

HIS KINGDOM WILL NEVER END

Luke 1:26-38

Key Verse: 33

“...He will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.”

This passage tells us the beautiful story of how Mary saw the glory of God’s kingdom. The glory of God’s kingdom overwhelmed all the darkness of her times and her personal crisis until she could joyfully accept the coming of Jesus. We’re in a very dark time right now entering into the Christmas season. Terrorists organized large-scale attacks in Paris several weeks ago and now the shooting right here in San Bernardino, California Tuesday has been also confirmed as a terror attack. There’s widespread civil unrest in Chicago and across the nation. It seems that in all the arguing, fear, and anger that no one will even be able to see Jesus this Christmas. In this passage, we are going to think primarily about Jesus, who is great, the Son of the Most High, reigning on his throne from heaven, whose kingdom will never end! I believe by doing so, each one of us can be overwhelmed by the glory and majesty of God’s kingdom and we can overcome the darkness and begin to turn our hearts to Jesus this Christmas.

First, The bigger story of what God was doing through Mary (26-27)

Today’s passage begins with the words, **“In the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy...”** Why does Mary’s story begin with Elizabeth? Luke was not an eye-witness of Jesus, so in verse 3 of this chapter he says, **“I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning.”** When Luke researched from **“the beginning,”** he found that Jesus’ story actually began with the story of an old couple Zechariah and Elizabeth who were also visited by the angel Gabriel and promised a baby John, who would be the forerunner of the Messiah. Luke frames Mary’s story right in the middle of the story of this godly old couple to emphasize that it was not an isolated event but part of the bigger story of what God was doing. Really, the star of this story is God who was orchestrating not only the birth of his Son but all history to bring about his salvation plan.

Verses 26-27 say, **“God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin’s name was Mary.”** Gabriel’s message is God’s first message in roughly 400 years. So, who is this angel Gabriel? The only other

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place that we find mention of him is in Daniel 8 and 9. God sends the angel Gabriel to Daniel saying, **“Gabriel, make this man understand the vision.”** And Gabriel later says, **“O Daniel, I have now come out to give you insight and understanding...for you are greatly loved”** (Dan 8:16, 9:22-23 ESV). So, Gabriel’s purpose is to help us understand the broader plan and will of God. If we look carefully at Gabriel’s message only verses 31 and 35 are about the birth of Jesus. The bulk of his message helps us to understand the ultimate purpose of why Jesus came. Most of what he says was not fulfilled until Jesus ascended back to the Father in glory at his right hand. Gabriel helps Mary and helps us to see God’s kingdom in difficult circumstances.

Second, “You have found favor with God” (28-30)

Now that we know the background, let’s read verse 28 together. **“The angel went to her and said, ‘Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.’”** Hearing this kind of greeting, we’re tempted to focus the entire passage on Mary asking how she became such a holy, righteous, worthy favorite of God. But we know that is not how God chooses people. Were any of us holy, righteous and worthy when we were chosen by God? Were any of the people God chose in the Bible? When we examine the text closer, we see that the words **“highly favored”** here come from the Greek **“χαριτόω”** (khar-ee-to'-o) meaning favored with grace. So, “favor” has the meaning of God is doing her a favor—an underserved kindness—not he favors her or she is God’s favorite. No, we know that God calls simple, humble people, just like us, and uses them for his great purpose, by his one-sided grace.

So the next words, are a little surprising. Verse 29 says, **“Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be.”** I pondered over these words for a long time. Why was she so troubled just because of his greeting? I believe that there are two reasons. **One is that when we are chosen we become acutely aware of how unworthy we are.** Mary was like, “Why me? Who am I?” I can relate to Mary, when P. Ron asked me months ago to deliver the Sunday message, I was willing because I want to serve. But as I began to prepare this message I said, “Why are we forcing these poor people to listen to me?”

