

12.08.24

Luke

Chapter 1 - An Inconceivable Announcement
So "How Could This Happen to Me?" (vs. 26-56)

Luke 1:46-55: And Mary said:

“My soul exalts the Lord,

And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.

“For He has had regard for the humble state of His
bondslave;

For behold, from this time on all generations will count
me blessed.

“For the Mighty One has done great things for me;
And holy is His name.

“AND HIS MERCY IS UPON GENERATION AFTER
GENERATION
TOWARD THOSE WHO FEAR HIM.

“He has done mighty deeds with His arm;
He has scattered those who were proud in the thoughts
of their heart.

“He has brought down rulers from their thrones,
And has exalted those who were humble.

“HE HAS FILLED THE HUNGRY WITH GOOD THINGS;
And sent away the rich empty-handed.

“He has given help to Israel His servant,
In remembrance of His mercy,

As He spoke to our fathers,

To Abraham and his descendants forever.”

I oftentimes think of the passage in James 4:6, as well as in verse 10, as well as in 1 Peter 5:6, humble yourself under the mighty hand of God and He will exalt you at the proper time. I wish I knew what the time was. Sometimes it seems like God is late and sometimes it seems like He's too early, and yet it is the proper time that God works. The key phrase in all those verses, and as James will so

aptly put it, “God is opposed to the proud, but He gives Grace to the humble,” is that I need to humble myself. “Humble yourself.” Isn’t that what it says in 1 Peter 5:6? “Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God.” I’ve tried that before. My body goes in contortions trying to humble myself. Have you ever tried to humble yourself? Wow, that takes a lot of work. It takes a lot of work because it’s not natural for, once again, us to perceive or pursue a humbling position. God says that the greatest in heaven will be the least. Wow. It’s hard to think of myself as just a waiter of tables, and yet, God says that’s the one who’s going to be the greatest in heaven. We think wrong, and because we think wrong, our expectations are sometimes off kilter.

When we come to the Book of Luke, one of the things that Luke’s going to be emphasizing as we talked about last week, is that God elevates what we would perceive to be unlikely individuals. As you look at the very beginning of the book, as he writes this book through the power of the Spirit of God, it’s as if he has an audience.

Once again, just to remind you,

(Luke 1:3) “it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus.”

Last week we talked about the good news for the privileged, because the “most excellent Theophilus” is obviously a title that is given to those that are perceived to be conspicuously privileged. The question is, who are these privileged people? The wonderful thing about the Gospel of Luke is Luke is going to tell you these privileged people are not who you think they are. I mean, as he begins to go down the list, we immediately are brought into the sphere of Elizabeth and Zacharias. I guess some of us right away would say, “Ok, he was a priest and everything,” but if you consider the fact that he was a priest, and Scripture tells us that both he and Elizabeth were righteous, this is a kind of anomalous in the point and in the fact that at this time, the priests that were going into office, a lot of them, especially the high priests, were actually selected by Herod, and they were actually selected by virtue of their political connection; not having

anything in regard to spiritual. So, to find somebody that was righteous, and a priest was pretty bizarre. It only makes a lot of sense that it would be at this time that God would send Gabriel to talk to this priest because, as the passage says,

(Luke 1:6) “They were both righteous in the sight of God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord.”

I mean, we know that this was a strange thing and happening because by the time Christ comes along, the Pharisees and the Sadducees really were the ones that were unrighteous, and Christ would call them on the carpet. So, to find a priest that was this way was rare, but here again, it shows God's timing, that He sees that humble spirit and He goes, “Now, it's time.” And you begin to realize that God works in the realm of the humble and the Theophilus' of the world. “Theophilus,” actually a name, but seemingly a title as well, that simply means, “Friend of God.” So, if in fact you were to ask yourself, “Who are the privileged in the kingdom?” It would be friends of God. Who are the friends of God?

