

Luke

The Gospel for Everyone

Study 12 | Luke 1:26-38

“The Annunciation”

News and Needs

Upcoming Events:

- On Friday, December 11th, there is a Newcomers' Dessert at 7:30. Location TBD. Please let those new to your groups know and encourage them to attend.
- Our end-of-semester Thank You and Christmas Party for community group leaders and hosts will be on Thursday, December 17th from 7:30-9:30. Location TBD. Let your hosts know.

Opportunities to Serve:

- Evening Service Help - PLEASE! We are completely dependent on volunteers to help with the few easy duties to make the PM service a warm and hospitable invitation to worship together and feast at the Lord's Table. Please appeal to your group to take a Sunday to join us at the PM service and lend a hand with greeting, offering, and/or communion setup/cleanup. Contact Brian Steadman to help out

For those groups that didn't meet last week during the Thanksgiving holiday (most of you?), please introduce Advent to your group in discussion. Some of the questions we began with last week might be of use to you in setting the stage before you move into the text. They were: “*Advent is a season in which we prepare for the second coming of Jesus by anticipating the celebration of his first coming. What future hopes do you find yourself waiting for day after day, year after year? What struggles do you have with waiting for good things to come in the future?*” And some further introduction to Advent before this week's discussion questions on the passage:

Advent (“coming”) is the season in which we prepare for Christmas. More specifically, it is the season in the church year in which we prepare for Jesus to come. This preparation, this praying for Jesus to come, is done with an eye to the past, present, and future. *The Past*- Obviously, Christmas is a season in which we celebrate and commemorate the first coming of Jesus into our Earth as an infant. So in Advent we prepare to remember and celebrate Jesus' coming to us in the past. *The Present*- Less obviously, Advent is a time in which the people of God remember God's faithfulness to come in the past in order to prepare for him to come to us now in the present! Advent is not chiefly a time in which we prepare to remember Christmas past; it is just as importantly a time in which we beg and trust God to bring salvation to us now, to continually come to us and take up residence in our hearts, homes, churches, and world. *The Future*- Lastly, Advent is a season in which we prepare for Jesus to come to this world in the fullness of his everlasting kingdom. It is a time in which we beg him to return and make things right at the end of time; in which we prepare for his second coming.

The mood of Advent is that of longing, of expectation, and of waiting. Advent is a time when we yearn for Jesus to come back, to completely make all things new as the returning King. The cry of Advent is the cry of those who have experienced the tyranny of injustice in a world under the curse of sin, and yet, have hope of deliverance from a God who hears the cries of the oppressed and who brings them deliverance.

Of course, as the Old Testament prophets remind us, there is the problem of longing for vindication from an evil world when we are contributors to that evil. And so, as a season of preparation, Advent is a time to repent and believe. A time to turn away from the false hopes and desires that capture our hearts

and define our lives, twisting us so much that we end up using and oppressing others. A time to turn toward Jesus, who frees us from slavery to our idols in order that we may serve one another in hope and love as we await his return.

1. What's the historical context of Luke 1:26-38? What promises are made to Mary, and to God's people through her? How is Jesus and his work described in this passage? How does Mary respond?

The gospel of Luke is the longest book in the New Testament and was written by Luke, who was a very well educated Gentile Christian. Luke is also responsible for the book of Acts (which is the second half of his gospel, together forming one major work). He was not himself an eyewitness to Jesus, but was a companion of Paul and other early Christian leaders, and he used his historical training to compile an orderly account from many early eyewitnesses to Jesus' life and ministry. Luke was composed most directly for other Gentile Christians in the nascent Christian church. In 1:3 Luke addresses his book to the "most excellent Theophilus," who is either a real patron or a literary address to all "*God-Lovers*". This gospel was written and circulated no later than the 60's A.D.

Here the angel tells Mary that she will conceive and bear a son. In verses 32ff we see that this son will also be the Son of the Most High King, God himself, "and he will receive the throne of his father David, and will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

Mary first asks how on earth such a miraculous promise would come to pass! Then she submits and agrees to allow the Lord's will to be done in her life no matter the costs to herself. She responds in verse 38, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word."

2. Why is it significant that Mary is a virgin? How does this fit into biblical precedent? What are we supposed to learn from this about the nature of God's work and the person of Jesus?

First of all, Mary is a virgin and not barren, per se. Nevertheless, her situation sets her firmly in a deep biblical motif of God giving life to the wombs of women who could not have such life within them apart from God's mighty power and faithfulness. There are at least seven of such women in the Bible: Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, Samson's mother, Hannah, Michal, and Elizabeth of Luke 1. This motif again and again builds on Genesis 3:15 wherein God says that *HE ALONE* will send a promised "seed" of the Woman who will crush the head of the snake. So throughout the Scriptures barrenness (and intermarriage, and polygamy, and virginity) is a challenge to this promise coming true. Every

time God miraculously gave a pregnancy he was showing that the kingdom would come by his strength and his generative power alone. Man and woman could not usher it in by their own strength. And this would be especially true of Jesus. He was born not only to a barren woman who at least theoretically might conceive by natural processes one day. No, he was born to a virgin: true miracle, by the generative power of the one true God alone. It shows that though he is fully human, he is more than that. He is the Son of God himself: “the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father.” Furthermore, the *ex nihilo* generation of a baby in a virgin’s womb sets this up as a New Creation. Jesus is God’s new world, his new Adam, and he will make from Jesus a new bride who will be flesh of his flesh. Suffice it to say that there’s a lot going on here biblically and theologically, and that it was of the utmost importance in that regard that God chose a virgin to be the mother of Jesus the Messiah.

3. What is prophesied here of Jesus that you have a hard time believing impacts you today as a part of God’s people? What gives you comfort, and how? How can you learn to respond more faithfully to God’s promises by considering the response of Mary?

How is it hard, specifically and practically, to believe that Jesus is reigning on his throne even now as God’s triumphant and sovereign King over everything that happens here on earth? How do these promises about Jesus, given to God’s people, comfort and encourage you when you’re discouraged? Consider Mary’s selfless, obedient, and joyful response. What can you learn from her when God’s promises seem to require great faith and sacrifice in your own life? Also think about the patience of Mary. Israel as a nation--and every faithful individual Israelite--was waiting patiently (for hundreds of years as a people) for the promise of the Messiah to come true. When the time comes Mary receives the “delivery of the promised goods” expectantly, without disbelief or cynicism; she is ready to react to the message, and immediately anticipates the full and final deliverance on God’s promises. She is faithful because she trust God to be faithful, even after very much waiting. How long have you waited for God’s promises to come true? Do you give up easily? Grow cynical? Or do you prepare? And wait? And expect? And beg God to make good on his promises even after much time goes by?