The second reason I believe she was troubled, was that she deeply understood what it meant to be chosen by God. The words, **“the Lord is with**

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you,” would surely have reminded Mary of the great heroes of faith like Moses, Joshua, or Gideon. God came to them asking them to change the entire course of their life, put themselves in mortal danger, and serve him at great personal cost for the rest of the lives. God comforted them and removed their fear saying **“I will be with you”** (Ex 3:12, Jos 1:5, Jdg 6:16). To be used by God is the greatest favor anyone can ever have but it comes at a high cost. Perhaps Mary too had her own dreams and plan for her life. What’s more, the words **“pledged to be married”** in verse 27, are better translated **“betrothed”** (ESV) denoting a period of engagement before marriage in which the couple could have no union. This betrothal was a binding contract and could not be dissolved without a certificate of divorce.¹ Mary couldn’t simply break it off to follow God saying, “God chose me, sorry Joe...maybe next time.” Mary was in a tough spot. Many young people also think that to really give their life to God means their life will be over, and they are greatly troubled.

“But the angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God.’ We really need to remember this: God’s choosing is nothing to be afraid of or avoid, it is his favor. He’s not trying to burden and ruin our life but bless us. Mary would be favored to be the mother of our Lord Jesus Christ. Mary is remembered as one of the greatest women in history simply for giving birth. Mary, a simple country girl, would never have viewed herself as favored. When we look at ourselves we can’t see ourselves as favored. But God’s choosing means we are highly favored. Maybe we can say this together inserting our own name, **“Do not be afraid, (YOUR NAME); you have found favor with God.”**

Third, “He will be great” (31-32)

Look at verse 31. The angel continued, **“You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus.”** (31) **“You will give birth to a son”** will soon be good news to Sunny Groters. But let me ask all the high school age girls, you’re around Mary’s age, what would be your reaction if the angel joyfully said you were going to be pregnant? I’m pretty sure terror or some synonym would be accurate right? Mary had to be terrified. Then how did she overcome and accept the will of God? The answer is that she saw who her son would be, that is, she saw the amazing plan of God and was overwhelmed by what God was going to do.

¹ Dictionary of Bible Themes, 5654 betrothal

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First of all, Gabriel said “you are to give him the name Jesus.” Literally, the angel would have said to her in Hebrew, “you are to give him the name Yeshua.” If we look through the Old Testament, every time the word “salvation” is used, referring to God’s salvation, the original word in Hebrew is “yeshua,” it appears over 150 times in the Old Testament (Gen 49:18, Ps 9:14, Isaiah 62:11, et al.). So, Mary literally would have heard “you are to give him the name ‘salvation.’” It would really catch your breath away, in fact is the first line of her song later. Matthew 1:21, **“She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”** The purpose of Jesus’ coming into the world was to be salvation for Mary and for all people.

Secondly, “he will be great.” What a wonderful word for a mother to hear **“Your son will be great.”** It is interesting that the angel tells her nothing about how Jesus would come to suffer and die but he says **“he will be great.”** On earth Jesus walking here and there being mostly rejected, didn’t look great. He looked like a root out of dry ground (Isa 53:2) and a suffering servant (Mk 10:45). As he died on the cross it seemed that he was utterly defeated by men (Ac 2:23). But he is great because he died in order to save all people from their sins (Ro 6:10). In this way, he defeated Satan and the power of sin forever (Heb 2:14). But he did not remain dead, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him (Ac 2:24). Jesus was raised to life and he ascended into heaven (Ro 8:34). Jesus said, **“I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.”** Through his death and resurrection, Jesus trampled death and Satan beneath his feet defeating every enemy of mankind (1 Co 15:24-26). So in Revelation 5:9-10, the heavens ring out, **“You are worthy...because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God.”**

Thirdly, “[He] will be called the Son of the Most High.” The Jews were expecting an anointed human Messiah. But the true Messiah was more than anything they could ever have expected. Jesus is the Son of God and he is God. Jesus would be Immanuel, **God** himself with us (Mt 1:23).

