



JESUS' BIRTH PROPHESED

Part 3 of Luke's Gospel: Investigating the Man Who Is God

Pastor Mark Driscoll | Luke 26-38 | October 04, 2009

INTRODUCTION

Well, hello, Mars Hill. We will be continuing our series, "Luke's Gospel: Investigating the Man Who Is God." If you've got a Bible, we're in Luke 1:26-38, feel free to find that. If you didn't bring a Bible that's okay, you can grab one on your way out. I'm going to go ahead and pray and we'll get to work. You're going to meet Mary, the greatest woman, the most significant woman in the history of the world.

Father God, it is my request on our behalf that you would send us the Holy Spirit as you sent the Holy Spirit to Mary; that as she learned of Jesus, we would learn of Jesus; as she responded in faith to the revelation of Jesus, I pray that we would respond in faith to the revelation of Jesus; and so God as we open your Word, we ask for faith like hers and we ask for it in her son Jesus' name, Amen.

THE PROTOEVANGELION (GEN. 3:15)

Mary is the most significant, important woman in the history of the world and her story actually begins with the first woman, Eve. I'll begin in Genesis 3:15 and you'll see the correlation. The first woman that God made was named Eve. God made creation, created Adam and Eve in his image and likeness, bestowed on them particular dignity, value, and worth. God entrusted to them the stewardship and oversight of creation. God allowed them great freedom to enjoy their life, but he forbid them from partaking of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Sadly, our first parents disobeyed, sinned against God, and rather than leaving them in death, headed for hell, God came to them in Genesis 3 and he pursued them as he pursues us and he spoke to them as he speaks to us and in Genesis 3:15 we get what is called by the theologians the protoevangelion, the first gospel. And so God shows up and he preaches against Satan, the serpent, the dragon, who tempted Adam and Eve, and God says to the serpent, Satan, "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." What is the answer to human sin, rebellion, folly, and separation from God? Well, a son will come through the line of this woman, Eve. There will be a battle between this male son and this dragon, serpent, Satan, and that he, the Savior, will be wounded and Satan will be defeated. From that point forward, God's people were eagerly anticipating the birth of a particular son: when will this son be born? The one who will conquer Satan, sin, death, hell, the wrath of God, be our Savior, be our forgiver, be our deliverer.

ISAIAH'S PROPHECY (ISA. 7:14)

History proceeds forward and a prophet of God is raised up, a man named Isaiah. Seven hundred years before the birth of Jesus Christ, he prophesied further revelation about the forthcoming of this male child: "The Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." He says you cannot, should not, will not miss this most significant birth because his mother will be a virgin. And the son she will bear will be named Immanuel, which means what? God is with us.

Every false religion based upon the first lie in Genesis 3 says we can become God, part of the divine, that's not what this teaches at all. It teaches that God humbly became one of us, not that we arrogantly became like him. And so then there was this expectation, anticipation for the son to be born through the virgin and that leads us to Luke chapter 1 beginning in verse 26, and here's where we find ourselves.

This son was born, the one who would crush Satan, the one who would forgive sin, the one who would deliver people. He was born to a virgin, you'll meet her in a moment, named Mary. And he lived without sin and he died in our place for our sins as our substitute, fulfilling all the temple ministry in the old covenant. And his blood was shed in our place for our sins and he rose for salvation. He evidenced his resurrection, he then ascended into heaven and the news of this man Jesus Christ went from a small group to a larger group of Jews all the way out to Gentiles, people who were not Jewish by descent. They started hearing about this King, Lord, God, Savior, Christ Jesus.

LUKE INTERVIEWS MARY

And this news reached the ears of a man named Theophilus. He was likely a wealthy, affluent, political man, a man of means and stature and significance, prominence, and preeminence. And he heard about Jesus and he was deciding whether or not to wholeheartedly give his life to Jesus and be a fully devoted follower as a Christian. And he didn't want to simply devote himself without first investigating the facts. And so he set aside a large sum of money, he gifted it to an affluent and articulate medical doctor named Luke, who also was a very gifted historian. Theophilus, like Luke, was a Gentile. Theophilus likely assumed that since Luke didn't grow up reading the Old Testament and waiting for messiah that he'd be a little more objective

in his investigation. And when it comes to things like, was his mother a virgin and did he rise from death, who would be better to investigate than a medical doctor, which Luke was. So Theophilus funded Luke to go on an investigative journey, to go meet with the eyewitnesses, to look at the oral tradition, to comb through the gospels of Matthew and Mark, to read the other written accounts, and to compile all the information about Jesus and write an orderly, truthful, historical, factual, accurate account of who Jesus was, is, what he said and did. And so Luke took years of his life for this great endeavor, it culminated in him writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the books of Luke and Acts, a prequel and the sequel.

And so when we learn about Mary today, you need to infer that Luke actually sat down with Mary. He would have gone to Nazareth if she was still residing there, sat down with her. By the point Luke interviewed her, she was not the young mother Mary, she was probably the grandmother Mary. She was likely in her 70s. So you think of the older woman Mary, perhaps elderly woman Mary, Luke sitting down for hours or days, we know not how long, interviewing her: "Mary, tell me your story. Is there anyone that can confirm that? Could I talk to your doctor, any friends and family, any other evidence that would help support your claims?" He is doing this investigative work.

