth but is the virgin conception and the evidence is the virgin birth. Joseph keeps God's Word.

Joseph is unalterably committed to the Word of Truth manifested by obedience but he is also relentlessly committed to the grace of God manifested by compassion. It was seen before the angel talked to him and after the angel talked to him. We need such Spirit-filled men today in families and churches, not men of truth with self-righteous arrogance destroy people but men of truth who will obey the truth always wanting to lift up and minister to people. It is not the graciousness that sacrifices truth or a truth that dismisses graciousness. Gentlemen, was a descriptive term for the effect of Christianity upon men – strong and courageous to obey and gentle in any and all relationships as they pursue the truth. This is the evidence of the Spirit of God within Joseph. So here we see the Spirit of God at work within a man and now we're going to see the Spirit at work within a woman in this study. In the study after that we'll see what it looks like in an old man.

What is it that now takes place with Mary? We know the big story of what God will do but let's look at the backstory in Mary as the work of Spirit is being done in her life personally as she receives the message of the big story from the angel. We see this account in the Gospel of Luke. Luke, the writer of this book, has two professions. He is a historian and a doctor. When we read this we'll see historian and medical language. We see medical language right away when it says 'in the sixth month' and he is speaking of Elizabeth's pregnancy with John the Baptist where she is at the end of her second trimester. Then we see the encounter of the angel Gabriel and Mary. We will see a series of things happen.

The first thing that happens is a benediction. A benediction is not a prayer. You can treat it as such but that is not what it is. A benediction is God's Word to you, not our word to

God. We get the word beneficial from 'bene' and 'dicte' means dictation so benediction is a 'good word' from God as His Scripture is given to you as a good word. In the history of the church many of God's people raise their hands to receive this word. This would normally take place at the end of the service but here Mary gets the benediction at the beginning of the message from the angel. This is what the angel says to her.

Luke 1:28 says [28] *And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!"* The word favor here is related to the word grace. This could be read 'Mary, O graced one.' Notice that Mary is not the fountain of grace but Mary is a receiver of grace. So she is not full of grace to distribute but she is filled with grace from the only One who can give it and that's God. Then the benediction moves to the result of being a graced/favored one and that is because she is a graced one, the Lord is with her.

We don't know how old Mary is but the language used about her and in the Old Testament prophesying about the virgin tells us that she is young, young woman. When you look at the culture and marriage then the guess is that she is somewhere between 12 and 16 years old. My guess is that she was about 13 or 14. Mary would have been in our junior high ministry and this is the Word that comes to her. So what do you think it does to her? It troubles her. Luke 1:29 says [29] *But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be.* She is not questioning but asking. The next words to her will be 'do not fear' so this must have been fearful to her, what does this mean? You can certainly see why she is troubled.

The angel then moves from a benediction to a prophecy of five points consistent with the Old Testament prophecies that the Messiah would come being born of a virgin. Luke 1:30–33 says [30] *And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. [31] And behold, **you will** conceive in your womb and bear a son, and **you shall** call his name Jesus. [32] He will be great and **will be** called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, [33] and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."*

The first point of this prophecy is that Mary would conceive in her womb. This will not come as a result of marital intimacy but one of miraculous work where from this woman will come a seed from which the Spirit of God will incarnate the Son of God to be born as a Son of Man and Son of God. The second thing is that she will bear a Son. No sonogram is needed. Thirdly, He will be called Jesus, consistent with what Joseph received. Fourthly, He will be great. Interestingly, Elizabeth and Zachariah are told the same thing about John the Baptist and Jesus will say that no man has been greater among women than John the Baptist but there is a qualifier. They were told John would be great before the Lord whereas with this One it is simply stated that 'He will be great.' He is the Lord and there are no limitations. His greatness His glorious. He is the Second Person of the Trinity – the Inheritor of God, the Revealer of God. The Son reveals the Father and inherits from the Father. Fifthly, He will rule over the house of Jacob, the throne of David and this is a different Kingdom than David's because it is a forever Kingdom. He will reign forever. This will be fulfilled in the coming nine months when Mary will give birth.