Well, those that humble themselves, and we'll see this continually throughout. It is interesting, if you were to do comparisons of the Gospels, of course, Mark doesn't go into anything about the birth of Christ; John doesn't go into anything about the birth of Christ, except for the fact that He was and is the "I Am" but Matthew will go into it. But when you begin to read that which Matthew records, it will come from more the angle of Joseph. In fact, it'll be Joseph that has a vision that God comes to him in that vision and talks to him and Mary will be kind of off to the side and her name will be used, but Joseph will be the focus of the intention.

When you come into the Gospel of Luke, Mary will be in the forefront. When you come into Gospel of Luke, strangely enough, though Zacharias is the priest, he will go into the background and his wife Elizabeth will come in the foreground, and the reason being is that Zacharias, though he was a righteous man, was not believing. Because he wouldn't believe, as we read last week, Gabriel says, "Ok, you're not talking." So, I guess the worst thing you can do to a preacher is tell him he doesn't

talk anymore. If you think about it, for nine months, he didn't say a word. He couldn't speak for months. It won't be until the birth of John, and finally he declares his name will be called "John," he actually writes it on a tablet, that God loosens his tongue and allows him to speak. What we see is a very interesting pattern in the Gospel of Luke, and the pattern is that some of those that take the higher position are those that we would not think could ever have a high position. So, Elizabeth, who is a woman that has not had a child and is now in her old age, it's now an impossible thing for her to have a child. So, we've gone from possible, plausible; now we're in the realm of impossible, and God says, "Ok, that's when I work." And we're going to see Him work in these wonderful, majestic ways in people's lives that we would pass off as insignificant because really, if you think about it, humble people are really not in the forefront. I mean, you wouldn't recognize a humble person if they walked in the room because they're humble. So, the things that they do are oftentimes behind the scenes because if they weren't behind the scenes then it wouldn't be that humble. So, as they begin to do what they do, the perception is that

they're not really special, and Luke will say these are very special people.

So, as we talked about last week and just by way of review, we're going to be focused on people like Elizabeth, which interestingly enough, when you consider how many times her name is mentioned in this first chapter, 8 times; Mary is mentioned 7 times. So, the point is that people that aren't even mentioned in the Book of Matthew, Mark and John, but now are mentioned in the Gospel of Luke. Why is that true? Because Luke is wanting to emphasize that God sees and hears the prayers of humble, and that He exalts those in the proper time.

Now, as we're going to be looking at today, that proper time, as I sort of initially said, is oftentimes not according to our perception of when it should be and because of that, we get frustrated. I think anybody that's genuine in their faith will at some time in their faith, wrestle with the legitimacy of it because what we're looking for is something real. So, when you walk in a way that you believe is pleasing to God and God gives you a promise in

Scripture, we claim it. We go, "That's a promise that God gave me."

For instance, Psalm 37 says if you delight yourself in the Lord, He'll give you the desires of your heart. He'll give me the desires of my heart. Ok. So, what's taking Him so long? What's clear about this particular passage is, how long has Elizabeth been waiting? I mean, the one thing that a woman needs in this culture to be significant is a child. Not as much in our culture, but in this culture, it was a child, and yet, no child. Had she been doing that which was wrong? No. I mean, Scripture says that they were righteous, walking blamelessly in the commandments of God. I can just see her, everybody else has kids, but she doesn't, "Why is God waiting?" and we're going to be talking about that as we go into passage.

All the way through the book, you're going to be seeing these lowly positions. So, you have Elizabeth, and the detail of Mary and this whole thing of her expecting and going to Elizabeth's house, this whole conversation. We don't even see Zacharias being involved in the

conversation. Oh, that's right. He can't talk. But what's interesting to me is that those that will believe marginally, and when I'm talking about marginally, I think there are people that just basically come to church and when they come to church, it's either regimental or ritualistic or ceremonial; they just kind of go through motions, but there are people that really believe this and those that really believe this are taking these promises and making it their own and they're saying, "God, I really believe that You're going to work." And then there's this time that goes in, and then they begin to wrestle with it. I mean, it's clear in this particular passage that Zacharias goes, "Ok. It's not going to happen." I can just see him with Gabriel going, "You're like 30 to 40 years too late; expecting my wife to be expecting at this age. It's not going to happen." Of course, Gabriel goes, "Do you know who I am?" So, at that moment, he shuts his mouth, but with that in play, what we see is a very interesting principle, and I would say this, if in fact you are skeptical about your faith, you're going to be marginalized in the way that God uses you. We see that literally Zacharias takes a back seat, and his wife comes in the foreground; as well as with Mary,

