

NOTES FROM PASTOR TIM'S SERMON – 4th Dec 2022 -Morning Service

NEW SERIES FROM LUKE'S GOSPEL "God's love for the lowest"

Part 2 "The relentless love of God"

Scripture references from the ESV

Luke 1: 26-38 ²⁶ In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin betrothed^[b] 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 favoured one, the Lord is with you!"^[c] 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 favour 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 for ever, 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^[e] 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." ³⁸ And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant^[f] of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

Life in the UK is currently defined by general anxiety and loneliness. The war in Ukraine, post-pandemic fear and the cost of living crisis contribute to this. We may well feel, living in Dorset, that no one in power actually cares about us, and as Christians we may feel we're really out on a limb. Regardless of our age, we can feel uncared for and as if we are only just getting through each day. We may feel we are lowly and not in the least important – average at best. Without much hope, joy or love, we reach for shallow entertainment on a screen or the latest novel.

This might sound like a bleak picture, but it is a true one. It is why we are all in desperate need of Jesus. It is why it is so important to gather together on a Sunday, whether for a reminder or to hear about Jesus for the first time. However lowly you may feel, however unloved and uncared for, God's word to us in these verses (above) shows that there is hope and love available for you.

God came to someone like us who lived in a place not dissimilar to where we live in order to reveal to all humanity how powerful, extraordinary and relentless his love is for the lowly.

1. **God chose to use the lowly to reveal his love to us (vv26-29 above).** Despite being highlighted in Nativity plays every year, Nazareth was not a prominent place, nor was it popular! It was separated from the central part of Judea and was not mentioned at all in the Old Testament, let alone as a place having any significance for God's people. Describing where Nazareth is would be a bit like describing where Broadstone is to someone who had never been here!

God could have chosen anywhere to reveal his plans to humanity. Surely Jerusalem (home of all the kings of Israel) would have been more fitting! Bethlehem might have been a more practical place to choose the mother from, instead of Mary having to travel there!

Yet God chose to use lowly Nazareth and what is more he chose to use Mary Mary was no one special. She was young, betrothed but not yet married, and a virgin. She was not powerful or influential. She lived in a nowhere place and was due to be married to a carpenter. She was low down the pecking order of anyone we might have chosen for the task ahead. That is precisely the point!

God chose to use the lowly to reveal his love to us.

- Why did God choose to bestow his favour on a lowly girl from a lowly place, when he could have done something entirely different and much more spectacular?

He did this to show his love and his favour to the lowly. He did it to show that he loves us and he knows us.

- He did this so that, 2000 years later, in the nowhere place of Broadstone, lowly as we know ourselves to be, shameful and sinful as we are, we can know that he has known us from before creation and he knows our name.

In this choice, we have evidence of who God came to bestow his favour on and who he loves.

- He loves those who feel unloved, who feel insignificant and not listened to. He loves US.

God's word is for each one of us, to enable us to draw near to him and know his love and favour. We can all read the Bible and hear God speak. In his word we can see the magnitude of who he is, and what he came to do for us.

2. **God chose to use the lowly to reveal his impossible promised King to us (vv30-33 above).** These verses contain an overview of the entire Old Testament, what Jesus accomplishes in the gospels and what we can look forward to on his return!

Gabriel tells Mary that she will have a son and he is to be called Jesus, which means God saves. It is also the name of the greatest leader of the judges of Israel (Joshua), who God raised up to lead his people into the Promised Land. He was strong and courageous because he followed God's word, and administered it faithfully. Yet Gabriel, adding sentence upon sentence in his anticipation, says that Jesus will be:

- The true and greater Joshua, leading his people into the New Creation
- The leader of leaders, the judge of judges
- Great and the Son of the highest, and he will be given the throne of David.

Luke is drawing from the Old Testament in his account, but very clearly, he picks up **2 Samuel 7:12**:

When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom.

God makes this massive promise to King David. Jesus will be a King like David but so much greater! David's time was considered the glory days for Israel, but Jesus, as King, will do what no other king, not even David, could do.

