

Sermon Outline

THE YEAR IN OUR LORD, 2012-2013

CHRIST JESUS, THE SON OF THE MOST HIGH: AN ANNUNCIATION MESSAGE

(LUKE 1:26-35)

I How Long, O Lord?

II God Sends the Angel to Nazareth... (Luke 1:26)

- A. When Caesar Augustus was emperor, and Herod was king of Judea, the Lord sends a heavenly messenger (Lk 1:5; 2:1).
—“In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth...” (v 26).
- B. In the Old Testament, angels were heavenly beings who served God as his messengers.
 - 1. Before God did something very important for his people, he would first send his angels to prepare the way.
 - a. Before Moses went to Egypt to ask for the release of Israel (Ex 3:2)
 - b. Before Joshua led the conquest of Jericho (Josh 5:14)
 - c. Before Samson the judge was born (Jdg 13:5)
 - 2. When we read that God has sent his angel, we sense that something very significant is about to take place.
 - 3. God is acting in history once again to bring his plans forward.
- C. We are also given the angel’s name: *Gabriel*.
 - 1. Gabriel was the angel who helped the prophet Daniel interpret a vision of the future (Dan 8).
 - 2. Gabriel was a prominent angel who stood in “the presence of God.” (Lk 1:19).
- D. Gabriel has been sent to the region of Galilee, and to a city in Galilee called Nazareth.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What are angels? How did they function in the Old Testament? When did they usually appear? (2) Who is Gabriel? Where in the OT has he been seen? (3) Where has the Lord sent Gabriel?

III ...To a Virgin Named Mary (Luke 1:27-29)

- A. Gabriel is sent to a specific person in Nazareth, “to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin’s name was Mary.”
- B. The Scripture gives us two facts about Mary.
 - 1. She was engaged to a certain Joseph.

2. She was a virgin.
- C. Upon appearing to Mary, the angel says, “Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!”
- D. When Mary heard what the angel said, she “was greatly troubled” and “tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be” (v 29).

***Questions for reflection:** (1) To whom is Gabriel sent? (2) What two facts are we told about Mary? (3) What kind of person was Mary given what we know? (4) What does the angel say to Mary? (5) How does Mary respond to the angel? Why do you think she responded the way she did?

IV Do Not Be Afraid (Luke 1:30)

- A. Gabriel wants Mary to know that she does not have to fear.
 1. He proceeds to set Mary at ease: “Do not be afraid, Mary...”
 2. When confronted by a holy and heavenly being, those are some of the best words a sinner can hope to hear!
- B. The reason Mary doesn’t have to fear is because she has “found favor with God.”
 1. God intends to do good to Mary, not harm.
 2. The words “found favor with God” do not mean that Mary was sinless.
 3. They mean that God had chosen Mary for a special task.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What does Gabriel say to set Mary at ease? (2) Why are Mary’s possible fears unfounded?

V You Will Conceive a Son (Luke 1:31)

- A. What is this task God has given to Mary?

—Gabriel says: “And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son...”
- B. In ancient Jewish culture, a child was a blessing from God.

—This is auspicious news!
- C. But this is where things get strange.
 1. Although it is normal for parents to decide the names of their children, Mary and Joseph are not going to have that honor in this case.
 2. In this particular case, the child’s name has already been determined.
 3. Gabriel says, “and you shall call his name Jesus.”
- D. Let us ponder the significance of this fact.
 1. Consider the name of the child.
 - a. His name shall be called Jesus (or *Yeshua* in Hebrew.)
 - b. Jesus/*Yeshua* is a variation of the name Joshua.

—Joshua was the great prophet who succeeded Moses and led Israel into the Promised Land.

2. But the name *Yeshua* is also significant at another level.
 - a. The word *yeshua* means “salvation” or “YHWH saves.”
 - b. Consider Isaiah 52:7, 10 again: “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation [*yeshuah*] who says to Zion, “Your God reigns”...The LORD has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation [*yeshuah*] of our God.”
3. God requires that Mary’s son be named “Jesus” or *Yeshua*, because *yeshua*—YHWH’s salvation—is what Jesus will be! —Somehow, this child Jesus is linked to that great salvation YHWH would bring when he returns to his people.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What task is given to Mary from God? (2) What would be unusual about the naming of Mary’s child? (3) What is the significance of Jesus’ name? How does the name *Yeshua* link Jesus to the theme of salvation in Isaiah 52:7, 10? (4) What does Jesus’ name imply about his mission in the world?