it's going to be pushed out there. As we go on, we're going to see people like Simeon and Hannah, and we go, "Who are these people?" and God, "I know you didn't see them, but they were friends of Mine, and they were friends of Mine because they humbled themselves and they believed I was going to come and that's why I'm using them." So, He starts pulling all these people out, that you're going, "Ok..." I tell you once again, just to remind you, only the Gospel of Luke will mention the good Samaritan. Here again, in the Jewish mind is, "Samaritans, really? Are you kidding me? There is no such thing as a 'good Samaritan,'" and God goes, "I'm going to make their name great." So, He does in the Gospel of Luke. The prodigal son and the man on the cross and all these things are only in the Gospel of Luke because it's revealing to us that God sees the humble in spirit and they are His friends. He's not going to let them be forgotten. He's going to grant them the desires of their heart. Now, in the process once again, it seems like a long time sometimes. In Mary's situation, it's interesting that the proper time was early because she comes before the Lord, and she goes, "I'm not even really married in the

sense of I haven't been trothed, but this doesn't look good." And He goes, "I know, but it's the proper time because the word has to be out that you're a virgin." So, in some people's lives, God begins to work in a way, and I can just see Elizabeth, "Why did I have to wait so long?" But God says, "But the proper time for you." And there is a proper time in every one of our lives that will do that which glorifies God the most, but we're going to talk about what He's doing in our lives as well by making us wait or by doing something at a time in which we would not think.

It is also to be noted, and I just want you to see all these kind of pictures in the Gospel of Luke, but as the angel then goes to Mary's house,

(Luke 1:26) "Now in the sixth month..."

Which six months seems to be in accordance with now, Elizabeth is in her sixth month, because if you look in verse 24, she'd been five months. At the point of five months, Elizabeth's going, "Ok. Now, I see what's God doing" and she goes outside. Now, I'm not an expert on this four months, five months, six months pregnancy

thing. I'm not really an expert on it, but I did do some reading, and from what I understand, at five months the pregnancy becomes visual. At five months, this is what they say, the baby starts moving, so that she can now go outside, and people go, "No, you've just gained some weight, honey." She goes, "Well, watch it move." So, she's pretty well cleared on that respect, unless she had pizza or something that was really intense, but the point is that she's waiting until the testimony is going to be clear, and she's not going to be accused of not saying what is true. So, she keeps herself according to verse 24, in seclusion for five months, and then, she says, "This is the way the Lord has dealt with me..." We're going to talk about what she means by that in the passage.

Then if you drop on down,

(Luke 1:26) "Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth."

Now, specifically, Luke wants us to know where the angel is going and where she is. She's in Nazareth. There is a reason for that, because Nazareth, of course, in the Gospel of John, you have Nathaniel Bartholomew saying,

“Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Why would he say such a thing? The reason that he would say that is because in this particular village, and it seems to be a village at this juncture, which is interesting, today, Nazareth is one of the largest larger cities in Israel; 78,000 people, which is also interesting because today, like 69% of the people living in Nazareth are Arabs and Muslims. They actually say that it's the Arab capital of Israel. It's an interesting statement. About 30% are Christians. So, you almost don't have any Jews in Nazareth even today and was kind of the case in the time of Christ as a village that it was largely a Gentile village. At that particular time, the largest group of the populace were Assyrians.

If you look with me in Isaiah 9; I'm just saying this by way of a tie in, you might see a pattern in the Book of Luke as well, but in Isaiah 9 it gives the promise of the Messiah coming. We oftentimes read Isaiah 9:6-7, “For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders...”

Sometimes we read the beginning that begins to infer that a bright light is going to come in a region that is, well,

I guess we could use the word again, unlikely, and that would be the region of Zebulun and Naphtali.

If you read, it reads this way,

(Isaiah 9:1) “But there will be no more gloom for her who was in anguish; in earlier times He treated the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali with contempt...”

