

**Home For Christmas**  
**Week 1**  
**Luke 1:26-38**  
**“The Miracle of Grace”**

**Introduction**

**For a Child will be born to us, a Son will be given to us, and the government will be on His shoulders. He will be named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.** **Isaiah 9:6**

The Christmas Story found in Luke’s gospel is one of the most beautiful passages in all of Scripture. Every year about this time, we re-read it and allow its message of hope to fill our hearts. Christmas is not all about the many gifts. It is about “*the gift*”. It is not about the pretty lights, but rather, “*The Light of the World*”, Who came to save us. It isn’t even about gathering with family and friends, but instead, it is about when God provided a way for us to be adopted into *His family*. Where we were once enemies of God, through Christ, we are reconciled and are now considered God’s *friends*. This is the wondrous story of Christmas.

Sadly, the true meaning often gets crowded out by the noise and clatter of this world during this sacred and peaceful time. It seems that the world wishes to cram in so much activity during this special holiday season that we forget what truly matters. With this in mind, I would like to challenge us all this year, not to get caught up in the endless barrage of so called festivities, but rather, we take some time away from the noise and clamor to spend time alone with The One Who is the reason for the season. Instead of running frantically in every direction, maybe the time has come for us to “Come Home” for Christmas.

Can I just be honest with you for a moment? I remember when our children were young, and between shopping for their gifts, the various dinners we felt obligated to take part in with the in-laws (and outlaws), not to mention all the various church activities of which we felt were our Christian duty to participate, I used to dread Christmastime. I know, that sounds awful, but I’m just being real here. I used to be a genuine Scrooge, when it came to all things Christmas. But I’m not like that anymore.

So what changed? I will tell you. I started learning to say no, that’s what! I decided to spend less time with everyone else on the planet and more time with my Heavenly Father. I started caring a little less about the presents and a lot more about “*The Gift*”. And as a result, I discovered something: prayer and thanksgiving bring more joy than tinsel and shopping. Not that these are bad things, but a bit of moderation can really help with the stress levels.

So don’t allow yourself to get distracted by the noise this holiday season, but schedule yourself some downtime to pray and re-read those beloved Scriptures one more time. And this time, pay close attention to what they are saying. For God so loved the world, that He gave... He gave the greatest gift the world has ever, or will ever know. He gave His Son. He came to bring us salvation, eternal life and everlasting peace with God The Father. Nothing wrapped in a package with a bow will ever compare with this wondrous gift! So come home, my friends. Come home for Christmas.

This morning I would like to read over Mary’s encounter with the Archangel Gabriel. But I want to look at it from a slightly different perspective. I believe that many times, we do not fully grasp the absolute sovereignty of our God. His limitless power is so greatly revealed for us in this first chapter of Luke’s gospel, but sometimes, we cannot seem to see the forest for the trees. We let ourselves be deceived into thinking that we need to help God along to do His sovereign will. I once heard a preacher say (not a good one mind you) that “we are God’s *hands and feet* in this world, and without us, He cannot accomplish His will.” Frankly, nothing could be further from the truth my friends. God doesn’t need any of us in order to accomplish what He wants to accomplish. But thankfully, He allows us to become a working part of His plans. What an honor it was for Mary to be chosen as a vessel to bring God’s grace to this wicked world! But know this; it wasn’t because of her greatness that she was chosen. It was because of God’s sovereign election of grace. And grace my friends... is unearned. It is freely given.

So, as we re-read this wondrous story one more time, let us behold the sovereign power of our God. It is a story of His *Grace*, His *Greatness*, and His *Guidance*. And all that we need to do to become a part of His plan is to trust and obey. For it is God Himself Who always does the heavy lifting. Please allow me to explain.

**Grace (vs. 26-30)**

**In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man named Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came to her and said, "Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you." But she was deeply troubled by this statement, wondering what kind of greeting this could be. Then the angel told her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Luke 1:26-30**

The Roman Catholic Church has grossly distorted Mary's standing in the universe. She is not, nor was she ever considered "divine" by any means. She was a sinful person just like the rest of it. And this is not just my personal opinion mind you. It is an established reality borne out by The Scriptures themselves. Everything about Mary's story tells us that she was born into a lower class of society. We know this simply from reading the gospels.

Mary lived in a small town called Nazareth. And to call this place a "town" is being extremely generous. It was a small hamlet, a bump in the road, if you will, some one hundred miles north of Jerusalem. The region in which Nazareth was located, namely Galilee, was often referred to as "Galilee of the Gentiles" for there were so many pagan Gentiles living in the region, that most devout Jews avoided the area completely. Hence there was a saying among the self-righteous in Israel, "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" (**John 1:46**).

