

Text: Luke 1:26-38

Title: "Confused and Disturbed"

Introduction: \$450 Billion for Christmas world-wide ... it's estimated that it would only take \$10 Billion to make the shortage of clean water, history. Malnutrition is the leading killer in the world today. The effects of poverty (malnutrition, disease, starvation, etc.) claim almost 50,000 lives a day with $\frac{3}{4}$ of those victims being children under the age of 5. Every 2.2 seconds another person dies because they do not have enough nutritious food. That's 2,000 people by the time we get done taking communion today.

In the United States, we have about 6% of the world's population, and consume about 40% of the world's resources. In the U.S., millions are obsessed with weight loss because we have too much food. Almost 1/3 of the world is obsessed with getting enough nutritious food to survive. Guess who's in charge of DISTRIBUTION?!?!?

LET'S PRAY!

Before we go any further, let me invite you to take the insert out of your program. On one side you will find our Scripture for today and on the other is a brief outline of how we are going to break down the Scripture. Please grab a pen and fill in the blanks and write down whatever else you think will help you in your faith journey or day-to-day life. When we leave here, please take this home and refrigerate it. Re-read our scripture a few times this week... Go over the notes that you write down, so that what we learn today sticks with you a little better. For those of you who are listening online or are IPODing, you can download our program and outline off of our website so you too can fill in the blanks!

Why do we care? We care because in Matthew 25, Jesus tells a parable. A parable again, is a story with a point. In a parable there is usually God/Good, Evil and Me. As the people listened to Jesus tell this parable, I'm sure they were trying to discover who is God, who is Satan and which character they are...

Essentially, Jesus told the people listening that he was going to separate the people between those that God was pleased with (sheep = going to heaven/paradise), and those God was not pleased with (goats = eternal hell). Jesus said that He will say to the sheep, "Welcome to my Kingdom, you good servants. When I was naked, you clothed me. When I was hungry you fed me. When I was thirsty you gave me something to drink. When I was in prison you visited me." To which the people responded, "When did we clothe, feed, and visit you? We don't remember giving you something to drink!"

Jesus responds, "When you did it for the least of these, you did it for me." So, in order to do something nice for Jesus, we must do something nice for "the least of these"! Who are "the least of these"? They are: The *hungry*, the *thirsty*, the *naked*, the *imprisoned*, the *homeless*, the *widowed*, the *orphaned*, etc.

Last weekend my youngest daughter, "Lily" had her 3rd Birthday. Our tradition in my family is to PARTY! We invited some family and friends over for lunch and cake and ice cream. We had decorations up with balloons and streamers. We took some time to let her open her gifts, and you know what?!? There was not a single gift in her pile of gifts for me!! No footballs. No tools. No camouflage. No basketball shoes ... Nothing.

Absolutely nothing there for me! Do you think I got mad and went to my room?!? Do you think I demanded something for me?!?

Yet, when it's Jesus' birthday, we all want something for ourselves ... as if time off of school and work is not enough!

Well, we are going to find out more from our Scripture for today about Jesus birthday really not being about us. God often surprises us with who He uses and how He uses us for His Kingdom!

Last week, we read about a priest and his wife being used by God to help lay the groundwork for the coming of the Messiah. Zechariah was in the Temple doing the incense thing representing the prayers of the Jerusalemites when Gabriel appeared to him and told Zechariah that he and Elizabeth were going to have a son.

Zechariah's response? "Um, Gabriel, I know that you are a messenger of God and all that, but I think you and God and whoever else is on the pregnancy committee forgot that Elizabeth and I are too old to have children." To which Gabriel said to Zechariah, "Hush up and listen ... for 9 months!"

At the end of that section, we find that Zechariah hurries home after his tour of duty at the Jerusalem temple is up and Elizabeth gets pregnant. Do you remember who Elizabeth's child is going to be? Right! John the Baptist who is the last great prophet signaling the coming of the Messiah ... the Savior.

We will get back to Zechariah and John in a couple of weeks...

Now, we fast-forward 6 months. Elizabeth is 6 months pregnant with John and meanwhile here's what's going on with her cousin up in Nazareth.