The Angel Gabriel

And after doing all of his research, including interviewing Mary, he writes what we read beginning in Luke chapter 1 verse 26: "In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God," and so, we've already met Gabriel earlier in the story. Mary has a relative named Elizabeth who's elderly and barren, married to a priest named Zechariah. The angel Gabriel is sent from God to announce to Zechariah: your barren, elderly wife will give birth to a son, your prayers have been answered, his name will be John, which means "God is gracious," and now it is in the sixth month of her pregnancy, that's what it means by "sixth month." Mary is unaware that Elizabeth is pregnant because we are told that Elizabeth went home greatly blessed of God, pregnant with a mute husband, doubly blessed in God's rich kindness, and she just went home and didn't tell anyone and didn't say anything, she just worshiped God and got ready to be a momma.

And so Mary is unaware that all of this is transpired and so then the angel Gabriel is sent on behalf of God to Mary to also bring good news to her. We do believe in angels at Mars Hill. We believe there are angels that obey and love God, we believe there are angels who do not love and do not obey God, we call them demons, they're in rebellion against God led by Satan himself. Angels are messengers and ministers on behalf of God, they speak and serve on behalf of God. We believe in all of that because that's what the Bible says and we believe the Bible. And so this angel Gabriel is dispatched, and, this is significant, of all the angels in the Bible, only two are named: Gabriel and Michael. If you get an angel, it's a good day, if you get Gabriel, it's a really good day. She gets Gabriel.

NAZARETH

"In the sixth month," chapter 1 verse 26 of Luke, "the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth." Now, Nazareth is nothing. This is amazing, Luke is a phenomenal storyteller. Nazareth is mentioned here in Luke, it's not mentioned in the Old Testament, it's not mentioned in the apocrypha, it's not mentioned in the Talmud. It's not mentioned in the ancient historian Josephus' record because no one important came from or to Nazareth, it was nothing. If you go there today, as I was there recently, you can get a false impression of Nazareth. Today it's a town of a few hundred thousand people, roughly 60 percent Muslim, 30 percent Jewish, 10 percent Christian.

In Jesus' day, it wasn't a town of hundreds of thousands, it was a town of dozens, 50, 100 people max. No more, at the maximum, than a few hundred people. This is a simple rural town. It was between two cities and so it was the kind of town people pass through, they don't venture to. Any of you been on a long road trip, you pull into one of those towns to get gas, a Slurpee or corn dog, use the bathroom, clean the bugs off your windshield, and get out as fast as you can, praising God that that's not where you live? That's Nazareth. Gas station and corn dogs, that's all they have, there's nothing there.

It's a small rural town, farming, there's one well, the archeologists tell us-you saw it in the introductory Scripture reading-where Jesus and Mary would have gone to pull water. They heated their homes with wood. The homes are 500 or 600 square feet, no indoor plumbing, no electricity. They have to bring their buckets to the well and haul their own water. These are very simple people. Even in those 500 to 600 or 700 square foot residences, part of it was occupied by livestock. You're looking at simple, poor, rural people, the majority of which were illiterate, very simple.

And the angel Gabriel shows up, where? Nazareth. This was altogether unexpected. Nathanael says in John 1:46, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" That's the rhetorical question. The assumption is, No, oh, except for God. He comes from Nazareth. Any of you from this town? Any of you from that dump, rural hick town? Your whole goal was to leave?

MARY AND JOSEPH

And Gabriel comes to Nazareth, "to a virgin," verse 27, "betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary." Now, we meet Mary and Joseph. Historically speaking, a lot has been said about them. We're reminded of them every Christmas season, we even have little nativity sets we put in our home, commemorating Mary and Joseph. And there is so much lacquer over the story that it's hardly recognizable. So we'll just sand it down a bit, get to the real story.

Who was Joseph? He was young, probably a teenager. In that day they married at 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 years of age. He was poor, a carpenter. He lived in Nazareth, simple little town. And he was from the kingly line of David. Think of a boy in junior high who can't grow a beard, really wants to, wakes up every day, double checks, hoping, praying. Here's a guy who, he's going to marry Mary, he's going to raise Jesus, and he doesn't have his license yet. He's that guy. He's a broke kid working a simple job hoping to meet the woman of his dreams, he does, he meets Mary, he probably met her when they were young. This is a little town. If there are 50, 100, 200 people, there are not a lot of marrying options, alright.

And Joseph and Mary likely grew up together, knew one another, their families were friends, maybe Joseph had a little crush on her since they were little kids, likely that kind of story. So he's working hard at a carpenter job, trying to save up enough money to marry the girl of his dreams. It's amazing how God brought them together in his providence, and their families approved of this. I was interviewing R.C. Sproul this week. He said that he and his wife of, I think, 50 years now, they were running around their elementary school at the age of 6 and literally bumped into one another, and he was like, "I got to spend the rest of my life with that girl." Mary and Joseph probably had a story like that, they knew each other since they were kids and their families would have known each other. In a town that small, you know everybody. That's Joseph.

