

## Christmas from Mary's Point of View - Luke 1 – Part 1

If I walked up to you and told you, *“Congratulations! You are the sole winner of the state lottery!”*, what would you think? If I told you that you had won a brazillion dollars because all your numbers matched, what would be your response? Would you immediately go out and start using your credit card to buy up all kinds of stuff or would you be reluctant to trust me about such a thing? You might be hesitant to trust me for several reasons. Number one, the odds are way against it. I did some research. (I googled it.) And the odds of winning the Texas lottery are more than 1 in 25 million. So, there's that. Also, I don't work for the lottery commission, so how would I know, right? Lastly, and I hope this applies to you, you don't play the lottery so how could you win? Those are good questions. You probably would not believe me about that, would you?

Now, imagine young Mary of Nazareth. She is engaged to a nice young man. She is living a normal life. She's just a teenager so she doesn't have a lot of life experience but one day as she is just minding her own business, an angel appears. Now, I'm not talking about one of those sweet little winged babies flying around and playing a harp. Imagine more of a 10 feet tall Ernest Borgnine-looking warrior with battle scars and a bloody sword in his hand – that kind of angel. Gabriel, the warrior angel, tells Mary, *“Hey, Mary! Good news! You just won the Messiah lottery and you are going to be His mother!”* Now, what do you think is going through Mary's mind at this point? Number one, the odds are against it. They have been waiting hundreds of years, thousands really, for the Messiah. They know He is going to come but of all the women in the world, the odds are against Mary. Also, Mary had not yet played the lottery, if you know what I mean. Scripture is clear that she was a virgin. She was engaged to Joseph but that's as far as things had gotten with them. She had yet to buy a lottery ticket so how in the world is she going to win the lottery and give birth to anybody any time soon? This would definitely be hard to believe.

It makes you better appreciate the story of Zechariah who, in the same chapter, is given similar news that his wife was going to have a baby even though she was an old woman. When Gabriel told that to Zechariah, ol' Zech had a hard time believing it and actually questioned Gabriel about it. Bad move, Zech! Y'all know the story. Gabriel caused Zechariah to not be able to speak until after the baby was born. So, why do you think Mary believed and Zechariah didn't? Why did Mary have faith and Zechariah didn't even though both were given the news in the same way by the same angel? Let's read this beautiful passage and we will start to answer some of those questions after we do. Turn to **Luke chapter one** and let's read **verses 26-38**. This is read lots of times around Christmas. In fact, I have notated in my Bible that I preached from this passage four other times. But this year, our focus is on the faith of Mary. Luke is the third Gospel and the third book of the New Testament right after Matthew and Mark. Matthew also gives some details about the birth of Jesus and, in fact, tells that Joseph was also visited by an angel and told this same basic thing. But let's read about the faith of Mary in **Luke 1:26-38**. *In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, 27 to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. 28 The angel went to her and said, “Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.” 29 Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. 30 But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. 31 You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, 33 and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.” 34 “How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?” 35 The angel answered, “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. 36 Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. 37 For no word from God will ever fail.” 38 “I am the Lord's servant,” Mary answered. “May your word to me be fulfilled.” Then the angel left her.*

So, I've had this conversation with several people lately about the song, "Mary, Did You Know." I like the song. It's very pretty and very worshipful and moving but my brain can't help but think the answer to the question of "Mary, Did You Know?" is yes! Yes, she knew. She knew He was the Messiah because she was told before and right after He was born by the angel Gabriel, the shepherds, the Wise Men, Simeon, Anna, Joseph and Elizabeth. Did she know specifically that He would walk on water or heal a blind man? No. But she knew He was the promised Christ child, the Messiah, the anointed One so anything was possible. Literally. So, having been told so many times, surely it didn't take much faith to believe it after a while, right? Oh, I think it still had to be hard to believe. I mean, how could a young virgin girl give birth to God in flesh? Even after He was born and for who knows how long afterward, she had to be thinking, *"Looks like a regular ol' baby to me. I still have to change His diaper, feed Him, burp Him, teach Him to walk and talk and everything else a mother has to do."* It took great faith to be the mother of a baby prophesied about so many years before. She had surely read or at least been told what was written in the book of Isaiah that the Messiah would be the Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace. Yet here He lay in a manger wrapped in some pieces of cloth helpless as any baby ever.

But Mary's faith really shines when the angel tells her his good news in our passage this morning. This is the first she has heard anything about it and yet, look at what she says. *"I am the Lord's servant, May your word to me be fulfilled."* How do you get faith like that and why should we want it? Well, we read in **Romans 12:3** that God gives everybody *"a measure of faith."* That word "measure" simply means a certain amount. God gives us all some amount of faith. Everybody, even Atheists are given a certain amount of faith. But faith is like a muscle. We all have some muscle but we have to build it and God allows us to go through certain situations that, when handled correctly, build our faith muscles. Like the past few years for example. The last 4-5 years have been crazy. That's not news to anybody anywhere. But one positive thing you can say about it is that it has given us opportunities to strengthen our faith.