VI Jesus Will Be the Great Son of the Most High (Isaiah 52:10)

- A. Jesus is going to be a magnificent person: “He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High.”
- B. But the angel also says that this child “will be called the Son of the Most High.”
 1. That statement clarifies what kind of greatness we are talking about.
 2. The Most High is God himself.
 3. The title “Son of the Most High” or Son of God could refer to a number of people or groups of people.
 - a. It can refer to angels (Job 1:6; 2:1).
 - b. It can refer to the nation of Israel as a whole.
 - c. It can refer to the King of Israel from the line of David.
- C. We know that “Son of the Most High” refers to the King of Israel because of what Gabriel says next: “And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David”
 1. Royalty is in view.
 2. Jesus is the Son of the Most High because he is the new King of Israel.
 3. Because Jesus will be born to Mary, who would eventually be the wife of Joseph, a descendant of David, Jesus is going to be born into the House of David.
 4. As a male member of the Davidic household, Jesus will have the right to the Davidic throne.
- D. The wonderful truth that Gabriel wants Mary to grasp is that the Lord God himself will see to it that Jesus receives the throne.

- E. Even at this early stage in the Gospel of Luke, we are already sensing how Jesus' life will unfold.
 1. The Lord God has claim Jesus as his own child, the way he claimed David and all the other great prophets of the past.
 2. The Lord God will overrule all events so that Jesus will eventually ascend to the seat of royal power.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What will Jesus be called? (2) What does “the Son of the Most High” mean in the case of Jesus? (3) Who will give Jesus the royal throne?

VII Of His Kingdom There Will Be No End (Lk 1:33)

- A. When Jesus ascends to his throne, all the promises the Lord made to David's descendants will be in force.
- B. Gabriel says, “and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”
- C. The basis of this promise comes from the Davidic covenant in 2 Samuel 7.

—Second Samuel 7:16: The Lord says to David, “And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.”
- D. What Gabriel is saying to Mary is very much in line with what YHWH had promised centuries ago.
- E. The Lord is simply fulfilling his promise to his servant David.
 1. He is raising up the Branch of Jesse.
 2. When Jesus ascends to his throne, he will take his place in a line of kings. This line was interrupted when Judah went into exile.
 3. Now, many years later, the Branch of David is about to be restored.
- F. Yet, this new Son of David named Jesus would also be the last King because his rule will truly be eternal.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) How long will Jesus' rule last? (2) What is the basis of the eternal kingdom? How does God's promise concerning Jesus relate to 2 Samuel 7:16? (3) Why will there be no more Davidic kings after Jesus?

VIII How Will This Be? (Lk 1:34-35)

- A. But Mary has one more question for the angel. “And Mary said to the angel, ‘How will this be, since I am a virgin?’” (v 34)
 1. There are two possible explanations for such a question.
 - a. Mary may have understood Gabriel to mean that she is about to conceive almost immediately.
 - b. Mary may have simply been at a loss for words—she says what first comes to mind! (Donald Macleod, *The Person of Christ*, 28).

- B. Whatever the reason for this question, it allows Gabriel the opportunity to say something about the unique circumstances of Jesus' conception.
1. How is it possible for Mary, a virgin, to conceive?
—The angel answers: “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you...”
 2. The Holy Spirit is the Presence of God; that aspect of God who enforces God's will upon creation.
 3. This language of “overshadowing” or “hovering over” recalls various Old Testament texts.
 - a. Genesis 1:2: “and the Spirit of God was *hovering over* the face of the waters.”
 - b. Exodus 24:16: “The glory of the LORD dwelt on Mount Sinai, and the cloud *covered* it six days...”
 - c. Exodus 40:34: “Then the cloud *covered* the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle...”
 - d. Psalm 91:4: “He will *cover* you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness is a shield and buckler.”
 4. God is about to do what he had done before.
—But this time, God focuses the power of his holy Glory-Presence on one specific individual, Mary.
- C. As a result of God's direct intervention in the formation of this child, Jesus “will be called holy—the Son of God.”
1. Earlier, we saw that Jesus will be called the Son of the Most High because God will make him a royal Son of David.
 2. Gabriel is now introducing another dimension to the sonship of Jesus.
 - a. While Jesus will be the Son of God in an *earthly, royal* sense, that's not the only meaning of his sonship.
 - b. Jesus will be the Son of God also in a *spiritual* sense.
—He will be the Son of God because the Holy Spirit forms his human body in the virgin's womb.
 - i. Note: We do NOT say that the Holy Spirit is the father of Jesus.
—The Holy Spirit is the Creator of Jesus' human nature through the body of Mary.
 - ii. It is in this sense that Jesus is the Son of God: His human nature was directly created by God himself without the agency of a male.
 - c. In fact, Jesus' royal Sonship is itself based on his supernatural Sonship.
—Prof. Joel Green: “Jesus is ‘Son of God’ not as a consequence of his assuming the throne of David...but as a result of his conception, itself the result of the miraculous work of the Spirit” (*The Gospel of Luke*, 91)
- D. Once we recognize that Jesus' Sonship is also a spiritual sonship, we are prepared for what will come much later in Scripture.