BETROTHAL

What about Mary? Well, we learned that she was "betrothed" and we hear that word and it doesn't make a lot of sense to us because we do marriage differently in our culture, sometimes not well. Betrothal was, there was a pledge to be married. Now, a girl could be as young as 12 and be betrothed to be married. She would be betrothed and then the betrothal would last a year. The betrothal would begin with a simple ceremony anticipating the wedding. The bride and the groom would love each other and want to get married and their parents would be heavily invested and involved and they would sign off on this, "This is God's will, it's a good idea, we think that these people should be married," so they get together with a religious leader, a priest, a rabbi, a teacher of some sort or kind of Scripture, Scripture would be read, a prayer would be uttered, they'd have a sip perhaps out of a glass of wine to commemorate. If they were from affluent families they'd have a party but these families didn't have a party.

How do we know? As you continue forward in Luke, when Mary and Joseph go to the temple, they couldn't even afford a sacrifice. Under the Old Testament law they offered a few birds because that was a provision that God enabled in the Old Testament law for those who were exceedingly poor. This is a poor young couple from a poor town from poor families.

They were betrothed, they were excited, she's planning her wedding. Any of you ladies been there, planning your wedding, or you're there right now, planning your wedding? That's what she's thinking about. And at the end of the year of betrothal, they wouldn't live together, they wouldn't sleep together, they wouldn't consummate their covenant, they would then have an official wedding ceremony, they would live together as husband and wife, they would consummate their relationship physically with intimacy, and they were almost there. They were betrothed. Betrothal was so serious that to terminate a betrothal required a divorce, you can read that in the opening pages of Matthew's gospel.

A PICTURE OF MARY

Now let me tell you what you may not know about Mary. She was probably illiterate, we don't know for sure, but very few women were formally educated in that day, very few men for that matter as well. And in a faraway town like that she was likely illiterate, unable to read or write. Her connection to God would be remembering Scripture that she had heard read in synagogue, and singing to God, you'll see that in ensuing weeks, and praying to God.

I'll say a lot today about the Catholics, because I was one. And I don't hate the Catholics, I love the Catholics, but when it comes to Mary, that's sort of their specialty. I was raised as a Catholic boy and I went to Catholic school. We were O'Driscoll, full-blown Irish-Catholic mix. My grandma was in a lay order of nuns pre-Vatican II. Latin Mass Catholic, I went to Catholic school. Catholic with a side of Catholic and Catholic for dessert, that's how I was raised.

And when it comes to Mary, the Catholics have sort of cornered the market on Mary, right. And all the pictures I saw of Mary growing up weren't very accurate. I'll show you one example. They usually looked something like this. Mary was not in her 30s, wearing a crown of gold, nicely embroidered clothing, sitting on a gold throne, holding a baby with perfect hair, wearing a white gown, having yet another gold crown, usually encircled by a halo, it wasn't exactly like that. So our picture of Mary, in large part that has been promulgated by Catholic art, is not accurate.

Think peasant girl, peasant dress, pulling water from a well, out collecting firewood to heat her parents' home. Think of her as being illiterate and having dirty feet and sandals, walking around on dirt roads. If anything, she's sitting on a homemade stool by her fire, not on a gold throne with a crown on her head. Mary wouldn't even know who this person was.

Here's the interesting fact, how old do you think Mary was? You see a picture like that and you're like, "Ah she was in her 30s." Mary was a teenager. Mary was 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 years of age. Girls could be betrothed at 12 and then they'd married by 13. Almost all of the theologians I've read think she was 12, 13, 14 years of age. Let that sink in. For those of you that have been a 12-, 13-year-old girl, does that add a little flavor to the story? For those of you who are 12-, 13-, 14-year-old girls, your parents won't trust you with an iPod, how about God? Could you handle raising him? We don't even give them a license because we don't trust them. Even with a seatbelt and an airbag, we still don't feel that they're capable of handling something of that significance. And God comes to the junior high girl.

Now I have the great blessing, honor, privilege, joy and, and I say that will all sincerity of my heart, I get to see the face of a 12-year-old girl every day, my lovely sweetie pie, my daughter Ashley, whom I love with all my heart. And as I was reading the story of Mary, I thought, "She was like Ashley, she's like my sweetie pie." My daughter's in junior high, she's 12. Mary was about her age when the angel Gabriel came to her and said you're going to give birth to God. For those of you that don't have the great delight that I do, of getting to see the face of a teenage girl, and it is a great honor, I wanted to show you what they look like so you could actually have a more accurate picture of Mary.

[Pause] It feels different now, doesn't it? Oh, all of a sudden Mary is no longer wearing a gold crown, sitting on a gold throne surrounded by angels, wearing a perfectly adorned embroidered linen garment. She's a junior high girl. The angel Gabriel is sent to her as she's planning a wedding.

FAVORED BY GOD

Here's what he has to say to her, "And he came to her and said," verse 28, "'Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!' But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor,'" wonderful word, we'll explore in a moment, "'with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. 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, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end,'" said the angel Gabriel to the junior high girl who was probably illiterate in a really small town.

It says that she was startled, that's not a shock. First, because Gabriel likely appeared as a man, and men would not have customarily approached and engaged in private with a young woman like that. Additionally, we hear that she has found "favor with God." Gabriel shows up and gives this great announcement, "God has favored you, he's elected you, he's chosen you, he's looked over the earth and he's favored you, Mary. Do you remember hearing in the reading in synagogue that a virgin would give birth to a child? That's you, Mary."