When Gabriel appeared to Mary, she was more than likely inside her parents two room home. For poor people in those days often lived in two room dwellings with one room for the family and another room for their livestock. Normally these two rooms were separated only by a curtain. When Gabriel arrived at such a place, I wonder if he was shocked that God would choose such lowly people to bear His precious Son.

But God in His sovereignty did not choose a wealthy family in Jerusalem to be the parents of The Prince of Glory. Instead, he chose a poor family, in a poor place, inhabited by both Jews and Gentiles alike. For Christ did not come to save the Jews only. He came as the Savior of the world! Thanks be to God for offering His wondrous grace to the very people that the ultra-religious considered as dogs. Thanks be to God that He chose to save a wretch... like me.

Now back to Mary. *The Bible* tells us that she was a virgin, betrothed to a man named Joseph. It was pretty common in those days for young girls to be pledged to marry around the age of twelve. The betrothal period would last for a year, and the girl would become the wife of her husband at the age of thirteen! It is hard for us to even imagine this in today's society, but also wise for us to remember that people did not live nearly as long in those days. If you wanted to have a life, you needed to get on with it.

So, how do we know that Mary wasn't divine in nature as the Papists claim? Because of what the angel says to her, not once, but twice. When Gabriel appeared to Mary, he greeted her with the words, "favored" (*charitoo* in the Greek) woman. He used the root form of this word (*charis*) just a few moments later telling her that she has found "favor" with God. Now when we see the word "favor", we immediately think that her good behavior has impressed God and caused Him to choose her above all other women in the world. But the words *charitoo* and *charis* both simply mean "grace". And what is grace? It is receiving something that you do not deserve. If you were perfect in God's sight, then you would not need His grace. But Mary wasn't perfect, just as we are not. We all need the Savior to show us His mercy and grace. Mary even confirms this truth later in the chapter in her song of praise to The LORD saying:

**...My soul magnifies The LORD, and my spirit rejoices in God, my Savior, because He has looked with favor on the humble condition of His servant. Luke 1:46-48**

Now, if Mary had been some divine creature, she would not have needed a "Savior", and she certainly would not have considered her condition lowly. If she had been divine in nature, when the angel arrived, she would have said something more like, "What took you so long? Its about time you recognized how special I am." No, Mary wasn't chosen because she was spotlessly pure, although I am sure she was as devout as she could possibly be in her faith. But *The Bible* clearly teaches that our righteousness (the best that we have) is as filthy rags in the sight of God (**Isaiah 64:6**). And that is why Mary needed saving, just as much as you or I.

The grace of God is a wondrous gift, and it is **God Who initiates it, God Who gives it, and God Who preserves it**. The first time that grace is mentioned in *The Bible* is in *Genesis Chapter Six*, where Noah finds "grace" (*chen* in the Hebrew pronounced khane) in the eyes of The LORD. Noah, just like Mary, wasn't perfect, but God sovereignly chose them both to be saved. The "why it happened" isn't nearly as important as to "why it matters". For you see, just as God has chosen these, He also chooses

us to receive His grace. We, like Noah and Mary, are sinful human beings infected with Adam's curse. And as such, if it were not for God's grace, our situation would be hopeless. We, like Mary, no longer need to be afraid, when we stand in God's presence. For thanks to the Blood of Christ Jesus, we are washed clean of sin. Those who place their trust in Him shall receive the unmerited grace (favor) of God! This is why we refer to the gospel as "the good news".

### **Greatness (vs. 31-33)**

**Now listen: You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will 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. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and his kingdom will have no end."** **Luke 1:31-33**

I noticed something about this passage this past week that I had never noticed before. The word "will" is used seven times in these three verses. That's a lot! And it speaks to the sovereignty of God. There are no "mights" and "maybes" in this message, just "wills". It begins with the angel telling Mary that she "will have a son." Notice how little of this depends on Mary. God has willed that she would deliver, His Son, so she would. She didn't understand how it would all work, but honestly, she didn't have to. God's will is always done. Nothing can hinder it. He is sovereign, and He alone will see to it that what He wants to happen... will happen.

Gabriel continued by telling Mary that she "will" name the baby Jesus (*Jeshua*, in the Hebrew meaning "JHVH saves"). The Holy Child's Name had been predetermined before time began. He was to be the Savior of the world, the gift of grace that would come to redeem fallen man. At the tower of Babel, men tried to build themselves up to God, but Jeshua would bring God to earth. He is the God-man, and there is none like Him.

"He will be great." What an understatement! The languages of men are woefully inadequate in their attempts to quantify the "greatness of God". He is forever in a class all by Himself. The list of Names given in Scripture to describe God are endless. Listen to the words of Isaiah the prophet as he attempts to describe Christ, The Son of God, Messiah King: "*Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, The Prince of Peace.*" And even these cannot fully describe the limitless greatness of our Savior. And this is why His will is always accomplished. For He is indeed great. And as such, He can handle anything that we face on this earth. Our God is able.

