



LOCKINGCASTLECHURCH

Life Group Notes – 12th December 2021

Open to the impossible. Luke 1:26-38

Please visit the LCC website to listen to the talk or read the transcript if available.

Luke 1 The birth of Jesus foretold

²⁶ 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 favoured! 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 favour 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 for ever; 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.

Comment

Open to the impossible... are we or aren't we? A Christmas song, 'Mary did you know' talks about the seemingly impossible life of the Jesus she would give birth to, impossible to conceive of in more ways than one. Another question for us is was this miracle-working Jesus just for the greats of Christian history, while he just (and that's a big just!) forgives our sins and sorts out our afterlife?

We look at Mary's three reactions to the angel Gabriel invading her space:

Reaction 1. *Troubled* (v29). Mary was an ordinary teenager with an ordinary life and prospects until this happened. Her normal life was shattered. She must have started to hold up a DO NOT DISTURB sign.

Held one of those up? (I've done that with the healing question sometimes. Is Jesus' healing a part of our package? Yes-success! Then a brick wall. We sometimes retreat, disillusioned. Do we avoid disturbance?

Reaction 2. *Mary the 'scientist'* (v34). Science answers the *how* questions, but what about the *why* questions? For us is it faith or science, or faith and science? Prof. John Lennox on Facing the Canon on Youtube says his faith is based on historical fact – Jesus rose from the dead. Scientists have done and are doing so much that is good, but those who believe that human life and the whole cosmos happened by chance need to stand back and have another look. Such a finely tuned environment for life is impossible by chance, so what's behind it? A God through whom everything is possible.

Reaction 3. *Let it be* (v38). Instead of letting everything in life stay the same, Mary said to the Lord 'may what you're saying actually happen'. On one scale, let the Jesus of the Mary song transform the world as Christians open their lives again and again to the power of the Holy Spirit, as He came upon Mary and Jesus arrived. On another scale, individually, what seemingly impossible dead-ends are we facing at the moment that need breaking open by the power of God? Are we open to the impossible?

Questions

1. Imagine yourself in Mary's shoes – what would your reaction have been?
2. Why do you think God chooses to reveal himself through ordinary people experiencing extraordinary events?
3. What areas of our life would we prefer to hold up a 'do not disturb' sign to?
4. Sometimes hopeful faith needs to overcome rational scientific negativity. How can we nurture faith, hope and love without losing practicality and common sense?
5. Drawing on the faith of those around you in your life group, what are some 'impossible' things you would like to pray for this Christmas?

Note: This is the last set of life group questions for this term – normal service will resume in 2022! Happy Christmas!