Do you know what that word "favor" literally means? It's the word for grace, undeserved favor, unmerited love. This word describes the essence of how we are saved and loved and embraced by God. Mary was saved by grace, she was chosen by God to be a recipient of grace. The same is true for all who become Christians; we're chosen by God to be recipients of grace, God's favor is upon us. So for me, as a Christian, I've received God's grace, he's favored me. If you're a Christian, he's given you grace, he's favored you. We don't deserve it. Our first question is, "God, why would you favor her?" and the answer is, because he's good, there's no reason beyond that. God could have looked down and said, "I'll pick a wealthy young woman," or "I'll pick an affluent, successful, significant woman," or "I'll pick a beautiful town, I'll pick a palace so that the second member of the Trinity, the Son of God could grow up in affluence and wealth and prominence and significance and have the best education and travel," and instead, "Mary, I choose Mary."

That's amazing. This is why we hate religion at Mars Hill. Religion is all about what you do to earn God's favor. Christianity is all about God favoring you by grace, taking nobody from nowhere and giving them love, that's what he does, that's what he does. That's why we can't stop singing of how wonderful this God is. And he tells her, "you're going to give birth to a son, you need to name him Jesus," which means God saves me from my sins. Her son will be her Savior.

MARY ASKS A QUESTION

Now her response is very important. We looked last week at Zechariah, the priest's response, his was not wonderful. "How can this be? I'm an old man, my wife is old, I don't know how this works, I don't know if you know this, old people don't have babies," he just, he talks too much. Mary is going to respond, verse 34, "Mary said to the angel, 'How will this be, since I am a virgin?'" She doesn't have unbelief, she asks questions. Some of you are here, you say, "I believe in Jesus, he's my God, he died for my sins, he rose for my salvation, but I have questions." I've met even with many people today who have asked, "if I believe in Jesus but I have questions, am I still truly a Christian?" The answer is yes. There's a difference between unbelief, which says, I don't believe the Bible is true, I don't believe Jesus, God, I don't believe he died, I don't believe he rose, that's unbelief. Questions are, I believe the Bible is true, I believe Jesus is God, I believe he died, I believe he rose, and I've got a lot of questions on how all that happened. Christianity is certainly big enough for questions. Anselm, the church father, called it faith seeking understanding. I believe it and I'm trying to understand it, that's just Christianity.

Mary doesn't demonstrate unbelief, what she doesn't say is, "I don't know if you know this, you're an angel, you guys don't make babies, we do, virgins tend not to. I know I didn't make it to college, but one thing I do know, we junior high virgins tend not to have a lot of kids." She doesn't argue with God, she doesn't disagree with God, here's her question, "I believe that can happen, how's it going to work?" That's a question. It's a fair question.

GOD OF THE IMPOSSIBLE

"And the angel answered her," verse 35, "'The Holy Spirit will come upon you,'" it's a miracle, "'and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. 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.'" And this is the great line, "'For nothing will be impossible with God.'" Do you believe that?

God can create everything out of nothing. God can take an elderly woman like Elizabeth and open her womb. God can take a virgin like Mary and give her a son. God can take on human flesh and enter into human history as the man Jesus Christ. God can rise from death; God can raise us from death. God can forgive our sins through the cross of Jesus. God can hear and answer prayer. God could take enemies and make them friends. Nothing is impossible, Mars Hill, nothing is impossible with God, it's not. [Applause] This is why we're happy and hopeful, this is why we sing and pray because our God is a God of the impossible. God could take nobodies from nowhere and raise up churches, that's what he does. Nothing is impossible. I saw this morning an adulterous couple that was separated, headed toward divorce, get saved, confess their sins, reconcile, renew their vows last night, get baptized this morning, and are on their second honeymoon right now. Why? Because nothing is impossible with God. It isn't. [Applause] And this is what the angel says, and he totally knows what he's talking about.

A SIMPLE FAITH

Verse 38, "And Mary said," here's her response, legendary, amazing, 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." Here's this simple woman from a simple town with a simple faith, but it's a sincere and simple faith. She knows very little. If she is illiterate, she's not been formally educated. She doesn't have the New Testament canon; she has bits and pieces of Scripture that she treasures in her heart. But here's what she has: faith. She believes what God says.

So many of us, we have far more information than her and far less faith in it. Some of you think, "I need to learn a lot more," maybe you do, but first things first, believe what you've already been taught. Mary knows very little, but she trusts it all. It's amazing, that's why Martin Luther said rightly that perhaps the greatest miracle is faith. She actually trusts God, takes him at his word. And she responds and says, "I'm the Lord's servant," some of your translations will say "handmaiden," that's the lowest servant. She says, "Whatever he wants, that's what I want, I will serve as he calls."

Friends, this is amazing. So many of us have a life charted out for ourselves and we want God to bless it and make it happen. And if God should rewrite our script, we're not very happy about that. Now, she has a script for her life: "I'm going to marry Joseph, it's going to be a great wedding, the dress will actually fit, and then we're going to consummate our marriage and then we're going to make babies and everybody's going to think I'm a good person and nobody is going to call me a tramp or a whore because I will be a virgin." And the angel shows up and says, "New script," and Mary says, "Well, whatever the Lord wants, he gets to write the script for my life. I love him, I trust him, and I'm his servant," says the junior high girl.