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Fourth, Why we need Jesus to be our never ending king (32-38)

Gabriel now shifts from telling us who Jesus would be to what he would do. Look at verses 32-33. **“The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.”** One thousand years before this God had promised David, **“I will raise up your offspring...and I will establish his throne forever...I will set him over my house and my kingdom forever”** (1 Chr 17:11-14). We can’t even conceive one thousand years. It feels like America has been around for forever but it’s only 200 years old—300 if you count from the pilgrims. God has absolute control over history and kingdoms and he is able to do everything he promises. Deuteronomy 7:9 says, **“Know therefore that the LORD your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments.”** But the beauty here is that the Israelites had not loved him or kept his commandments and yet God still kept his part to love them. Their story is one of many ups and downs, but mainly downs. Had God kept his word he would have repaid their evil with evil and wiped them off the earth. But Exodus 34:6-7a says, **“And [God] passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, “The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin.”** We should get down on our knees and thank God every day, because he is faithful and forgiving even though we are sinful, childish and rebellious.

But why is the coming of a promised king good news for us? **The first reason we need Jesus as our king is because kings, kingdoms, leaders and governments cannot solve the fundamental problem of humanity.** The French Revolution was born out of unrest because the nobility enjoyed excessive luxury, while downtrodden peasants were excessively over-taxed. This is portrayed in such heartbreaking detail in one of my favorite novels, “The Tale of Two Cities,” when an aristocrat’s chariot flying heedlessly through the streets runs over and crushes a small boy and there are no repercussions, no remorse over what he has done. When the people could take no more, it boiled over into nation-wide revolution. At its heart the revolution, inspired by the American Revolution, sought liberty and justice for all. During the revolution, Napoleon Bonaparte quickly rose through the ranks of the French Revolutionary army as one of the greatest military strategists in history. After beheading the monarchy, France was declared a republic and Napoleon was declared the first consul, like the venerable consuls of the Roman

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republic. Then, drunk with his own power, he proceeded to go to war with the rest of Europe and then going against everything he had fought, he crowned himself Emperor of France.

When Napoleon had won “liberté” for France and been made first consul, Beethoven had titled his 3rd Symphony, “Bonaparte Symphony,” exulting this hero of democracy and freedom. However, when he learned that Buonaparte had declared himself Emperor, he broke into a rage and exclaimed, "So he is no more than a common mortal! Now, too, he will tread under foot all the rights of Man, indulge only his ambition; now he will think himself superior to all men, become a tyrant!" Beethoven went to the table, seized the top of the title-page, tore it in half and threw it on the floor. You can even see the original manuscript, where on the title page he has vigorously crossed out Bonaparte’s name and the symphony was retitled “Eroica (Heroic) Symphony” in the memory of a once great man.

CS Lewis said that the real reason for democracy is not that man is so good he can govern well but that “man is so fallen that no one can be trusted with unchecked power over his fellows.”² In 2008, then Senator Barack Obama ran under the campaign title “Hope.” The iconic poster and his sweeping speeches made the majority believe that he could change America, change Washington, solve all our problems and give us peace and prosperity. But 8 years later, nothing has changed—in fact we now have gay marriage, terrorism on the rise and economic downturn. With the upcoming elections many are again putting their hope in presidential candidates to save our country. Others utterly reject all authority and engage in rebellious anti-government activities. But in reality, it doesn’t matter if we put a man or a woman, black, white or Asian, republican, democrat or independent in the white house or replace the government altogether, it will not solve the fundamental problem of mankind. John Lennon wrote that if we could just imagine a world without divisions of countries and without religion there would be world peace. But even in this imaginary perfect society there will always be people who will do evil for no reason, because we cannot solve the fundamental problem of mankind which is sin. The sin problem of humanity can only be solved when individuals accept Jesus. Where individuals, communities and nations accept Jesus’ kingdom there is real change.

² C. S. Lewis, “Equality,” in *Present Concerns: Essays* by C. S. Lewis

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The second reason we need Jesus to be our king is because his kingdom will never end. The climax of God’s message is verse 33b, “**his kingdom will never end.**” What sets God’s kingdom apart, is that it never ends. The Bible tells us clearly that this entire universe will pass away but God’s kingdom will last forever. Many kingdoms, governments and even civil rights groups start out with good intentions but they become corrupt and fail. Even the French Revolution betrayed its ideals and sought the power it had overthrown and was defeated. But Isaiah 11:3-4 says that the Messiah will not judge by what he sees or hears, but by what is right. That is why his kingdom can never end.

