



December 1, 2024 Sermon Study Guide Lead Pastor Brian Bales – Carols of Advent: *Hope*

Birth of Jesus Foretold

²⁶ In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary.²⁸ And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" ²⁹ But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰ And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹ And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. ³² 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,³³ and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."³⁴ And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"³⁵ And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. ³⁶ 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. ³⁷ For nothing will be impossible with God." Luke 1: 26-37(ESV)

A Life Application Study Guide

James 1:22-25 tells us to put into practice what we are discovering in God's word.

DISCUSSION POINTS

1. What is one of your favorite Christmas Carols and why?

As we begin this new series we think of these lyrics:

O Come O come Emmanuel

O come, Thou Dayspring, from on high, and cheer us by Thy drawing nigh.

Disperse the gloomy clouds of night, and death's dark shadows put to flight.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

2. The news of a pregnancy and the promise of a baby is often wonderful news. Unless it is unplanned and unexpected and then a variety of emotions and reactions may follow. In Mary's story there so many layers that we should consider each one and how we might respond if we could step into her world.
 - Angels are often mis-portrayed in our contemporary western culture. How have you thought of angels when you read scripture, and the passage depicts an angel with a name or angels arriving in multitudes? How would you describe an angel?

 - An angel with a name was significant and that angel had a job to carry out. The Angel Gabriel was a messenger sent by God, but he was also a visually imposing messenger who was not human. So, what do you imagine he looked like to Mary?

3. Look back at a time when you received a message that was both unexpected and so far out of the ordinary that you were (in that moment), disoriented. The message didn't fit into your reality.
 - Consider how you processed what you heard, maybe what you saw. What was your response and how long did it take you to fully grasp what you had heard and make it fit into your reality?

- What do you imagine was going on in Mary's heart and mind as the Angel Gabriel spoke to her?

Consider the results from a study on Auditory Reaction Time versus Visual Reaction Time. *One study shows that the ART is faster than the VRT. The results obtained documented that the mean RT to detect visual stimuli is approximately 180–200 ms, whereas for sound it is around 140–160 ms. Research shows that an auditory stimulus takes only 8–10 ms. to reach the brain, but a visual stimulus takes 20-40 ms.*

- So, Mary was processing the visual impact of Gabriel with her in that 3D time and space and processing his message spoken to her that did not align with her reality.
- How are you thinking about God right now?

4. Mary had been set apart by God because she was living according to the rules of her Jewish upbringing. She was a virgin, but the reward for that was an unplanned pregnancy out of wedlock.
 - What do find in the Luke passage that is most profound about Mary's circumstances?

- Where do you see *HOPE* in Luke 1:26-37? How is reading between the lines helpful as you are searching for *HOPE* in that passage?

- Brian asks us to consider the verses below as we consider that Jesus (Emmanuel) is the *HOPE* of the world.

Therefore, the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel. – Is. 7:14

Let us hold tightly without wavering to the hope we affirm, for God can be trusted to keep his promise. Hebrews 10:23 (NLT)

- Today, you may be searching for hope unsuccessfully but go back and read verse 37. ³⁷ *For nothing will be impossible with God.* Highlight in the passage the events that seemed impossible by human standards but became a reality when God became a part of the equation. How are you thinking about God now?

WALKING IT OUT

- Where will you look this week for a *Hope* called *Emmanuel*?

- How will you offer *Hope* this week to someone struggling to find hope in a dark world?