And so we read that and we may culturally miss what she is willing to give up. It shows that she does not idolize marriage, she does not idolize her identity, she does not idolize comfort and security. She's willing to open her hands and forego all of that and let it be taken from her. There was a provision in the law that, actually, he could divorce her. It says in Matthew's gospel that he was going to until an angel showed up and told him not to. So what she's saying is, "God, if I don't get to marry Joseph, I'm okay with that." How many of you ladies, putting together your wedding registry and your invitation list, if God showed up and said, "No, you need to let that go, you may never be married and he may divorce you before you even start," you'd say, "I'm totally fine with that, that's not a problem." That was Mary's response.

There was also a provision in the law that, to make an example of her for all the other young women, they could strip her naked, re-dress her in rags, abuse her verbally and physically, tie her up in the town center, and call her a whore and leave her there for a good long while so that all the other women would get the idea that being a fornicator and adulteress is unacceptable. And what she's saying is, "God, I'm okay with that. I'll let go off Joseph and my reputation." And see, for the rest of her life they called her a whore and a slut and a tramp. Jesus, growing up, heard repeatedly, "At least we know who our mother is," another way of stating, "Your mother slept around so much you don't even know who your dad is." Mary knows this. "Don't you know that my mom was a virgin?" "Oh sure, yeah, oh sure, yeah. Tons of pregnant virgins in Nazareth because this is where God always shows up, totally, we believe that."

See, so Mary is willing to let go of her comfort, her security, her identity, her reputation, her marriage, and she doesn't blink, it's instantaneous, "I'm the servant of the Lord, whatever he would have from me." Now, what we see here as well is that Mary's response is something that is emulated by her son. Do you remember the Lord Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, where he is being asked to atone for the sins of the world through the shedding of his blood, what does he say? "Your will be done." There are points in his life where Jesus sounds a lot like his mom.

TOO MUCH OR TOO LITTLE OF MARY

And what happens from this point forward is that history and the theologians and the traditions and the agendas set in, and some make way too much of Mary and some make way too little of Mary. So let me do some theological correction on Mary. Those who tend to make too much of Mary: Roman Catholic and Orthodox Christians. They tend to make way too much of Mary. I was raised, as I said, a Catholic altar boy, Catholic school, sign of the cross, praying to Mary everyday, the whole deal. I don't hate Catholics, I love them, but there are some things they get wrong and they need to correct. This would be one of them.

But they will add to the Scriptures. They will say that not only was Mary able to give birth to Jesus as a virgin, that her mother was a virgin too. There's no evidence for that. Oh, as Jesus was sinless, Mary was sinless too. Not true. You'll see that, in the ensuing chapter, she goes to the temple to offer a sacrifice, which is what sinners do for the forgiveness of sins. She's a sinner. Some would say as well that she was ever-virgin, that she never had any intimacy with Joseph, which isn't true. The Bible says that Jesus had brothers and sisters, and that they didn't have any relations intimately until after Jesus was born and then they had a normal marriage and they had a lot of kids.

As well, the Pope has said in recent years that she was co-mediatrix, co-redemptor, that she is our co-mediator, co-redeemer along with Jesus. It's not true at all. The Bible says there is one mediator between us and God, it's the man, her son, Christ Jesus. Mary doesn't connect us to God, Jesus does. That's why we see Mary in the early church worshiping her son as God in the opening chapters of Acts. Additionally, she's not co-redeemer, it's not that we will stand before God and say, "Thank you for saving me through Jesus and Mary." If you say that, Mary will be there shaking her head saying, "Don't do that, don't do that, don't pray to me, don't worship me, don't venerate me, don't, don't, don't do that."

And then they will actually pray to Mary, and if you grew up Catholic, you learned this; I prayed it, I think almost every day as a little boy: "Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb Jesus, Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death, Amen." I said it so much that though I haven't prayed it in 20 years, I still remember it. I've not prayed it since I was saved by God at the age of 19 in college and I regret ever praying to Mary and I've never prayed to Mary since and I'll never pray to Mary again and that prayer is unacceptable because it prays that Mary is the dispenser not the recipient of grace. So, you don't pray to Mary for grace, you go get grace from where Mary got it; grace comes from God. Mary got grace, she doesn't give grace. She received grace from God and we can receive grace from God as she did. And so they would make way too much of Mary, way too much of Mary, adding to the Scriptures, putting in superstition and folklore.

And then others will overreact to that and they'll make way too little of Mary. Some Protestants don't even really speak of Mary. Some churches hardly ever mention her name other than, "She gave birth to Jesus, now moving right along," just sort of skip her. There was one noteworthy young pastor in this country who wrote a book basically saying that maybe the virgin conception and birth were taken from pagan mythology, maybe Jesus' mother was a lying whore, if so, what's the big loss? Well, if the Bible lies about Jesus and Mary's a lying whore and she raises a boy who says he's God, that does affect the story considerably. And some would go so far to say that she was a lying whore. Something called the Jesus Seminar, which is a group of men educated beyond their humility, would get together and they would vote on what they thought should be in and out of the New Testament, and Robert Funk, one of their members, actually called Jesus "a bastard messiah." That's terrible, that's unbelievable.