Also, it can never end because Jesus has all power and authority and nothing can defeat his kingdom. Hebrews 3:1 says, “**After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.**” This phrase is repeated 4 times in Hebrews—the author really wants us to understand who Jesus really is now that he has ascended. 1 Peter 3:21b-22 says, “**Jesus Christ...has gone into heaven and is at God’s right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.**” Sometimes it seems that the world is just chaos, that Satan is running amuck. But the reality is that Jesus is on his throne and he is absolutely sovereign, somehow he is working everything to his good purpose. We already know the end. My Bible says that Jesus wins and he will take his faithful to be with him in glory forever. When we remember this then we don’t need to be distracted by Satan’s mischief.

The third reason we need Jesus to be our king is because his kingdom is the only thing that can overcome the darkness of our times. These days we are reeling from the senseless loss of life from terror attacks in Paris on November 13, where 7 ISIL terrorists killed 130 people and wounded over 300—it was the greatest loss of life in France since WWII. In the aftermath, many Americans did exactly what terrorists wanted and gave into fear, turning our backs on thousands of destitute Syrian refugees. On Friday, we learned that the shooting in San Bernardino, California that killed 14 and wounded 21, was also a terror attack by two individuals inspired by ISIS ideology. Our hearts and prayers go out to all the suffering families. Many began to use the opportunity to immediately talk about the need for gun control and that may be part of the problem but it doesn’t explain the rise of violence in our world. Policy cannot defeat the ideology of Islam and the rise of sin, only God’s kingdom, the kingdom of love, righteousness and peace can defeat these things. Right now there is widespread civil unrest in Chicago and across our nation. It’s hard to nail down any one cause. But accepting Jesus’ love is

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the only thing that can stop the violence on both sides. In God's kingdom there is true justice and equality, forgiveness and mercy. Jesus taught us to pray **"Your kingdom come...on earth as it is in heaven"** (Mt 6:10). When we come into a dark room we don't complain about how much darkness there is, we turn on the light. In the same way we need to pray for the light of God's kingdom to come into our dark world.

When the kingdom of God came down into the Ecuadorian jungles to the Waodani tribe, it brought about widespread spiritual and social transformation to a savage, stone age tribe trapped in an endless cycle of murder and revenge. The Waodani said that without the gospel, they would have killed themselves into extinction.³ When the kingdom of God came down to South Africa to Nelson Mandela during his 27 year prison sentence, he realized that to change the world he must change himself. He was transformed from a militant socialist to gentle shepherd for his people who then transformed his nation through love and peace, not only ending apartheid and inequality but bringing true unity to his people. In his autobiography "The Long Walk to Freedom" he said, "If you want to make peace with your enemy, you have to work with your enemy. Then he becomes your partner." He also said, "I saw that virtually all of the achievements of Africans seemed to have come about through the missionary work of the Church."⁴ As the world is going through so much pain, suffering and trials these days, it is a good time to turn to Jesus and his kingdom. By seeing his glory we can overcome the power of evil in our world and be part of his glorious kingdom.

The terror and civil unrest, social problems and enemies of God were far greater in Mary's day and she had many more reasons than us to say no to the will of God. But let's read verse 38 together, **"I am the Lord's servant,' Mary answered. 'May your word to me be fulfilled.' Then the angel left her."** Mary didn't look at the darkness of the world around her or the difficulty of her situation but she looked at God and overcame. Overwhelmed by God's kingdom she gladly surrendered to God's will. This Christmas let's focus on Jesus and the glory of his kingdom until all the darkness of the world may fade away and we also can make a good decision to accept the coming of Jesus like Mary.

³ Christianity Today, "Beyond the Gates of Splendor"; <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2005/januaryweb-only/beyondthegates.html>

⁴ Christianity Today, "Nelson Mandela and His Faith"; <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/nelson.mandela.and.his.faith/34956.htm>