Now, Nazareth was a small town (1600-2000 inhabitants) quite a ways northwest of Jerusalem, west of the Sea of Galilee. Nazareth was on a major trade route so many Gentiles (non-Jews) and Roman soldiers passed through those parts often. (PICTURE?) As you can see it is in pretty hilly country overlooking a large valley that we know as Armageddon.

Well, here's what happens in Nazareth:

READ LUKE 1:26-38 NOW

- I. He's Back (Gabriel) (vs. 26-28)
 - A. Let's back up to last week again. Zechariah is a priest from the tribe of Aaron who is serving in the Jerusalem temple when an angel of the Lord appears and speaks to him.
 1. If there is any place that one could expect to see a messenger of God, it would be in the Temple.
 2. If there is any person who could expect to see a messenger of God, it would be a certified priest working in the temple.
 - B. In the same light, if there was any place in the world NOT to expect to see a messenger from God, it would be Nazareth ("...can anything good come from Nazareth?").
 - C. And what about Mary? If there was any person in the world who could expect to NOT EVER see a messenger of God, it would be a teenage girl from a relatively poor family... See, Mary had a few strikes against her.
 1. Mary was female and in their society, you held no social status until you were married.

2. Mary was young (early teens), which means she was not taken seriously by her culture ... she was just a girl/nothing.
 3. Mary's family really had no claim to any status because her father was rich or anything.
 4. Mary's only link to royalty was that the man she was engaged/betrothed to was a descendent of the great King David, BUT she would still not have any social status until they were married!
- D. So, here's this girl from Nazareth minding her own business and an angel (Gabriel ... same one that appeared to Zechariah) appears and GREETES HER!
1. Zechariah did not get a greeting. All he got was a: "Do not be afraid!"
 2. Mary gets a greeting of "Greetings favored (graced by God) woman! The Lord is with you!"
 3. Now, please note that she is "favored" not because of who SHE IS, but Who God Is. Gabriel said that she is "favored", because "The Lord is with you!" She was chosen by God, not because of her character, but because of God's Grace!
- E. Notice how Mary responds ... She responds with humility and honesty. She did not expect a visit from a God Messenger or special favors from heaven.
1. Get this: there was nothing special or unique about her that these things should happen.
 2. Although we understand that Mary was a Godly young woman, this scripture does not reveal that she was way different from other Jewish girls in the 1st Century.
 3. If she had been different or unique or special, she might have responded to Gabriel with, (like a teenage girl) "Well, it's about time you got here! I've been waiting!"
 4. These events were a complete surprise to her ... she was "Confused and disturbed..." and trying to figure out what the meaning of this visit was.
- II. It's a Boy! (vs. 29-33)
- A. How many of you like to be the bearer of Good News? Isn't it fun?
1. A couple of nights ago, Sarah and I got to share some good news with our youngest, Lily.
 2. She just turned 3 and we decided it was time for her to move out of her crib and start sleeping in a toddler / "Big Girl" bed.
 3. When we showed her the bed she was so excited ... jumping up and down and shouting!
 4. It's fun bringing people good news ... Ed McMahon's job!
- B. Well, this is twice in 6 months for Gabriel! He tells Mary that she is going to become pregnant and have a son.

1. For many women, this is good news ... for Mary; maybe not so much. Remember that she is just engaged and not married. She was a young maiden who had not been with a man.
 2. That was the expectation. When you marry, you have never been with anyone else... the bride is pure. The husband is the first and only after the wedding!
 3. If not, the husband could call off the engagement. The family (Mary's parents) would be disgraced in their community, have to give back whatever Joseph had offered to marry their daughter.
 4. Mary's parents could disown her and kick her out. If she had no status, no income and nowhere to live, imagine what could happen to Mary and her son!
 5. Her whole community would shame her and not understand...
- C. But, Gabriel gives her encouragement, knowing that he is asking her to do perhaps the most faith-filled act ever asked of a human being... 5 things that your son will be:
1. He will be very great.
 2. He will be called the Son of the Most High (God).
 3. He will be given the throne of his ancestor David (Israel).
 4. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever.
 5. His kingdom will never end.
 6. Mary knew that Gabriel spoke of her giving birth to the Messiah that the Jewish people had waited hundreds of years for.