MARY IS AN EXAMPLE OF FAITH

So we don't want to make too much of Mary and we don't want to dishonor her, we want to believe what the Scriptures say about her, and here's what they say: she loved the Lord, she was not a perfect woman, but she was a woman of faith. And in the most amazing moment of her humble life, she was willing to let go off her reputation, her marriage, her comfort and security so that she could serve God, so that she could lovingly serve Jesus. Let me say this to you, Mary should not be our object of faith, but she should be an example of faith. Every man and woman should aspire to have faith like Mary's, by the grace of God, to love God, to trust God, and to serve Jesus like she did, to have the same kind of heartfelt devotion, affection for Jesus as she did. She's not the object of our faith, but what a wonderful example of faith.

And I would say this as well, for those of you who are parents, let Mary stand for you as an exhortation that the Western cultural creation of something called "adolescence" need not be accepted. We've created something called adolescence, which is that you get to be immature, irresponsible, and rebellious, and it's assumed that that's a natural life stage. You get to get drunk and party and sleep around and do stupid things and we say, "Oh, well that's junior high/high school/college/grad school/20s/70s," it just sort of continues. And Mary has her own faith and she loves the Lord and she's chosen to be a virgin and to keep herself chaste and pure. And when God comes to her, it's amazing that he could send an angel on his behalf to have a conversation with her and she's fully capable of having that conversation, and the angel lays out the plan of God and she's fully capable of responding to it by faith. For those of you women or men who have slept around and disobeyed God and done stupid things, Jesus does forgive and does give a fresh clean start. But for those of you who are young, you can have holiness and a walk with God and a relationship with God and purity with God. You don't need to be worldly, you could be godly. That's what I want for my daughters and my sons. There's no way in the world at the Driscoll house we're going to say, "Well, it's junior high now. For a certain number of years, feel free to rebel, sin, and destroy your life." No way. Jesus. Walk with him, like Mary did. She walked with God faithfully.

And I'll say this as well. I want Mary to be lifted up as a great role model for the young women in this church. She's a wonderful example. She's not perfect, but she is wonderful, amazing, amazing. In a day when sexual sin is so prevalent, rebellion is so prevalent, when everyone but particularly teenagers are so exceedingly selfish, self-consumed, narcissistic to their core, Mary says, "I'm a servant of the Lord, whatever he wants, that's what I want." Mary is this wonderful example for all of us in general, but for the young women like my lovely daughter in particular. Mary is a great example. She should inspire hope in us. I want all the young women to look at Mary and say, "Yeah, there is a friend and a mentor; I need to read the Scriptures and get to know her a little better and have the Holy Spirit come to empower my life as he did her life so that I could love and serve Jesus like she did."

TEN THINGS WE LEARN ABOUT JESUS

And what we see as well is that the Scripture, even though Jesus isn't born yet, it's all about Jesus and it's all about the coming of Jesus and we learn ten things about Jesus, I'll share them with you in succession. Number one, we learn in this section that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Scripture. Again, Isaiah 7:14, the virgin will give birth to a child. Who is he? Jesus, Immanuel, God with us. All of Scripture, all of history is about Jesus and he comes as the fulfiller of Scripture.

Number two, we learn here that Jesus is fully man. He really is human. He has a mother. He's born. Luke 2 says he grew in favor and stature and wisdom with men and God. I don't mean any disrespect to Jesus, but he was born and Mary held him and breastfed him and changed his diaper and blew his nose and fed him and taught him how to walk and talk and bathed him. And sometimes the picture of Jesus is that he's like a man who was washed in hot water and just came out speaking syllogisms, you know, combing his hair and memorizing Leviticus and walking around, just giving truisms. It's just bizarre, the false picture of Jesus. God became a man, he identified with us from the womb, through the birth, through the seasons of life. He was fully man, he was fully man, he was a man raised by Mary.

Number three, not only was he fully man, he was fully God. When the angel says he is "the Son of God," that's a divine title; that he's the same stuff, same substance, he is the same as God the Father. Whatever God the Father is in eternity and attributes, Jesus is the same. God the Father is working in history through God the Son, and God the Son is the second member of the Trinity becoming the man Jesus Christ, so the Son of God, the same stuff and attributes as the Father, adds to himself humanity, takes upon himself human flesh. Augustine, the church father, said he didn't lose his divinity, Jesus, the second member of the Trinity, he added to it humanity and he became a man. That's what it means. And he comes into human history as the Son of God, accomplishing the work of the Father, the same stuff, equal to the father.

Fulfillment of Scripture, fully man, fully God, number four, fully sovereign. We're told that his father is "the most High God" and that he is "Son of the most High." There are other demons that rule, there are other angels that rule, there are other religions and powers and principalities and spirits. There are demon gods named things like Allah that have real power and authority, but they're not the Most High; they're higher than we are, but they're not the Most High. God alone is the Most High and Jesus is the Son of the Most High God, the same as the Most High God. So we're talking here about his preeminence and his prominence and his power, his sovereign rule.