Now, those are two of the tribes of Israel. They're located in this region, maybe about 25 miles perhaps west of the Sea of Galilee, but there this little village is and a lot of Assyrians at this juncture are in this village; their population is the strongest, and very few Jews. So, it's not really considered a holy place or a righteous place. In fact, just the opposite. It's a place of the Gentiles.

So, the way it reads is,

“...He treated the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali with contempt, but later on He shall make it glorious, by the way of the sea, on the other side of Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles.”

So, the text is telling us this particular region is known for being more Gentile than Jew, and why that's significant is

that Nazareth is in Zebulun. So, it's telling us that Jesus lived basically in a Gentile town in the Jewish realm of Israel. It was in this realm that according to verse 2, (Isaiah 9:2) “The people who walk in darkness Will see a great light...”

Now, we know that at the time that Jesus was there, there was actually a synagogue because He stands up in the synagogue in the Gospel of Luke, and He proclaims from the Book of Isaiah that He's the Messiah. Basically they're hanging in there with Him for a little while, and then He begins to say, “But you're not going to listen.” Then, they got mad at Him and wanted to kill Him.

But the passage here is telling us,

(Isaiah 9:2) “The people who walk in darkness Will see a great light; Those who live in a dark land, The light will shine on them.

(Isaiah 9:3) You shall multiply the nation, You shall increase their gladness; They will be glad in Your presence...”

Of course, Christ did so many miracles in that area of Galilee in that particular region that you begin to see, and how men begin to rejoice. So, the promise is that in a most unlikely place, as Luke will emphasize, in this city of Nazareth, the angel the Lord will go and visit. I mean, we can kind of picture Gabriel going, “Ok, Jerusalem, we're going into the temple. I'll go see Zacharias because he's a priest. I'll see him there.” But now, six months later, he's going to go to Nazareth.” And we're going, “Why in the world would Gabriel go to Nazareth?”

So, the passage picks up,

(Luke 1:26) “Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth.”

I like the way that Luke puts it, it's almost like he takes for granted that you have no idea where this town is.

He goes,

(Luke 1:27) “to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.”

Once again, Luke is going to emphasize Mary over Joseph. Matthew is going to emphasize Joseph over Mary. Why would this be true? Because Luke is going to be saying, “God sees the humble and He recognizes them.”

Let me just show you this interesting picture in Luke 8; by the way, only Luke will record this.

(Luke 8:1) “Soon afterwards, He began going around from one city and village to another, proclaiming and preaching the kingdom of God. The twelve were with Him.”

Well, we've heard that from the other gospels, but what is he going to put in that you've never seen?

(Luke 8:2) “and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and sicknesses: Mary who was called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out,

(Luke 8:3) and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod’s steward, and Susanna, and many others who were contributing to their support out of their private means.”

You would not know that from any other gospel but the Gospel of Luke.

Let me show you something else that's very interesting in Luke 3. I particularly like this chapter, the way that it starts, because what Luke does at the very beginning of Luke 3, is he goes through the who's who; the most important dignitaries that exist in the world as they knew it.

So, here's the list,

(Luke 3:1) “Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip was tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene,

(Luke 3:2) in the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas...”

So, that's the who's who. I mean, those are the big guys. That's the big guns. It was during this time, so Scripture is letting you know. Sometimes God works in the lives of people, and you almost want to ask God, “Did You know this guy was here? Because You could have used him.” God goes, “I know. I didn't want to use him.” So, He overlooks all these guys, and look how it ends here,

It was at this time that (Luke 3:2) “the word of God came to John.”

This guy out in the country, eating locusts and wild honey, not a part of the system, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness. What is Scripture wanting you to know? God chooses the weak and the foolish things to confound the wise; the things that are not to nullify the things that are, that no man would boast. That's what He's wanting you to know, that God's not picking people because they are great. He's choosing them because they walk in humility, and they will trust in Him. This is what He's looking for. So, all the way through the Gospel of Luke is going to be emphasizing that point. He let you know in Chapter 3 that, “Ok, I know all these grand people are here, but it's John that I'm going to use” and clearly there are women who are supporting and helping in the support of even the ministry of Christ. What a thought that is. God says, “These were the humble ones, and I don't want them to be forgotten, and I want to let you know that I remembered them.” Because sometimes in the process, especially of the great promises that God has given us, we

sometimes feel so insignificant that we literally feel that God has forgotten us, and Luke wants you to know, not forgotten, timing; not forgotten, it's going to happen, but you continue in this.