III. How Can This Happen? (vs. 30-37)

- A. Mary's question of Gabriel was not a lack of faith like Zechariah's was last week. Mary asks, "But how can this happen? I am a virgin." In other words, Mary agrees that what God says will happen, but she would like to know how...
- B. When I went skydiving a couple of years ago, I was full of questions. I was about to jump out of a plane at 10,000 feet. I wanted to know how it all worked! It was not that I did not trust the people taking care of us...
- C. Mary's about to jump. She just wants to know how it's going to work.
- D. Mary having a baby as a virgin is hard for people to believe. It is a miracle ... meaning, it's a supernatural happening and we probably cannot explain it. For those of you struggling with the fact of Mary becoming pregnant in the way she did, hear these 3 facts:
 1. #1 - Remember that the author, Luke, was a medical doctor. He knew how babies were made. Imagine how hard it would have been for Luke to believe this story, yet he writes this down as "FACT".
 2. #2 - Luke researched all that he wrote and did not write it unless he had multiple eyewitnesses. Tradition tells us that

Luke spoke with Mary more than once about the events in the first 2 chapters of the Book of Luke.

3. #3 – As Christians we believe that God created the universe and everything in it. Should we doubt that God has the power to place a child in the womb of a virgin?!?
- E. Gabriel tells her that the Holy Spirit will make sure she is pregnant. Why is it important that Jesus is born of the Holy Spirit and not of a human man?
1. Jesus was born to die!
 2. Jesus was born to hang on a cross and take our sins with him as the PERFECT SACRIFICE!
 3. Jesus had to be born without the sin of humanity so that he could save humanity.
 4. He also had to be born of a woman, so that he was fully human.
 5. Jesus was fully human as the son of Mary. Jesus was fully God as the son of God.
 6. Jesus can understand all that we go through with human feelings and physical, emotional, relational hurts and joys. Jesus can understand when we bring Him our problems...
 7. BUT, Jesus also has the power to deliver us from sin and guarantee us eternity in God's Paradise (heaven).
 8. Without Jesus being born this way, our entire faith and belief system falls apart.
- F. Gabriel gives Mary one last encouragement before he leaves ... "If you don't believe that God can do this, Mary, your cousin Elizabeth has been pregnant for about 6 months ... and she's OLD!"
- G. And then Gabriel gives us all words to live by: "For NOTHING is IMPOSSIBLE with GOD." (repeat)
- IV. Mary's Response (v. 38)
- A. ... It does not matter what happens to me. It does not matter what suffering I have to endure. It doesn't matter if my husband to be leaves me. It doesn't matter if my family disowns me. It doesn't matter that so many people will not understand. It doesn't matter if my whole community insults me and disgraces me. It doesn't matter that I am a single young woman who has no status in my society. It doesn't matter if I don't appear to be useable by God. Let it happen the way you say, because IT'S NOT MY BIRTHDAY!
 - B. This is scary for me, but "I am the Lord's servant. May everything you have said about me come true."
 - C. Anyone here feel UNUSABLE by God? "I'm too this or too that to be of any use to God's Kingdom..."
 - D. NONSENSE! By God's Grace, not according to who we are, we are all useable by God to Change the World for Good.
 - E. Mary changed the world by bearing the Messiah, the Savior who is Christ the Lord.

- F. I wonder what Gabriel would say to you today about how God wants to use you for God's Kingdom. I wonder if we would respond with, "I am the Lord's Servant. May everything you have said about me come true." It doesn't matter what I want, because it's NOT MY BIRTHDAY!
- G. How will we Change the World for Good today?!? Video on website ... \$50 T-shirts. We are rescuing 100 in '10!

Let's Pray!

Communion: Different this morning, with all the bugs going around... When you come forward, I challenge you to say back to God, "Thanks for sending your Son to die for me ... May everything you have said about me come true."