Number five, he is a king, Mary likely never woke up, looked in the mirror, and said, "I am definitely birthing a king," and he was a king. The angel said that he would be "great." In that day, there was a king named Herod whose nickname was Herod the Great. And the angel says, "He's not great, your son, he is the great one. Herod is a puppet king under Caesar Augustus, the real king, and above that king is the King of kings, he is coming in your womb." It says that he will rule from David's throne. This goes all the way back to the Davidic Covenant, 2 Samuel 7:8-16, in your community group you can look it up and talk about it. The promise was made that David would be a king, but that through his family line would come the King of kings who would rule and reign over all kings and kingdoms forever. So they were waiting, "Where's this king?"

In 1 Samuel 16, David is anointed king; it's some time later in 2 Samuel 5 that he is appointed king. And we're in that time where Jesus has been anointed king and he has not yet returned to earth to establish his eternal kingdom and so he's not yet appointed as king. There was a season between David's anointing and appointing, and we are in that season between Jesus' anointing and appointing. He's seated on a throne, high and exalted at the right hand of the Father, right now, ruling and reigning. Jesus says, "All authority has been given unto me," and that will all be made visible, manifest, and known when the King comes and establishes his throne in the new creation and his kingdom goes forever.

Now, how this works is that Jesus is from the family line of David, possibly through his mother Mary's line, there is debate, certainly through Joseph's line. We are told clearly in this text that Joseph was from the family line of David, so when he adopted Jesus, he adopted Jesus into the family line of David in fulfillment of the prophecy of 2 Samuel 7:8-16.

Number six, we learn that Jesus is eternal. The angel says that "He will rule and reign forever, he'll have a kingdom with no end." Jesus is eternal, he lived before his birth, he lives after his resurrection and ascension, he is eternally existing without beginning or end, he will "reign forever," his kingdom has no end.

Number seven, we hear from the angel that Jesus is powerful because "nothing is impossible with God." There is nothing that is impossible for God. God can do anything.

Number eight, that he would be sinless. The angel declares that Jesus would be "holy"; that as Adam had no earthly father and was to be the head of all humanity, when he sinned, we all inherited his corruption and sin nature. Here comes Jesus, the second or last Adam. He likewise has no earthly father and where Adam failed, Jesus succeeded and where we were condemned in Adam, we were redeemed in Jesus because he is holy, he is sinless, and when he died, he died not for his sins, he had none, but for our sins so that we might be forgiven. He is in fact sinless.

Number nine, he is our Savior. His name literally means, "he saves us from our sins." We're all sinners by nature, choice, thought, word, deed, omission, commission. None of us can stand before God and say, I've lived a perfect life. We're all guilty and Jesus is the one who is our Savior. He forgives us, he embraces us, he loves us, that's what he does.

And number ten, lastly, Jesus is humble. Do you know that this announcement wasn't made to the multitudes, just one woman? It wasn't made in a big town; it was made in Nazareth. It wasn't made to a rich woman; it was made to a poor woman. Jesus didn't grow up in a large house; he grew up in a small house. He didn't have access to the best education; he was in a small town with mainly illiterate people. Jesus didn't grow up wearing the finest clothes; he dressed simply. He father wasn't a king and didn't have a significant job; his daddy was a carpenter and he helped his dad to help put food on the table for his family. Jesus didn't get to travel the world and have amazing experiences. He stayed pretty close to his hometown of Nazareth. Jesus was humble. Jesus came to Mary. Don't you love that?

See, religion tells us, do your best, try harder, achieve more so that God will love you, and the story of Mary is, God looks down, has favor, gives grace to those who don't deserve it, he loves them, he embraces them, he gives meaning, value, purpose to their life, he changes them because he's altogether good. That's why we love Jesus so much more than religion. Religion is only for the good people, that's what they think. Those who are religious and think they're good, they're the worst of all. Jesus is for everyone else, the sinners, the broken, the rebels, the failures, the hard hearted, the stiff necked, the nobodies from nowhere, the illiterate, the peasants, the poor, the outcasts, the marginalized, the weak, grace, it's all it takes. And if he is humble enough to be with Mary, isn't it wonderful that he is to this day humble enough to come and be with us. You know that Jesus wants to be with you, not because you are amazing, but because he is. He is the God of grace.

AN EXAMPLE FOR MEN

Some of you will feel like damaged goods, broken, unworthy. I'm sure Mary experienced some of that, and her answer was, "God, if you want to hang out with me, I'd love to hang out with you," and "God, if you want to love me, I'd be happy to love you," and "God, if you want to serve me, I'd be happy to serve you," the humility of Jesus.

I want each of you men hearing this story to really think about Joseph. He had to deal with the fact that his son was called a bastard, his wife was called a whore, and that he was mocked by everyone in town for the rest of his life. And what he said was, I'm okay with that. And what he was willing to do was to marry a single mother and adopt her child. Let me say this men, for those of you who are single, do not overlook, do not neglect the potential of a wonderful life with a single mother. One of the reasons Christians have always cared for single mothers is because our God had a single mother and one of the reasons Christians have always adopted children is because our God was adopted. It's amazing.