So, as it goes on, it refers to Mary in verse 28, as Gabriel comes before Mary,

(Luke 1:28) “And coming in, he said to her, “Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.””

Now, there's actually only two places that we know of that Gabriel is in Scripture. One is in the Book of Daniel, and one is in the Gospel of Luke. Those are the only two times that he's really mentioned, but his name seems to mean “man of God” or “great one of God,” however you want to translate that particular name, but God will use him in particular in the Book of Daniel to go to Daniel and to explain to him some of the things that are happening. He says, “I've come to give you understanding,” in Daniel 8. So, he does, but in Daniel 9 it's a very interesting chapter because the chapter starts off with Daniel, he begins to read about his own people in captivity and how long that's going to last; probably reading the Book of

Jeremiah specifically because it actually says it's going to be for 70 years. So, as he's reading that, he goes, "It's 70 years." So, he starts praying and he prays in such a way that you're going, "Is this Daniel?" Because here's this revered person and we see this humble person that is praying before God, and as he begins to pray, he goes, "We've sinned. We deserve open shame. We deserve everything horrible, but You're gracious and You be merciful to us." And he cries out to God, and Gabriel comes to him, and he goes, "The moment you started praying that prayer, I was sent." Now what's interesting to me about the text is, Gabriel had visited him in Chapter 8, but didn't give him, I would say, a particular greeting. He just kind of begins to explain things, but in Chapter 9, because he has humbled himself, you know what Gabriel says to him? "You, who are greatly esteemed." Scriptures wanting you to see that before Gabriel was sent, because God had an explanation to give Daniel, but the second time Gabriel was sent was that he would encourage Daniel because as he is praying and confessing, God wanted him to know that he was greatly esteemed. It's the same thing here with Mary. Gabriel was going to let

her know, "You are greatly esteemed." Now, the question is, why? And there's only one answer to this. It's because she's humble before the Lord. It's the only reason. I mean, what is it she's done? What is it she could possibly have done? She's just a young girl, maybe 15,16,17 at the most, and on top of that, she's an indigent. How do we know that? Because when they come before the Lord to offer sacrifices, it's turtle doves or pigeons that they offer. So, that's always, according to Leviticus, a sign that they don't have any money. So, here you have this indigent girl; she actually describes herself as a servant girl, which seems to be that was her role and an angel of God visits her in the most unlikely place, which would be Nazareth. I mean, it sure would be better if she were living at a better place than Nazareth, instead of where all these Gentiles are. I mean, it's a little embarrassing, right? But the point is that God sees this heart. It doesn't matter where you are, it doesn't matter who you are; it does matter that your heart's right.

As the Angel will say, in verse 28, as he comes to her, "Greetings, favored one!" Now, people will

misunderstand why she's favored, "Because Mary's so great. She did such a great work." No, no, she kept herself pure before the Lord, and it was that humility before God that God says, "I see this." And it was the perfect time for this promise of prophecy to come true, that a child would be born of a virgin, because once again the girl could not have been married prior. So, it would have to be a young girl. The perfect timing of God within the passage.

(Luke 1:30) "The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God."

Once again, why favor? Because of her humility and because of her submission.

(Luke 1:31) "And behold, you will conceive..."

And great things are going to happen.

As it goes on to say,

(Luke 1:33) "and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end."

(Luke 1:34) Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?"

Now, this is not Mary questioning the legitimacy of what the angel is saying like Zacharias, this is her actually questioning, “How could me, being a virgin, actually have a child?” And what's interesting is what is understood in the text, and if you look with me,

(Luke 1:34) “Mary said to the angel, “How can this be...” and you can literally put in there, “for me”.

