

Osaka International Church
Series: Luke 03
Title: Mary, the Lord's Servant

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Scripture: Luke 1:26-56
Special Events: Mary's Song, Advent Candle #1 Hope

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Key Verse: Luke 1:38

I. Introduction

Good morning! Take a look at this photo. It shows the Church of the Annunciation in Nazareth. This beautiful, modern church is built over the top of a much more ancient church that dated back to the 4th century. The 4th century church was said to be on the site of Mary's childhood home, which Roman Catholic tradition claims is the place where the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary 200 years ago.



On the other hand, the tradition of the Greek Orthodox Church reports that the site of the Annunciation was at the spring in Nazareth and that the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary while she was drawing water there. They have built the Church of Gabriel at that site. So there is some disagreement about the exact site where Gabriel appeared to Mary.



The Bible does not record whether the Annunciation was at Mary's home or at the town well, but it does record that it was in Nazareth. Today there is a modern city on the site, but in Jesus' time it was a small town with a rather poor reputation. And yet, it is the place where God chose a young woman to bear the Christ child. Let's read the story of the Annunciation, Luke 1:26-38.



II. Scripture Luke 1:26-38 (The Annunciation)

[26] In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, [27] to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. [28] The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." [29] Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. [30] But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. [31] You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. [32] He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, [33] and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end." [34] "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?" [35] The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. [36] Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month. [37] For nothing is impossible with God." [38] "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said." Then the angel left her.

III. Teaching #1

As we have already studied, the angel Gabriel had previously appeared to Zechariah announcing that he and his wife, Elizabeth, would have a son in their old age, and we noted that this son was to become John the Baptist, the great prophet who went before the Lord Jesus to prepare the way. Now, in the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sends Gabriel to the little town of Nazareth, to a young teenage girl, to announce that she will be the mother of the long-promised Messiah, who is Christ Jesus. This painting, by John Collier, places Mary in a modern suburb showing her as an American teenager. Mary's youth and innocence are startling, but accurate, and the painting hints at the idea that Mary was in many ways a typical young girl of her time, such as might live next door.



The story of the Annunciation is a favorite among painters and it has been painted many times. Noelle has painted the scene in several ways. This painting, which was done by Noelle two years ago, shows Mary and Gabriel in a European-looking garden.



On the other hand, this painting, also by Noelle, shows Mary and Gabriel on a snowy day. I could share more paintings of the Annunciation with you, each different in various ways. Why is the scene painted in so many different ways? I think it is because it is a universal scene that resonates with people of every time and place. Jesus will be the Savior for all of mankind, in every time and place. And so the announcement of His coming is for all people. Art that shows the scene in various times and places proclaims that Jesus is always coming to us in every land and in every era.



The angel comes to Mary, a descendent of King David, which is important for the fulfillment of the ancient prophecies about the Messiah. And the angel says, to this young girl who lives in a small and obscure town, **(from Luke 1:28-33), “Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you. Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end.”**

Mary is highly favored. The Lord is with her. She has found favor with God. And the Lord has chosen her for a very special work. Mary is to be the mother of Jesus, the Son of God. And He will be given the throne of David and will reign forever; His kingdom, the Kingdom of God, will never end. The words that Gabriel uses to announce the coming of the Christ echo the Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah to come. The Scripture tells us that Mary was greatly troubled by this unusual greeting; and probably by the appearance of the angel as well. Even so, Mary is calm and she asks, **(Luke 1:34), ““How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?””**

Unlike Zechariah’s question, which asked for proof of the angel’s words, Mary’s question contains no hint of doubt. As startled as she is, she believes what Gabriel has said, but she wonders about how these things will be accomplished. Mary is asking out of faith, not out of doubt. Gabriel answers her, saying, **(Luke 1:35-37), ““The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month. For nothing is impossible with God.”** Nothing is impossible with God. As human beings, we are limited in our strength and wisdom. Many things are impossible for us. But the Lord God who created the heavens and the earth has all knowledge, wisdom, and power. Nothing is impossible for Him.

For the One who created men and women, causing a virgin girl to become pregnant without physical relations with a man requires no effort at all. It is a simple miracle for God. That Mary, a virgin, was made pregnant by the Holy Spirit is a miracle, but the big miracle is that the child she is to bear is the Son of God. Jesus is the eternal Son of God come into this world in the flesh to share our suffering and to bear our sins on the cross. In the Gospel of John the miracle is spoken of like this. **John 1:1-3, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.”**

John makes it clear that the eternal Word is the Creator God. Because God is a Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the Word was both God and with God. And in **John 1:14**, we are told, **“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”** We can see the Trinity at work here. The Father sends the Son from heaven, and the Holy Spirit places the Son in Mary’s womb.