Some of you men – now you have to be the best men, if you want to marry a single mother. You don't get to work on the marriage and then add children. You need to start, ready to take responsibility. And some of you men have your whole life planned out, maybe God would be coming to you through the Holy Spirit right now and saying, "New script for you, you've overlooked single mothers. There are women that love me and I've done a good work in their life and their heart, you should consider marrying one and adopting their children or child so that they would have a Christian father

like Jesus enjoyed.” Don’t, please don’t overlook the single mothers. I’m sure Mary was wondering, “Am I damaged goods? My reputation is destroyed, I do love the Lord, but poor Joseph, he’s going to have to deal with this shame for the rest of his life,” and you know what, she was a blessing and a gift and he was a man who was graced of God to have a woman like that. I’ve met a string of single mothers where they come into me with tears in their eyes saying, thank you for the hope. Let’s give them more than that, let’s give them husbands and let’s give them fathers for their children, let’s do that Mars Hill. And I want you men to really prayerfully, carefully consider: is that God’s calling on your life to be a man like Joseph, about redemption?

AN EXAMPLE FOR WOMEN

And ladies, I want you to learn from the example of Mary. She said, “I am willing to be the Lord’s servant,” and what was her ministry? Wife, mother. We live in this foolish day that tells young women: flirt, date, sleep around, cohabitate, fornicate, use birth control, have an abortion because the last thing you want is to get saddled with a child; if you want to really change the world, kids will get in the way. Mary said, “Actually, I’ll be a mom. I’ll raise this to a boy, his name will be Jesus, and that’s my gift to the world.” She also raised another boy named Jude, he wrote a book of the Bible. She raised another boy named James, he too wrote a book of the Bible and pastored the early church in Jerusalem. Do you think at the end of her life she stood back and said, “Man, I really wish I would have achieved something. You know, my one son atoned for the sins of the world, the other one pastored the church in Jerusalem that is the epicenter for world missions, and two books of the Bible are written by my sons, and oh, by the way, I was numbered among the early church and I got to see the Holy Spirit fall on Pentecost and 3,000 added later and Luke interviewed me and I made it into a few books myself”? I don’t think she had any regrets being a worshiper of God and a wife and a mother.

And some of you will hear that, and because Satan whispers in your ear, you’ll hear, “Ah, so Mark doesn’t love women and he thinks that women should be uneducated and they should all get pregnant,” and that’s, you know what, that’s not what I’m saying at all. I love my daughter with all my heart, she’s very smart, a great student, I’ve got a college fund for her, I anticipate her to do exceedingly well in school as she always has, but you know what, I don’t know what the Lord’s call on her life is and if she comes to me and says, “Daddy, my calling is to be a wife and mother,” what I won’t say is, “Ah, I’m so sorry to hear that, I wanted great things for you.” I would say, “Praise God, like Mary, be the Lord’s servant and don’t despise his calling on your life, let him write the script.”

RESPONSE AND CLOSING PRAYER

I’ll close with this. Here’s how we all get to enjoy what Mary enjoyed to some degree. It’s a really exciting part. God speaks to and reveals himself to Mary, as he does to us, and he tells her about Jesus, as he tells us about Jesus. And he comes to her to birth new life in her, as he comes to us to birth new life in us. And it’s not that we have birth but we have what Jesus calls “new birth,” being born again. Just as the Holy Spirit did a miracle in Mary, the Holy Spirit comes to do a miracle in us. Just as Mary was incapable of having life, we are dead in our trespasses and sins, we’re incapable of having life, and the Holy Spirit imparts the very life of God to us miraculously, we are born again spiritually, we belong to God, our sins are forgiven, our new life begins, and God births us through her son, Jesus Christ. And she responded with faith, so we respond with faith, trusting in God. And she responded by saying, “My life belongs to God, let me be his servant.”

Mars Hill, I want that for all of us today. Have you learned about Jesus, has the Holy Spirit come to you, is he birthing new spiritual life in you, would you respond in faith, trusting Jesus, would you receive this gift of grace, the favor that God gives, and would you say, like Mary, “I’m your servant. It’s not my life, it’s yours. Whatever you want, that’s what I want. Sick, healthy, rich, poor, single, married, barren, fertile, failure, or success, I’m your servant, whatever you want,” that’s what I want for you. But like Mary, you have to respond, and I’ll give you an opportunity to do that right now.

Father God, I do pray for all who would hear this message. God, I pray that Mary wouldn’t be our object of faith that she would be an example of faith. God, what an amazing young woman. I pray for my daughters and the other young women in this church, that they would see a great encouragement in Mary. I pray, Lord God, for the men, that they would learn something from Joseph, that they would treat women with dignity and respect and propriety, that, Lord God, they would, male and female, save themselves for marriage, that, Lord God, some of the men in this room would marry single mothers and adopt their children, that would be a wonderful thing God, we’ve seen it many times, we want to see it some more please. I pray for those women who today, Lord God, have reputations like Mary’s, bad things have been said about them and others have done atrocious things to them and may they not be bitter and angry, may they be your servants. God, I pray, I pray for us as a people, that we would look to this humble, simple young couple, we would celebrate your favor and grace that we would enjoy it ourselves, that we would enjoy responding in faith as Mary did and we would be willing to live as your servants, doing what she did, loving your son, in whose name we pray, Amen.

[End of Audio]

Note: This sermon transcript has been edited for readability.