- Jesus will be the King who has been longed for. He will build a house and God will dwell among his people.

- He will draw the whole kingdom into the fullest close relationship with their God.

We have been told that Joseph is of the line of David, in order that we know Jesus will be the fulfilment of that promise. This Kingdom will never be destroyed (v33 above), a glorious place where God will dwell with his people forever. Ever since Adam and Eve rebelled against God,

**it has been God's goal to have us dwell with him forever
and so he has relentlessly pursued us.**

God's goal has been for us to know him, enjoy him and be in a perfect relationship with him. In this account, Luke is telling us that every promise that has been made concerning humanity will be fulfilled through this baby.

This is the most extraordinary story that has ever been told and it is true!

Remember that Gabriel is talking to Mary, not some princess in a castle where the baby would be heavily protected. Mary will have to have an interesting chat with Joseph, who will struggle to believe her until God intervenes. Then she will have to deal with the challenge of being pregnant in, first, Nazareth where people will look down on her and then travelling to Bethlehem.

- Based on human wisdom, no one would have picked Mary – but God did!

**God chose to use the lowly to reveal his impossible promised King because Jesus is
the King for the lowly.**

Jesus himself said "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. ³² I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." (Luke 5:31-2) Jesus has come for sinners, for those who feel disregarded by society – for US.

Jesus came for:

- The single mum who feels let down by every man she has ever been with
- The 80 year old who feels there is not much point to life now
- The teenager who is struggling with anxiety and depression
- The people who work to make ends meet, where every day feels like a grind
- Anyone who recognises that they are lost without him

We know this because his mother was Mary. **This is God's relentless love in action.**

3. God chose to use the lowly to bind himself to humanity forever. A king like this seems impossible, and in fact the whole situation seems impossible, as Mary's question flags up (v34 above). What is the answer to the impossibility of the birth of the perfect promised King from the womb of a virgin, a King who will bring about a kingdom where God will dwell with his people forever?

- God, in all his fullness, enveloped Mary (v35 above). He became man and lived among us. Jesus whose name means God saves, came down to us and for us.
- He who is highest made himself the lowest so that the lowly of heart could dwell with him forever.
- From conception, he was fully human and still fully God. He did not lose his Godness by becoming man, nor was he any less human. In fact, he was the most human anyone could possibly be. Many have attempted to resolve this mystery, but

God as man is not a mystery to be solved but a reality to be enjoyed

This is the **relentless love of God** on display for us. He chose to come for us so that his purposes, his glory and his love would be revealed to us. He makes the impossible possible and Gabriel answers Mary's question thus:

For nothing will be impossible with God (v 37 above).

If you say you are not religious, or follow another religion, you are taking on an ideology of works, where you have to prove yourself endlessly and the only way you can get out of any situation you face is to work harder.

- When we take our eyes off all that God has done for us, this is what we are doing.
- God came down so that he could do the impossible for us.

Jesus, the Son of God, was born, lived the perfect fully human life, died in our place and rose again three days later so that the lowly can know him for themselves and can dwell with him forever.

That is why we can do what Mary did and submit to his word (v38 above). Mary is our example of how we should respond to the great news of Jesus coming as our King.

We can submit to Jesus as our King:

- because we know, like Mary, that we are not forgotten by him – he knows us by name!
- because we know, like Mary, that he is a King who works for our good
- because he guarantees the outcome of dwelling with him forever
- because he has shown us how much he loves us, how much he gave up for us and how low he was willing to go for us

Not only can we praise him for this but we can also delight in God's promises being fulfilled in his Son.

- We can delight that he, the highest, takes the lowly and draws them to himself.
- We can live a life where we know who we are and where we have a value that is as high and indescribable as the very nature of God.

The impossible way he chose to save us shows something of the depths of the **relentless love of God** for us, a love we will never be able to fully understand.

If you are feeling lowly, uncared for or cast aside, look to this situation with Mary and remind yourself that Jesus actually came for the lowly, the uncared for and the cast aside.

Submit to God's word, delight in his Word and look forward to when you get to dwell with God and know this love forever.