This is what we're going to see throughout the Gospel of Luke, “How could it be possible that this is happening to me?” Well, that's actually the response of humble people because they're not thinking, “I deserve something.” It's like, “Why would I be shown all of this magnificent favor, me being who I am and having really nothing to offer?” so to speak.

If you drop on down to verse 43, it'll be the same response that Elizabeth has. What does it say?

(Luke 1:43) “And how has it happened to me, that the mother of my Lord would come to me?”

So, throughout, what we began to realize is that God's going to do literally the impossible. God is setting up the stage to do the impossible.

In fact, this is his statement in verse 37,

(Luke 1:37) “For nothing will be impossible with God.”

The way that we usually think is in the realm of possible. At the best, our faith might go into the plausible, but rarely do we ever think impossible, but that's where God kicks in; that's where God gets real in our lives. This is why when you get into the realm of the impossible, you shouldn't panic, you should rejoice, because this is where you begin to see the power of God. Because look, when you're in the possible and plausible, you're still figuring out, “Well, I could do some of this.” But God doesn't want you to do some of this. All glory needs to be given to Him. So, he chooses these that are in the realm of the humble. Look, there are going to be things in your life where you're going to be praying, and you're going to say, “Wait a minute. You said You were going to do this and it hasn't happened. So why hasn't it happened?” Well, I'm going to give you 3 reasons and I'm going to give you what God is

doing by both making you wait or by perhaps doing something according to a different time schedule than yours. I'm going to tell you why He does that. So, three reasons. The first thing that He's going to do and one of the reasons why He doesn't do it when you think He should, is to reveal your heart. He's actually going to reveal your heart because look, most of us say we believe, like Peter, "I've got it from here." But yet he goes into protection mode for God. Now, ok, you're not really believing that God is a protector, are you? So, there are so many things that we say we believe, that the reality of it isn't.

Let me just give you a couple of passages to kind of contrast and compare. In Romans 4:20, that particular whole chapter is talking about Abraham, and it says that he believed. In fact, it literally goes on, and says, "In hope against hope he believed." (Romans 4:18) The passage then will go on to say that Abraham grew stronger in his faith while he was waiting. So, one of the telltale signs that you have true faith is that when you have to wait, you grow stronger in faith. When you have to wait and

you begin to wane in your faith, this is God revealing you don't really believe.

It's kind of the way that it's put in 2 Peter 3:4, “Where is the promise of His coming?”

So, man begins to question. Of course, one of the things that God is doing, like in Matthew 24:48, he says, “Ok, the master left,” and he said, “I'm going to come.” But then the steward said, “He's not going to come for a long time.” So, he started abusing the people, and what God is saying through the parable is “Ok, you're showing your true colors. You don't really believe that I exist, and you don't really believe that I'm going to come. You don't really believe that I'm going to meet out justice.” So, time actually reveals your heart.

Do you remember the passage in the Old Testament in 1 Samuel 13 with Saul? Samuel says, “Ok, I'm going to come. I need to offer up the sacrifices, so you need to wait for me.” And the enemy was coming, and it seemed like, ok, God's gone over time. He's gone actually into overtime because after the period of time that God said he was going to be there, it's like Samuel was late. So, He

went over the time, but He was going over the time for a reason. Why? To show Saul's heart, and Saul goes, "I'm going to do the sacrifice. I'm not going to wait for Samuel." Then Samuel goes, "What have you done? You couldn't just wait for God?" He goes, "Well, the people made me do it," or "I was worried about all the warriors coming." He goes, "Ok, so it revealed who you're trusting in." And that's exactly what God is doing in those stages of us waiting, "Do you believe?" As Romans 4 says, in hope against hope, will you believe? Will you grow stronger in your faith. If you have true faith, you'll grow stronger. So, the first is, he's going to reveal your heart. Now, what we see is the heart of both Zacharias being revealed in the passage; he turns out to be more skeptic than a believer, and Elizabeth turned out more to be a believer than a skeptic, and God begins to elevate the ones that are of faith. How wonderful to know that God is not shortchanging, which actually brings us a second point.