When Mary hears this she has a good question. I love the honesty of the Scriptures here. Who wrote this book? It was the Holy Spirit through Luke. We don't know when Luke wrote this book. Luke 1:1–4 says [1] *Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, [2] just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, [3] it seemed good to me*

also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, [4] that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.

The book of Luke was put together by interviewing witnesses. I think he did this when Paul was in prison in Jerusalem and then over at Caesarea by the Sea which was over a two year period. Luke is a historian and writes like one, inspired by the Holy Spirit. The things in the book not only reveal his medical knowledge but also his bent toward historical work. Having done the interviews, it is my opinion that we are reading his writing after interviewing Mary during those two years. He gives you insight like ‘she pondered this’ as though the person who experienced this would have shared. So not only was I concerned but when the angel told me I was going to bear a child and I was a virgin, how in the world would this happen. If you’re putting this together as a religious writing you would never put this in there. You really see a real person grappling with a real event and sharing with Luke her process.

Here is what the angel said to her. Luke 1:35–38 says [35] *And the angel answered 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. [36] And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. [37] For nothing will be impossible with God.” [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.*

The angel encouraged Mary by telling her about Elizabeth’s birth that would happen supernaturally and her son would make way for the Messiah. When God does miracles it is not for entertainment but for redemptive purposes to exalt Christ. If He can do that with Elizabeth then He can do this with you, Mary. As soon as Mary hears that Mary says ‘then let it be done to me according to Your Word. I am your servant’ and she surrenders to the will of the Lord. Don’t you just love the pictures of the Scriptures? God comes down and we get lifted up. He comes down by His Spirit to lift us up to come to Jesus and to lift up the people He is using for us to come to Jesus. So what do we want to learn here? Here is my takeaway.

The Spirit-led life marked by God’s grace is...before I give you these marks I want you to see Mary’s magnificat found in Luke 1:46–56 which says [46] *And Mary said,*

*“My soul magnifies the Lord,
[47] and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
[48] for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant.
For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
[49] for he who is mighty has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.
[50] And his mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.
[51] He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts;
[52] he has brought down the mighty from their thrones
and exalted those of humble estate;
[53] he has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he has sent away empty.
[54] He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,*

*[55] as he spoke to our fathers,
to Abraham and to his offspring forever.”*

[56] And Mary remained with her about three months and returned to her home.

In other words, Mary stayed with Elizabeth to the end of her pregnancy of bringing forth John the Baptist. This is a glorious song of worship and praise from Mary. So in putting all this together what do we learn about the Spirit-led life from this woman of God?

One, is a Spirit-led life is a surrendered life. Let it be done to me according to Your Word. Our God is patient with us in all of our frailties, for your questions will not frighten Him off and your doubts will not cause Him to hide but God does not negotiate. God calls us to surrender and to live you have to die to yourself. You flee the wrath to come to flee to the Savior and you surrender. Let it be done to me, in me, through me and for me according to Your Word. We don't negotiate our relationship and we don't negotiate the Word no matter how much the world would mock it.

Secondly, the Spirit-led life is an inside-out life. Mary says 'my soul magnifies the Lord.' We don't live our life outside-in. God doesn't whitewash tombs, He cleans them out. We live our life from the inside out. When God does a big story with your life outside, He starts inside stories.

Thirdly, the Spirit-led life is a worshipping life. When God the Holy Spirit gets a hold of you, your automatic God-created, God-redeemed response is to glorify God the Father through God the Son in God the Spirit. You want to worship God. Before you're saved you want to do anything but worship God. You'll be glad to go to a church if the worship service is all about you but you won't want to have part in a service that is all about God. Life apart from God is when all have sinned and come short of the glory of God for God's glory is not our heart's desire. We will assassinate God's glory to exalt our own but when the Spirit of God lays hold of your heart now your greatest desire is to gather and live for His worship. I Corinthians 10:31 says *[31] So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.* Worship becomes something that comes out of you.

