

Hope and The Call of Mary

Luke 1:26-38

Key Verse 1:33

What are your hopes and dreams? What do they reveal about the way you live your life? If you're a student, you may hope for the semester to end and for good grades. If you're a working professional, you might hope for work-life balance, career success, the respect of your colleagues, or perhaps to make a meaningful impact in your field. If you're a parent, you hope for your children to have a bright future. No matter where we are in life, we all have hopes—whether it's for personal growth, health, peace, fulfillment, or security. These hopes often shape the way we live and how we spend our time.

If we hope for success, we work hard to achieve it—studying late into the night for good grades or putting in extra hours at work to secure promotions and opportunities. Parents pour themselves into raising children, hoping for the best for them. Our actions often reflect our deepest hopes and desires.

But the truth is, all of these hopes, while important, are temporary. True and lasting hope can only be found in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. When we shift our ultimate hope to Him, repenting of our old hopes and dreams, we begin to live with a new identity—one defined by our status as Christ-bearers and citizens of an eternal kingdom that will never fade away.

I pray that through today's message, we are reminded to place our hope in this everlasting kingdom—one that will never spoil, fade, or perish. All earthly things come to an end, but the kingdom of God is eternal. Let us also respond to God's call for each of us. We are highly favored and acceptable to Him. Let us be His servants, living according to His word, and trusting in the hope He has set before us.

Part 1 - Old Hopes

The passage today begins with the angel Gabriel being sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth (v. 26). This is significant for two reasons. First, during this time, there was no new prophet or revelation from God in 400 years, a period referred to as the "Silent Period." This silence is broken when the angel Gabriel appears, first to Zechariah at the beginning of Luke 1, announcing the birth of John the Baptist, and then, six months later, to Mary. Secondly, Mary is from the small town of Nazareth in Galilee, a rural area with an estimated population of no more than 400 people. Nazareth was located about 60 miles from Jerusalem. In the New Testament, this town is described as very humble and unnotable, for example in John 1:46, when Nathaniel says "Nazareth! Can

anything good come out of there?” This place was considered an unlikely origin for the angel to appear and deliver a great message of hope! However, God goes to people and places that are ordinary to reveal His glory, and the angel appearing to Mary after a silent period of 400 years is groundbreaking.

Mary was a young girl, who as it says in verse 27, was betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. Mary was betrothed meaning that she was engaged to be married. In biblical times this was a serious commitment and more binding than modern day engagements. Breaking a betrothal would require a divorce. During the time of betrothal, the couple was promised to each other for marriage but had not yet come together as husband and wife. During this period, the couple would live apart until the formal wedding day. Mary was likely busy with preparations for her upcoming wedding, which was the biggest event of her life up until this point. She was also preparing for her future home with Joseph. Unlike today, where you can easily order things on Amazon, Mary likely had to make arrangements to gather necessities for the home or even create things herself. She was eagerly anticipating a new life with her husband and the possibility of starting a family, focusing on the joy and hope of her future marriage. Let's be real ladies, if you were engaged, you would be looking forward to your wedding day too! But, then, an interruption came- one that would change everything.

Part 2 - Favor

Let's read verse 28 “And he came to her and said “Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!” After 400 years of silence, an angel coming to Mary, a young girl from a rural town, is surprising. Mary was shocked herself. In verse 29, it says she “was greatly troubled at the saying and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be” The angel reassures her, saying, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God (v 30). Notice that the word favor is repeated. But what does this mean? The word “favor” here means to be graced, made acceptable, to honor with blessings. The angel is telling Mary that she has found favor with God, meaning she is considered acceptable, pleasing, and adequate in His sight. She has been given God's grace, favor, and blessing. It's important to note that being favored here doesn't mean Mary did anything to earn God's favor—it was a gift, given freely by God. God's grace is one-sided; He is the one who makes us adequate and equips us to carry out His mission and calling. This applies not only to Mary but to all of us as Christians as well. As Christians, are we highly favored? Are we given grace? Is God with us? Yes, yes and yes!