"He will be called The Son of The Most High." This is The Christ Who came to save us. Many have attempted to argue that He never claimed to be God. But that is so very wrong. The Pharisees wanted to stone Him over and over again for claiming equality with God. But The Christ had the authority to claim all these things, because He is and always shall be God.

**In the beginning was The Word, and The Word was with God, and the Word WAS God.** **John 1:1** (emphasis added)

My personal favorite is when Philip, the disciple, asked Jesus to "show them The Father". Jesus response says it all:

**"...Have I been among you all this time and you do not know Me Philip? The one who has seen Me has seen The Father. How can you say, 'Show us The Father?' Don't you believe that I AM in The Father and The Father is in me?..."** **John 14:9-10a**

Jesus will be called the Son of the Most High.

God will give Him the throne of His Father David. The first four "wills" are a reference to The LORD'S first appearing. The last three are in reference to His second. When Christ returns He will establish His throne in Jerusalem and reign forever. As of now, Christ is in heaven at the right hand of God The Father. David's throne is not up there, but when The LORD returns, He will sit on the throne of David, His earthly ancestor. Both Mary's lineage and Joseph's can be traced back to King David (**Luke 3:23-38** is Mary's genealogy, and **Matthew 1:1-17** is Joseph's). These give Christ the legal claim to David's throne, for He was born as his rightful successor. King Jesus will reign. Our God's will is absolute.

His kingdom will have no end. Although Jesus was rejected by His own people in His first appearing, He will in fact be embraced by them in His second. And as the prophets have foretold, He will establish an everlasting kingdom when He comes. In fact, there are over 300 prophecies concerning Christ the Messiah King in *The Old Testament*, and Christ has fulfilled them all. How Great is our God! Everything that He wills shall always come to pass.

**Guidance (vs. 34-38)**

**Mary asked the angel, “How can this be, since I have not had sexual relations with a man?” The angel replied to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore, the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. And consider your relative Elizabeth — even she has conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called childless. For nothing will be impossible with God.” “See, I am the Lord’s servant,” said Mary. “May it happen to me as you have said.” Then the angel left her.**

**Luke 1:34-38**

I want you to pay close attention to exactly Who it is that does *all* the work in this scenario. Mary had no idea how all these things would come to pass. She can’t begin to fathom how a virgin could conceive. Her mind can’t even begin to wrap itself around the idea. She may have been young, but she knew how babies are conceived. Her response does not represent a lack of faith, but just a lack of understanding. But notice how the explanation requires nothing on her part. The angel doesn’t tell her how to produce the Messiah. He doesn’t give her a book to read on “Immaculate conception 101”. He simply tells her that The Holy Spirit will take care of everything!

Gabriel went on to explain that God can do anything and everything that He desires. The results were not up to Mary. They were the sole responsibility of God Himself. All Mary had to do was accept the Word of God, by faith and surrender her will to His (**vs. 38**). And that is a very important concept for all of us to grasp. We are saved, when we believe God and surrender our will accordingly. For you see, just as Mary had to simply surrender herself by faith so that God’s will could be done in her to *conceive* The Savior, we too must be willing to accept God’s promises in order to *receive* The Savior. Everything else is done in us by God Himself. It is God, who initiates His grace towards us. He draws us to Christ by the Word and The Holy Spirit. Then because of His greatness, His will in us shall ultimately be accomplished. Or as Paul would say,

**I am sure of this, that He Who started a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.** **Philippians 1:6**

When we place our faith in Christ, because of God sovereignly choosing to do a work of grace in us, He will not only save us, but will keep us saved and finish what He began. He keeps every promise that He makes. We do not have to do anything, except believe and surrender to His will. This is how we receive The Savior, and it is exactly how Mary received The Savior.

**For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God’s gift — not from works, so that no one can boast.** **Ephesians 2:8-9**

The point that I am attempting to drive home here is simple. We receive the Savior the very same way that He was conceived in Mary. God reveals His will and His Word to us. We believe and surrender to His will, and He does all of the work Himself. Our salvation is initiated, produced, and sustained all by His mighty power. We have nothing to do with it, aside from taking Him at His Word. And that is how we are saved. Which brings me back to my favorite verse in all of Scripture:

**Abram believed The LORD, and He credited it to Him as righteousness. Genesis 15:6**

So in the midst of this, the busiest season of the year, schedule some time to be in a quiet place to contemplate all that He has done for you. And give thanks for the wondrous grace you have received by faith in Christ Jesus. And let this be a time when you truly “come home” and spend Christmas with the One Who sovereignly chose you to become one of His very own.

TRUTH!!!