I have another speculation about this passage. I don't believe Mary said this while she was pregnant (the passage from Luke 1:46–55). I don't even think she wrote it after she gave birth to Jesus. I've been around for three births and my wife was not writing music at that time. I believe she wrote this post crucifixion and resurrection. I believe this is a distillation that Luke gets from her and tells him this is what she has written. I think that is what it represents. It represents the mature thoughts of a Spirit-led Christian. In the song Mary doesn't talk about the Incarnation and the miracle. She talks about the God who blessed her and the God who is blessing so many through her. It is not about her and the miracle but it's about God and His glory and the glory of God to others.

Here is an illustration of this. When I was a kid growing up I didn't know the Lord. My family knew the Lord and I went the other direction. I would go down for weekends and summers to be with my grandparents. My grandfather was a lay minister in the Methodist church. I knew they were going to expect me to go so no matter what time of year it was I planned to always bring shorts so that I could say I couldn't go to church due to the only clothing I had. I pretty much knew I could get out of going to church with only shorts. I would do anything I could to get out of church. When I got saved I was there every time the church met. It wasn't that all of a sudden the church got hip and started putting together a worship service that appealed to me but it was that I got saved. Now there was nothing I wanted to do more than to worship Him, hear Him and praise Him.

Martin Lloyd Jones that first Christmas after his conversion goes to a Christmas party with all his doctor friends and saw a red tag Salvation Army band playing ‘Carols of Praise God.’ He looked to his wife and said ‘I’m going to reach these people but those are my people.’ That is where I need to be. What changed was not the environment but it was inside. Surrender inside out, now worship. A Spirit-led life is a worshipping life. It even creates a new song to the glory of God.

Fourthly, the Spirit-led life is a rejoicing life. The Bible doesn’t say much about it but I can’t imagine the ridicule Joseph and Mary faced in that small little Nazareth town. But she counted it all joy. She didn’t build her life on happiness which is based on happenstance. She built her life on the joy of the Lord who rules and reigns in every circumstance. She is rejoicing.

Fifthly, the Spirit-led life is a blessed life. She has been saved by God’s grace. God has visited her in her humble estate and she has brought forth praise to Him. Sixthly, the Spirit-led life is a saved life. This is not an exception to total depravity. Mary was born dead in her sins but she was saved by Christ through the Spirit of God. That is why she said ‘My soul rejoices in God my Savior.’ She had been blessed so that no longer was the guilt of sin upon her, no longer did the power of sin hang over her and now she was saved from those sins and could grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. She like you had a saved life by God’s grace.

Seventhly, the Spirit-led life is an overshadowed life. Mary was overshadowed by God’s Spirit. The big story is He has overshadowed her with conception with no marital intimacy and brings forth the Son of God while still a virgin. The Nicene Creed states it this way: *Who, for us men for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man.* This is absolutely crucial that God came through the virgin Mary as the second Adam who comes as the Son of Man, fully God, fully Man by the Spirit. In fact, it says in I John 4 that if you don’t believe that you’re the antichrist. If you don’t confess that Christ has come in the flesh you’re the antichrist. So this is crucial and foundational to Christianity. Praise God that He overshadowed her.

He overshadowed her with the power of the Holy Spirit who overshadowed the creation and brought order to it, who overshadowed the exodus through the Red Sea, who overshadowed the people in the wilderness, who overshadowed and filled the tabernacle with His glory, who overshadowed the people of God as they crossed over into the Promised Land and the same Holy Spirit overshadowed Jesus in the womb, through His childhood, at His baptism, in the wilderness, in His teaching ministry, taking Him to the cross, bringing Him out of the tomb and as He ascended. Now the Holy Spirit overshadows you and me from Christ who has been poured out. When the Holy Spirit overshadows you then the shadows of sin begin to be dispelled from you – no more guilt, no fear, no power of sin – but we walk in and for Jesus Christ. When that overshadowing comes God starts writing what we think is a back story and He is actually using it in His big story.