God wanted Mary to know that she was highly favored, not to flatter her, but to prepare her for the calling He was about to give her. He wanted to assure her of her true identity. Mary was not just a young girl from a small town about to be

married—she was someone highly favored by God. God sought to shower her with grace and give her a greater sense of hope. By reassuring her that she was secure in Him, graced, blessed, and loved, God was helping her to confidently embrace the calling He was placing on her life.

God was even preparing her before giving her this great calling. While God doesn't need us to carry out His will, He chooses to include us. He included Mary—someone who seemed ordinary, insignificant, and unlikely. And that's who our God is. When we feel ordinary or unlikely, God comes to us and reveals that we are highly favored by Him. He loves us and wants to shower us with grace so we can come to know our true identity in Him.

Let's read verse 31 “ And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.” This is when the call of Mary came. She would be the mother of Jesus! She is so blessed, there would be a greater meaning to her life! She would have died as an ordinary woman but now she would be the mother of the savior of the world! What a mission and calling! God chose her to be part of His plan, she was not some spectacular spiritual woman but it was because of God's grace upon her that she was chosen. This completely changed her life. The hope of marriage, once her greatest expectation, was now replaced with the hope of bringing the Messiah into the world! Of course, Mary was likely concerned with how Joseph and the people in her town would react, but these worries diminished in comparison to the immense hope she now carried in her heart. Because God had revealed both who He was and who Mary was to Him, she was likely at peace, trusting that the One who gave her this great mission would be with her every step of the way. She knew He would not abandon her and that He would fulfill His promises to the end.

Part 3 - God's Hope for Mankind

Let's read verse 31-32 “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 him the throne of his father David.”

The name Jesus means Jehovah is Salvation, which means God saves. The Israelites at the time, thought the Messiah who was to come would save them from their political troubles, as we can all probably relate to now. They were under Roman rule at that time. The Romans imposed heavy taxes and strict governance among the Jewish people, which often led to economic hardship and many of the taxes collected were considered exploitative. However, we do not just need redemption from political rule like the Isrealites. In fact, what we really

need is the redemption of our sins. Jesus came because he wanted to free us from the grip of sin and Satan. That is desperately what we need and He is the only one capable of saving us from sin that leads to death. All of us have fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23) and sin creates a separation between humanity and God but because of Jesus who was sinless, he could offer himself as the perfect, unblemished sacrifice to atone for the sins of the world. Jesus who was to come through Mary would be the one that would save the Israelites and us from sin and this gives us a greater hope than staying in the defeat of our sin or constantly striving to have a relationship with God.

Second, He will be great which means that he will be the greatest conqueror, deliverer, and savior of all time. There are political reigns in the world that will come and go but Jesus will be the highest and mightiest of all. We may think that there are some leaders who are great, but in reality they are just adequate compared to the one who is truly great.

Third, he will be called Son of the Most High. Jesus would come to be among his people. At the time the Jewish people knew that the Most High meant God. This almighty God, Creator God, would take on flesh to dwell with his people and redeem them.

Fourth, the angel declares that the Messiah will reign on the throne of His father David, showing that God is faithful to His promises. God had promised David that He would send a Shepherd King to save His people, and now that promise is being fulfilled. God would send a king to save us from our sins, but not just any king—a Shepherd King.

When we think of kings, we often picture powerful, wealthy, authoritative figures. However, Jesus redefines what a true king is. A true king reigns with justice and righteousness, leading, caring for, and even laying down his life for his people. What earthly king would do that? Jesus, the Shepherd King, is God Almighty, who seeks the lost, gently calls us to Himself, and sacrifices His life so that we might have life to the full.

Finally, the greatest hope we can have is that Jesus' Kingdom will never end. The hopes of this world are temporary and often fade. We may strive for them, but they are not guaranteed to be fulfilled. There is no lasting security in them. But Jesus promises a Kingdom that will last forever, and we can trust in this promise because of what He has already done.

Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament promises, including the one from Genesis 3:15: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." Jesus, born of Mary, is

the fulfillment of this promise. God spoke it, and it came true. He is a promise keeper, fulfilling His word in His perfect timing. Similarly, in Ezekiel 34:23, God promised to send the Messiah through the line of David, and Jesus is that promised King.