If you look with me in Luke 1:24,

"After these days Elizabeth his wife became pregnant..."

So, we're now going back to the initial pregnancy of Elizabeth.

“... and she kept herself in seclusion for five months, saying,

(Luke 1:25) “This is the way the Lord has dealt...”

See, the word “dealt”? Underline that word. “*Poieō*” is the word that he used in the Greek, which means, “This is the way the Lord has been working in my life.” So, she goes, “This is the way the Lord has been working in my life.” You could actually use the word “fashioning.” “He's been fashioning things in my life.”

“... when He looked with favor upon me, to take away my disgrace among men.”

Now, the picture is this, that she comes to realization that “This is why I am who I am. This is why I've had to go through what I'm going through. My whole life now makes sense; that He purposely was doing this in my life that I might manifest His glory through this time of waiting.” Really, if you think about it, where would the miracle be if she were in her 20s? But the miracle is in

this. She goes, "I was fashioned for this reason." There are times in your life where you realize when God does the exalting at the perfect time, you go, "That's why He made me. I get it. This is why He made me. This is the whole purpose of my life."

So, the second point that I want to draw attention to is that if you're having to wait, God is doing something to literally fashion a greater, more glorious deed. If you're having to wait, praise God, because whatever is happening is going to be greater. I mean, think about it, what she really wanted was a kid. Ok what does she get? She gets a kid. She gets a child that's impossible to have. Literally, impossible to have. She will have a child that's greater; according to Luke 7:28, he's greater than all the prophets that ever existed. She will have an opportunity to be with the Messiah herself and with the mother of the Messiah. She realizes, "Ok. This is why I was called." It wasn't just to have a child. See, we have certain perceptions of certain things that we want to see happen, and God says, "Ok, but I'm going to make you wait because I'm fashioning something that's going to be

greater for you.” And if you're having to wait, that's exactly what God is doing.

I think of John 11, remember where you have Lazarus, and of course he's dead. Christ could have gone there earlier, but He purposely holds Himself back and doesn't and waits for him to die. What does He say is the reason? That God would be glorified. Now, here's the point, that God is willing to take the ridicule of man. Of course, man says, “God's late. He's not coming on time.” Sometimes we feel in our heart that He's done us wrong, but God will willingly take the ridicule of man that He might bestow a greater confidence and a greater hope in your life. I can tell you this, that the times that God worked at a time that I thought, Well, that was good timing.” You know, I was thankful, but when God worked in my life when I go, “Ok. Now, it's impossible. It's impossible.” And then He worked, I go, “I can trust Him for anything” and it literally gave me a greater hope. You could just imagine, here, Lazarus, he dies and then after he's stinking, he's raised from the dead. You walk away, and you go, “I can trust Him for anything.” Now, had He not gone into the realm

of the impossible, you would not have trusted Him for everything, but now nothing's impossible. So, isn't it the graciousness of the Lord to many times take us into the realm of the impossible? Now, I know we're fighting and kicking and screaming the whole way sometimes, but God says, "This is for you."

The last thing that I want to emphasize today, and certainly there's a lot of things that we can go into in the passage, but in the end result, if God's waiting, He's waiting to exalt the humble in the proper time. He literally is going to exalt you in the proper time, and this means that He's going to make your life significant even to those around you. When you look at Daniel, God elevated him to look significant, the Jewish boy that was gone, taken into captivity. He's going to elevate you, but more specifically, He's going to make your life significant, memorable and valuable not only in the eyes of God, but God is going to exalt you in the eyes of men. I know I hear people say this, "I don't need to be exalted." Yeah, what it's talking about is that God is going to give you happiness and dignity in the lives of others, and it's really

the dignity that begins to draw souls to Himself. But God is going to use you in such a way that that man is going to say, like with Mary, “Hail, favored one.” God has been most gracious. Now, that's in Luke 1, where she's exalted.

Of course, Elizabeth will say to Mary in verse 42,

“And she cried out with a loud voice and said, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!””

