

# Behold! A Virgin Will Be With Child

## Luke 1:26-38

### Introduction

Today we begin a new series of sermons, chosen especially for this Advent season. The series is titled:

### **“Behold!”**

Throughout the series our emphasis will be on telling the story of Jesus. It is a story that needs to be told over and over again, because it is a story that changed the course of history. More importantly, it is the only story that can change a life.

- Never before, never since, and never again has the God of any religion entered into the human story for the purpose of saving people through His life, death and resurrection.
- This story changes everything! It changes you. It changes me. It has the power to change the heart of ...
  - That grumpy old neighbor who complains about your leaves blowing into his yard.
  - That wayward son or daughter whose lives are far from consistent with the kind of faith they ought to have.
  - A nation whose very soul is at stake.
- It has the power to change you, and it has the power to change me.

It is the story of God's grace, a story of great news, as the angels proclaimed:

*Behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. (Luke 2:10-11)*

That word “Behold” is word closely associated with the Christmas story. It evokes images of angels and God's message of salvation, doesn't it?

There are many words for “behold” in the Scriptures, none of which are easily translated into English. However, the essence of their meaning can be distilled into this simple definition. This is what I want you to think when you hear “Behold” this season:

*Stop what you are doing! Pay attention! Something important is happening right now. You don't want to miss it.*

Quietly, simply something is happening.

The story of Jesus isn't told with great fanfare. The trumpets don't blast! The network news cameras don't blind you with their lights. You can't miss announcements with that kind of noise and attention.

But the story of Jesus doesn't happen that way. It happens quietly and simply. Look how it begins. The setting is a quiet little village called Nazareth. On a normal day, quietly an angel appears to a young woman named Mary. No one else is around.

In fact, so quietly does this angelic appearance occur that for the next 30 years only Mary, her fiancé Joseph, and her cousin Elizabeth will know about it.

"Greetings!" the angel begins. We then learn that this is no ordinary angel. This angel is Lutheran, for he says "The Lord is with you!"

In that simple, quiet setting, in a simple, quiet way, that angel proclaimed the single most important message ever delivered through the entire course of his history. Are you ready? Listen carefully ...

*Behold! A virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel. (Isaiah 7:14, NASB)*

**Stop what you are doing! Pay attention! Something important is happening right now. You don't want to miss it!**

Yes, in that simple, quiet setting, in that simple, quiet way, Gabriel announced:

### **#1: THE PROMISE WAS BEING FULFILLED**

Isaiah wasn't the first to make this promise, although his are the words we most closely associate with this announcement:

*Behold! A virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel. (Isaiah 7:14, NASB)*

But the promise of a Messiah was first reported in the earliest chapters of Genesis. There in 3:15, following the infamous eating of the apple, God announces to the serpent that a Messiah was coming, someone who would eventually trounce the serpent under his heel.

That was then. Today in this simple, quiet setting, in this simple quiet way, Gabriel informed Mary that she will become the vessel through which this promise is fulfilled. Despite the biological impossibility – she was, after all, a virgin – she would become pregnant through the work of the Holy Spirit and give birth to the Messiah.

*The Holy Spirit will come on 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. (Luke 1:35)*

Each year I wonder what new truth I will see in this very familiar story. And each year I am amazed at what I have missed all of these years. What strikes me most in this story is that Mary knows the truth, but she can't tell anyone! Well, she could ... but no one

would believe her! She will know that the promised Messiah is here decades before anyone else would know it!

- She will know it every time that baby kicks.
- She will know it with every backache and touch of morning sickness.
- As she watches her stomach grow and her feet slowly disappear from sight, she will know that the baby who makes that happen is the one God had promised to his people.

She is not “just pregnant.” She is pregnant with the much longed-for fulfillment of God’s promise!

Yes, in that simple, quiet setting, in that simple, quiet way, Gabriel also emphasized the importance of that promise:

## **#2: THE PROMISE WOULD BE THE SAVIOR OF THIS WORLD**

Verse 31:

*You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. (Luke 1:31)*

When Isaiah prophesied about this baby, the name he used was:

*Immanuel. God with us.*

Mary is told to name her baby:

*Jesus. The Lord is my Savior.*

We actually learn the meaning of that name more from Gabriel’s announcement to Mary’s fiancé, Joseph (Matthew 1). But Mary would know the meaning of that name. If ever a name was packed with significance, it is the name *Jesus*.

- The name is derived from the name *Yahweh*, the very name of God Himself. So it was a name that immediately would point people to God.
- His name would remind every Jew that God had promised to rescue His people.

It is a name for you and me that bears much significance as we – some 2000 years later – live our lives.

- It is the name into which we are baptized.
- It is the name by which healing and miracles occur.
- It is the name that gives us the authority to ask God anything in prayer.

But most importantly, it is through this name all people, past, present and future, those who will be saved must be saved:

*For there is no other name under heaven that has been given among mankind by which we must be saved. (Acts 4:12)*

One day everyone will understand the significance of this name, for one day:

*At the name of Jesus every knee will bow ... and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord... (Philippians 2:9)*

He is Jesus. My salvation. Mary understood that in a way that no mother has ever understood the significance of her baby's name.

In that simple, quiet setting, in that simple, quiet way, Mary listened to what the angel told her. She listened as he told her that:

- The promise for which she and centuries of Jews had been waiting would be fulfilled in her womb
- The promise growing inside her would be the way in which all people's sins could be finally and fully forgiven

There was only one thing left to do. And she did it.

## **#2: THE PROMISE MUST BE BELIEVED**

Verses 37-38:

*"For no word from God will ever fail. I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." (Luke 1:37-38)*

One writer expressed Mary's response like this:

*She experienced the grace of God. She believed the Word of God. Thus she was able to fulfill the will of God.*

She didn't understand how this would happen. She had no clue what this would mean for her in the future. She did not have all the answers. But still she believed, and confessed:

*For no word from God will ever fail. (Luke 1:37)*

Other translations render it like this:

*For with God nothing shall be impossible. (Luke 1:37, KJV)*

## **APPLICATION**

It is in Mary's simple profession that we find the challenge for our own faith this morning. Do you believe:

- In Jesus, God has fulfilled a centuries old promise to send the Messiah?
- In Jesus, all people can experience the forgiveness of sins?

I readily admit I don't understand it all. But God doesn't ask me to understand. He asks me to believe.

- There is much about God that I don't understand.
- But I see enough to know there is something beyond my level of understanding. And I'm OK with that.

I believe that with God nothing is impossible. And because I believe that, I am able to believe that God can forgive me for everything I've ever done.

Amen.