1 Peter 1:3-4 describes the Kingdom of God: "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy, he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you." Jesus has given us a hope that is secure and everlasting, grounded in His mercy. This hope can never be taken away; it is kept in heaven for us. We can have full confidence that we will inherit this eternal Kingdom. It's far better to place our hope in something that is certain and unshakable, something that brings true meaning and life, than in things that will fade away and be lost when we pass. We need an eternal hope because we have an eternal soul

Part 4 - Response

Now that Mary has received this incredible news from the angel and has been given a new hope—the honor of being chosen to bring the Messiah into the world, not because of her own doing, but because of God's grace and blessing—she now has a hope in the everlasting Kingdom of God. With this new hope, she is ready to respond to God's call. Let's look at her response in verse 34: "And Mary said to the angel, 'How will this be, since I am a virgin?'" At this point, she is simply asking a genuine question, curious about how this could happen biologically, since she has not yet been with a man.

The angel replies, "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." This will be the work of the Holy Spirit, who will bring Christ into the world. Mary's role will be to be the vessel through which Christ is born, but it is the Holy Spirit who will overshadow, cover, and protect her.

This could seem like an overwhelming task, one that Mary could have easily resisted. Often, when we sense God's call, we see it as difficult, inconvenient, or ill-timed. Mary could have responded by saying, "God, this is not the right time—I'm about to get married, I'm in the middle of planning a wedding, and I have other responsibilities. Being pregnant right now, especially under these circumstances with Joseph not being the father, is the last thing I had planned." However, this is not how she responds. Let's read verse 38 "And 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" Mary's response is one of submission. She submits her hopes, her dreams, her future to God and says, "let it be to me according to

your word.” She trusted in the word of God, she trusted that God would carry it out according to his purpose. She did not have faith in herself, but in God himself, his promises and his word.

When Mary received a new hope, she was able to respond with, "At your command, Lord." Her response was one of honor and humility, as she recognized the incredible privilege of being part of God's plan. She, a young woman from a humble, small town in Galilee, was chosen by God to be the mother of Jesus Christ. She didn't deserve this calling, yet God chose her—not because of anything she had done, but because of His grace.

Mary experienced this grace and the hope that went far beyond her hopes of being a wife and having a family. Her response was one of submission and a deep understanding of her identity in God. She was willing to accept this extraordinary calling to be the vessel through which salvation would enter the world. She also recognized who she was in God's eyes—highly favored, His servant, and available to go wherever He called. She was blessed because of her faithfulness and willingness to submit to His will.

We are not called by God in the same way Mary was—her calling was specific to carrying Jesus Christ in her womb. But how is this applicable to us today? As Christians, we are called to be bearers of Christ and ambassadors of His kingdom. When we accepted Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, we received the Holy Spirit, who dwells within us and is with us wherever we go. We are called to make Him known and represent Him.

God wants to give us a hope that goes far beyond what we often envision—something far greater than our hopes for success in school, at work, or as parents. His hope is eternal, and it shapes the way we live and serve.

We may have doubts or wonder if we are truly being called, or if we are qualified, but the truth is that as Christians, we are highly favored and accepted by God. We have already been called to make Him known and to bring others to obedience in Christ. In Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus says: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” Christ is with us as we go and bring others to Him. When you have good news, you don't keep it to yourself—you want to share it.

As we hold onto this new hope in the kingdom of heaven, we also have a new identity. We are citizens of the kingdom of heaven. Our hopes shape the way we live. When our hope is in something everlasting, we live with purpose and

meaning, striving to represent this eternal kingdom. If all earthly things fade, then there is no true hope or purpose in life. But with the true hope of the kingdom of heaven, we know that even bringing one person to Christ is meaningful, because it means one more person will experience a kingdom that never fades, perishes, or spoils.

Let's accept God's call to represent Him in a world that is often hostile to His message. Let's bring the message of restoration and hope to a world filled with fading hopes.