I remember growing up we just had one TV if we had one at all and almost every night my dad would watch the news. When I was a kid, the news was so boring. *"Pop, do we have to watch the news tonight?" "Let me just catch the top of the news then you can change it."* Well, I figured out the top of the news was everything until the end of the weather. Drove me crazy. But as an adult, guess what. I enjoy watching the news or listening to it on the radio as I drive. I like political talk shows. I have become my dad. That hasn't really been a problem before. Now, when I listen to the news, I find myself getting stressed. I lose my peace and I start to worry and I know that's wrong and so when I realized it was happening to me, I turned it all off. Now, I listen to Christian music. I listen to good preachers on the radio. I watch other churches worship on TV and I feel my peace coming back. I feel joy. I'm not stressed like I was. Did you know that scripture actually tells us why that happens? Going back to **Romans, chapter 10 and verse 17** says, *"So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."* Faith comes by hearing God's word, listening to it, meditating on it, putting it to the test and growing in it.

Mary heard the word of God through the angel and she believed it. She had faith because she knew it was true even if she couldn't prove it mathematically or scientifically. She had faith that it was true and when you have faith, you also get peace and joy. Have you ever opened up a Christmas gift and found another gift inside the gift? You know what I mean. You unwrap a box and it's a jewelry box inside. You open it up and inside there is a pair of nice gloves. You go to try on the gloves and you find a diamond ring inside the gloves. That's a pretty good gift, right? I'm sure all you husbands are planning something like that this year, aren't you? Well, that's what faith is like. When God allows you to go through something that builds your faith, you find you have peace and joy to go with it that also help you get through. Don't take my word for it, my Berean friends. Check out **Luke chapter 7** where Jesus is talking to the sinful woman. She believes in Him and has faith in Him and Jesus tells her in **verse 50**, *"Your faith has saved you. Go in peace."* Faith and peace go hand in hand. Also, in **1 Peter 1** it says, *"Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible."* Faith and joy go hand in hand as well. It's the gift that keeps on giving! **Hebrews 11** (the faith chapter) says, *"And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards*

*those who seek him.*” When you please Him with your faith, He rewards you with peace and joy. Sounds like a pretty good deal to me.

According to a Gallup Poll released just a few years ago, **those who attend church frequently** were the only group of Americans that did not see the state of their mental health decline during covid. The [results](#) of Gallup’s November Health and Healthcare survey, conducted annually since 2001, reveal that the share of Americans who classify their mental health as “excellent” has reached an all-time low of 34%. The share of Americans who describe their mental health as “excellent/good” has also reached a record low of 76%. Nearly every demographic subgroup saw the state of their mental health decrease from 2019 to 2020. However, among Americans who attend religious services weekly, 46% classified their mental health as excellent. That figure **is an increase** from the 42% who saw their mental health as excellent in 2019. ([The Christian Post](#)) Mental health is just another way of saying peace and joy so even the secular world can see that faith brings peace and joy.

But what does it look like to have faith? How do you know when you really have it? I hear politicians sometimes say something like *“my faith guides me in my decision-making”* but then they go right on to vote for abortion so obviously it takes more than just saying it. What does it really look like to have faith? But what does it look like in your life? Would you say you have faith? Of course you would, especially sitting here in church on a Sunday morning. But what does it look like? I think about **Belinda** who broke both of her legs a couple of years ago and one leg healed up real nicely but the other took its sweet time but she always has a good attitude and every time something good happens, her response is always, “Glory to God!” It takes faith to be able to mean that. I think about the little group of **8-9 people** we had that came over here from our Runaway Bay church 12 years ago believing God when He said to move even though some of our friends didn’t come with us. That takes real faith and God has blessed it.

Faith is not just believing that God is going to make everything turn out rainbows and lollipops. Faith says, **“I know God can and I know God will but even if He doesn’t, still I will praise Him.”** Faith is believing that God is working all things to our good even when the circumstances are not good. Faith is believing that God’s grace is sufficient for us, that His presence is enough for us and that His peace and joy are available to us in the worst of times. Think about Mary again. I compared it to winning the lottery but can you imagine what she had to go through? She was a virgin when Jesus was born but try to convince the neighbors of that! Then she had to endure the pressure of knowing she was raising the Messiah. Can you imagine the pressure from society but especially from Satan? That’s too much for a teenage girl to bear. But she never lost faith. Then she had to watch the unspeakable, unthinkable happen. She had to watch Him being whipped and tortured and die on the cross. That had to be at least part of what Simeon told her in the temple when they brought baby Jesus there. Do you remember? Simeon took Jesus in his arms and in **Luke 2:33-35** he said, *“The child’s father and mother marveled at what was said about him. 34Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: “This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, 35so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.”* Don’t you know Mary would gladly have taken a literal sword to the heart to keep her son from having to be crucified? It wasn’t right. It wasn’t fair. Jesus didn’t deserve it. Mary didn’t deserve it. You may not deserve to go through what you are going through but faith says that God is in control and He loves me so I can endure all things through Him who strengthens me. And while Jesus didn’t deserve to die, it was always God the Father’s plan and because He did, He paid the price the Father said was due to pay for your sins and my sins. **Romans 6:23** says that the wages of sin is death. That is what we deserve. That’s the price we ought to have to pay but Jesus paid it for us by His grace. **Ephesians 2:8-9** says, *“For it is by grace you have been saved, **through faith**-and this is not from yourselves, it is the **gift of God**-<sup>9</sup>not by works, so that no one can boast.”* We are saved by grace and through faith and so we continue to live by faith because of what Jesus has done in our lives. Have you truly accepted God’s gift of grace? Have you asked God to be Lord and Savior of your life and to forgive you of all your sins? That’s all you have to do to take the first step. There will be many more steps of faith to take in your life but that’s the first one. Do it today as the music plays.