This is the Christ that is to be born of Mary, God’s Son come to bring truth and grace for us. Mary did not ask for any proof or sign, but Gabriel offers one **(Luke 1:36), “Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month.”** It is no surprise that Mary wanted to go and see Elizabeth as soon as possible. Let’s read Luke 1:39-56.

IV. Scripture Luke 1:39-56 (The Visitation)

[39] At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, [40] where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. [41] When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. [42] In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! [43] But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? [44] As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. [45] Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished!"

[46] And Mary said:

"My soul glorifies the Lord [47] and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

[48] for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant.

From now on all generations will call me blessed,

[49] for the Mighty One has done great things for me - holy is his name.

[50] His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation.

[51] He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;

he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.

[52] He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble.

[53] He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty.

[54] He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful

[55] to Abraham and his descendants forever, even as he said to our fathers."

[56] Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months and then returned home.

V. Teaching #2

Mary traveled from Nazareth to the hill country of Judea, in the same region as Bethlehem. Mary went to the home of Zechariah and Elizabeth and called out a greeting. And, **(Luke 1:41) "When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit."** John the Baptist is still in his mother's womb, but somehow he knows who has come and he leaps with joy. We mentioned this a few weeks ago, but in the Bible children in the womb are always spoken of as people, human beings, who feel pain and pleasure and are capable of joy and sorry, and even of being filled with Holy Spirit.

Luke 1:42-43, "In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" Elizabeth knows that Mary bears the Christ child and calls her, **"the mother of my Lord."** Elizabeth understood that this was not going to be an ordinary child; she knew it as the Lord Himself coming in the flesh. Mary responds to Elizabeth with a beautiful Psalm of praise. Let's take a closer look at a few verses.

Luke 1:46-48, "And Mary said: "My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed," Mary truly is blessed and honored. For 2,000 years she has been called the, "Blessed Virgin," and that is good and appropriate. But notice what else she says. Mary says, **"my spirit rejoices in God my Savior."** Mary knows she is not some kind of sinless superwoman. Mary knows she needs a Savior. Mary's own words show that the Catholic doctrine of a sinless Mary is incorrect. If Mary were sinless she would not need a Savior to take her sins away.

The scene of the visitation of Mary at Elizabeth's home has been painted by a fair number of artists. I like this painting, which was done by an unknown Vietnamese artist. This painting seems to capture the simplicity and wonder of the moment. Mary stayed with Elizabeth and Zechariah for three months, and then returned home. Since Elizabeth was already in her sixth month, Mary probably stayed and helped until the baby was born. After this, Mary returned home to Nazareth.



By the time Mary returned to Nazareth, her own pregnancy was probably starting

to show. She would have faced a lot of criticism and even the possibility of being stoned for breaking the law, but she was willing to face whatever was coming. Mary had strong faith and she trusted in the Lord. This is shown very beautifully in her reply to the angel Gabriel in **Luke 1:38, "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said." Then the angel left her.**" Francesco Albani's 1645 painting shows the face of God looking down from heaven at Mary, the blessed woman of faith.

VI. Conclusion

Mary trusted in the Lord completely and was willing to do whatever the Lord asked of her. She was a true servant of the Lord. Luke gives a lot of space to the stories of the angel Gabriel visiting Zechariah and Mary. Luke also places the stories close together, inviting comparison.

Both stories are about people of faith and miracle pregnancies. Both stories are about how the Lord is going to bring salvation to His people. But there are many differences, Zechariah and Elizabeth had desired a son for many years. And God finally granted their prayers. But I think that Mary desired only one thing, to be a servant of the Lord and to do His will.



Zechariah's faith is imperfect, sometimes he doubts. This is encouragement to all of us, because we also doubt from time to time and need to have our faith renewed by seeing our prayers answered. But when I reflect on the Scriptures, Mary's faith does not seem to depend on what the Lord does; her faith rests in her confidence of the loving character of God. She knows who God is, and she trusts Him completely. Both Zechariah and Mary are filled with the Holy Spirit and they both praise God. Love the fact that God pours out His grace on both of them.

But there is a difference, Zechariah's faith is an encouragement to us, but Mary's faith is an inspiration. Most of us have faith like Zechariah, but we can pray that God would give us faith like Mary's, the pure and simple faith of a child who knows the Lord as their God and Savior. Let's pray.

VII. Closing Prayer