We sometimes hear that passage being quoted, perhaps erroneously, but the question is, why is she blessed? See, that's the question that you have to ask yourself. The only answer is, she's blessed because God saw her humble heart, that she humbled herself under the mighty hand of God, and then He exalted her. Well, He elevated her in the eyes of those around here. Here she is, she realizes she's in a no place city; she's with a bunch of Gentiles, and on top of that, she's a servant girl, and on top of that, she's young, and God goes, “It's a perfect time to exalt you because they're going to see that it's your heart that I look at. It's nothing else.”

Let me just emphasize this too, in the context of this, Luke 11, if you look there with me. Remember, there's a woman that comes to Jesus in the midst of Him doing all the great works, and some woman cries out,

(Luke 11:27) “While Jesus was saying these things, one of the women in the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, “Blessed is the womb that bore You and the breasts at which You nursed.””

It almost sounds like Elizabeth, but she's not saying it in the context of, “your blessing comes from the favor of God that is upon the poor.”

But look at Jesus' response,

(Luke 11:28) “... “On the contrary, blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it.””

Why was Mary blessed? She kept herself pure. She heard the word of God, and she did it. She observed it.

This is why when you go to Luke 1, you look at what Mary says,

(Luke 1:46) “And Mary said:
“My soul exalts the Lord,

(Luke 1:47) And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.”

In the passage, you realize that her soul is dealing with all of her feelings and what she's saying is, “My feelings or my desires are just wanting to lift God up.” Obviously not herself, but then it goes on and says, “and my spirit,” See here? “I've been moved,” would be another way of putting it. “I've been moved to rejoice in God.” Watch the phrase here, “my Savior.” It's as if, for the first time, she realized that this salvation is for her. When you're seen and belittled by everybody around you, you never feel that way, but she goes, “I now get it. I'm favored by God. He's my Savior” and she'll use this word over and over again,

(Luke 1:48) “For He has had regard for the humble state...”

That's a low condition; the lowliest place. He's had a regard for that. By the way, the reason why she's favored. “...For behold, from this time on all generations will count me blessed.”

(Luke 1:49) “For the Mighty One has done great things for me...”

I mean, you can hear her all the way through this,

(Luke 1:52) “He has brought down rulers from their thrones,

And has exalted those who were humble.”

I mean, end of verse 50,

“...He has scattered those who were proud in the thoughts of their heart.”

“But for me, He has shown mercy.”

(Luke 1:54) “He has given help to Israel His servant, In remembrance of His mercy.”

And she begins to proclaim that wonderful message.

Scripture is telling us that God is doing a work in our lives. He's making our lives more significant. He's making it more memorable. He's making it more valuable because of the waiting; through the weighting, because when He acts, now, it's not only in the impossible realm, but also in a realm that will elevate you at the proper time. The key in the passage is, wait for God. He's working in ways that

you cannot see, you can't understand but wait for Him. He loves you. His promise has not gone unto deaf ears, and He's going to do exactly what He said He's going to do, but it's going to be at the right time for you at the time when the greatest glory will shine.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we give You thanks for your word and for the reminder that You're doing a work in our lives. You're fashioning something in the midst of this time. Lord, there have been times in our life that our eyes are opened. We realize it was for this reason that all these things happened to me; the difficulties, the problems, the time of waiting, the suffering. It had a reason. You saw our hearts. You could see that we had humbled; we subjected ourselves to what You said You want us to do. We've delighted ourselves in You. We have to admit, Lord, that there are times that we feel like You've forgotten us but thank You for this Gospel that says You haven't. You haven't. You're working in our lives. You're fashioning something that is just right for us, and you're going to

distinguish us in a way that is going to be unique and going to bring glory to You and going to encourage others. Your heads bowed and your eyes closed. Perhaps you feel that God has forgotten you, that He's too late, it's not going to happen? If you're in the realm of the impossible, thank God, because this is where it's unmistakably Him and this is where He gets all the glory, and this is exactly what He's calling for. Take a moment and give Him thanks for the things in your life and you make a resolve in your own heart that you're going to follow Him; you're going to do what He says; you're going to obey Him; you're going to submit to Him; you're going to walk in humility before your God and let Him take care of the timing.