In Chicago there is this shoe salesman who wants to tell this clerk about Jesus. He is afraid and asks the Spirit to help him. The Spirit overshadows him and finally he says to the shoe clerk ‘Will you come to the Sunday school class I teach?’ The shoe clerk said ‘yes’ and he went. He became a Christian and his name was D. L. Moody. The shoe salesman was Edward Kimble. D. L. Moody had this marvelous ministry and went over to England. This man who was almost ready to deny his faith who was a great teacher, preacher, theologian was named F. B. Meyer and he came to hear Moody speak. God set his soul on fire and was overshadowed by the Spirit. Meyer became evangelistic in his heart and soul and a wonderful instrument throughout England in evangelism.

I thank God for Edward Kimble who reached D.L. Moody who reached F.B. Meyer and Meyer reached a man named J. Wilbur Chapman who ended up starting the ministry of Youth for Christ. Then Chapman through Youth for Christ reached a baseball player named Billy Sunday who left his baseball career because he wasn't going to play on the Sabbath and began to preach. Billy Sunday reached a man named Mordecai Ham. God has the back stories working but uses them for big stories like Youth for Christ and evangelistic crusades in England.

In Charlotte, North Carolina in the 1930s there was a prayer meeting and my grandfather was there and so was his brothers. They were praying for revival in Charlotte. They were at a dairy farm. The answer to the prayer was playing in the next room. The dairy farm belonged to Franklin Graham who was in the prayer meeting. His son Billy Frank is in the next room playing. In 1943 in answer to that prayer they bring to Charlotte Mordecai Ham. Ham preached. Cliff Barrows, T.W. Wilson, Grady Wilson and a 19 year old teenage boy came to Christ in those meetings where Ham preached. That 19 year old was Billy Frank Graham. God called him into an evangelistic ministry and one of his first evangelistic endeavors was a helping work in his hometown at Calvary Presbyterian where my grandfather and his brothers were.

Billy Frank Graham came over to do an evangelistic meeting in 1948 at Calvary Presbyterian because of Mordecai Ham and the back story goes all the way back to Edward Kimble. At the end of the service an 18 year old man with a 17 year old wife and a two month old baby came and gave their life to Christ. That was my dad and mom and that baby was me. I thank God for Edward Kimble and you. Let's pray.

Prayer:

I don't know what backstory God has been doing in your life by His Spirit and I don't know what He is going to do with your life but I do know where it begins. If you are reading this and you need to come to this Christ just like these men starting with Edward Kimble then commit your life to Christ. If you'd like to pray with someone please call me here at Briarwood at (205) 776-5200. I'm not talking about you joining the church as a member I'm talking about the Holy Spirit doing a work in your heart to surrender – saved, rejoicing, blessed, overshadowed – life starting today. You may be saved but just need to pray with someone and you can call too. Holy Spirit come down and lift us up that we might lift up Jesus who will draw all men to Himself for I pray in Jesus' Name, Amen.

Power Point

When the Holy Spirit is doing something around you that is for you by His grace, He will also do something in you that will be seen from you for His glory.

The distinctive evidences of the Holy Spirit at work in Joseph are also seen from Joseph:

GRACE AND TRUTH

- Joseph is unalterably committed to the Word of Truth manifested by obedience.
- Joseph is relentlessly committed to the Grace of God manifested by compassion.

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND MARY

Mary's Encounters

Mary's Exaltation

LIFE TAKEAWAY

A Spirit-Led Life marked by God's grace is...

- A Surrendered Life
- An Inside-out Life
- A Worshipping Life
- A Rejoicing Life
- A Blessed Life
- A Saved Life
- An Overshadowed Life