1. Jesus is Son of God in the ultimate sense that he is the eternal Son of the Father.
 2. Jesus is that aspect of the one God that is *Son*—he is God the eternal Son (Heb 1:2).
 3. Because Jesus is God the Son, he is perfectly suited to assuming the role of the royal Son of God on earth.
 4. That important revelation will come much later when all the other words of Jesus have been collected.
- E. But what we have at this point in revelation is already an awesome truth.
1. Jesus is the Son of God in two important ways.
 - a. He is the Son of God because he is the Heir to the throne of David.
 - b. He is the Son of God because he is given human nature by God the Holy Spirit.
 2. Because Jesus is the royal and heavenly Son of God, he can live up to the calling of his name.
—He will be the *yeshua*—God’s powerful gift of salvation to the world.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What are two possible explanations for Mary’s question? (2) How will Mary be able to conceive this child? (3) What does the language of “overshadowing” and “hovering over” recall? (4) Aside from the royal, earthly dimension of Jesus’ sonship, what is the other dimension of Sonship that Gabriel hints at? (5) “Because Jesus is the royal and heavenly Son of God, he can live up to the calling of his name. He will be the *yeshua*—God’s powerful gift of salvation to the world.” Discuss.

IX Jesus Is God’s Salvation For Us

God’s great salvation, contained in Jesus, comes to us from the outside, and without our active help. To be saved, all we can do is receive this salvation as a gracious gift from God. And that we do by trusting in Jesus Christ.

- A. Who is ultimately the key actor behind the events of this passage?
 1. Consider the following facts:
 - a. It was the Lord who sent the angel to Mary.
 - b. It was the Lord who chose Mary for his purposes.
 - c. It was also the Lord who had determined that the child should be called Jesus.
 - d. It is the Lord who grants Mary this special child by the power of his Holy Spirit.
 - e. It is the Lord who would give the throne of David to Jesus.
 2. The prime mover in the events is *the Lord God himself*.
- B. Neither Mary nor Joseph really have much say in what is to happen.

1. They can only receive with joy and gratitude this honor that has been bestowed on them.
2. That is what Mary does.
3. How does Mary finally respond to Gabriel?
 - a. “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; *let it be to me according to your word*” (Lk 1:38).
 - b. What we have here is a beautiful picture of what it means to receive and rest on Christ Jesus alone for salvation.
—It is to take God at his Word, and cast our hopes entirely on the Lord.
- C. In our humanistic, man-centered age, we like boasting in ourselves. We boast in...
 - our achievements
 - our efficiency
 - our excellence
 - our own virtue (and these days, our lack of virtue)
- D. The point of the virgin conception of Christ is to show that unless God acts, man cannot do anything to save himself.
- E. By sending Jesus to the world, God, the offended party, is reconciling us to himself.
- F. God has come to save us from his judgment by means of Jesus Christ.
 1. As our salvation, Jesus ends our separation from God.
 2. As our salvation, Jesus begins the Kingdom of God over us.
- G. Our response should be to receive Jesus Christ the Son of God for our salvation—and begin our new lives under his rule.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) Who is ultimately the key actor behind the events to come? (2) How does Mary finally respond to Gabriel? How is her response a model for us? (3) “The point of the virgin conception of Christ is to show that unless God acts, man cannot do anything to save himself.” Discuss.