

**Mary's Story**  
**Luke 1:26-38**

Friends, the story which our kids presented to us this morning reminds us that we don't have to impress God in order to get his attention or love, He loves us just because He loves us, because that's just the kind of God he is!

And really, that is the starting point – the “why” if you will of the whole Christmas Season.

So as we see Christmas decorations and lights on people's homes and in the shops, as we hear Christmas music playing over the radio and in the malls as we're shopping for gifts, as Starbucks rolls out its holiday flavored lattes...

friends - the “why” behind this whole season is God's love.

As John 3:16 says *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*

And friends, believe it or not - we need to be reminded that God loves us – and of how much God loves us!

Especially around Christmas time, not just because of how commercialized things have become but because for many people Christmas means lots of stress because there are so many things to do in order to get ready for it.

And Christmas time can mean loneliness for those who don't have or can't be around family or friends or who have recently lost loved ones.

That's why John 3:17 is just as important as verse 16 – because it says *“For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.”*

In other words the birth of God's Son, and by implication the celebration of the birth of God's Son was not intended to be something that burdens us, or causes us stress and anxiety

But its something that God did out of love through which he intended to liberate us and free us up –

as Jesus himself said *“I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. (John 10:10)*

However, that’s not always how we experience it, is it? I mean this is something important – it’s God’s Son, we ought to do something, we ought to make sure things are right!

Just like in the story of the Children of the King – when it was announced that the King was coming to visit, the little girl felt she should prepare something, and when she couldn’t she was worried.

And as we read in the scripture this morning, when the Angel visited Mary to tell her she would be the mother of the messiah, she was initially **anxious as well**.

But by the end of the Gabrielle’s visit, Mary is calm and willing to make herself available to God’s to be a part of His plan.

So what was it that helped Mary move from being “greatly troubled” to being able to say “I am the Lord’s servant, may your word to me be fulfilled”?

Well friends – it’s all about God’s love. It’s **God’s love that moves Mary** to respond the way she did in the end.

God loved Mary so much that He took the initiative **to break into her life** to make her a part of his plans.

And Mary was just a young woman in her early teens, just an average Israelite girl who was planning to get married.

And She didn’t have any particular skills or abilities to note, but...God wanted to use her anyways. And so God sent his angel Gabrielle to let her know about His plans for her life.

And it’s the greeting that Gabrielle gives Mary which gets her so worried. He says *“Hail Mary, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you”*.

Why is this troubling?

Well think about it - how do you react when your boss comes into your office and says to you, Hi Bob, my most favorite employee... or a friend comes up and says “Jane... my most favorite person in the whole world...” or Mom, have I told you how much I love you lately?

Our response is... this person is buttering me up, what do they want from me? And so the text says Mary wondered what kind of greeting this was?

Who favors her? Who is this person greeting her in such a way, what does he want from her? She wasn't anyone special; she didn't have any particular talents, why was she suddenly getting this attention?

Because to be favored meant that somebody wanted you for something.

It's sort of like a thug coming up to some professional athlete and saying “Hi... how ya doin’? I work for Big Eddy and he likes you, so now you're working for Big Eddy too – and Big

Eddy has got a lot of money riding on the game next week, so you're gonna help him out by throwing the game - kapeche! Being favored could be bad news – depending on who favored you. So Mary is really troubled by this greeting.

And friends it can be really troubling to us as well to hear someone say to us “Hey did you know that God loves you and He has a plan for your life”

Who is this “God” who “loves” me? I had my own plans going along quite nicely thank-you very much. I didn't ask from them to be interrupted.

It can leave us quite agitated and troubled as well.

So the angel Gabrielle puts Mary at ease – “Don't be afraid” he says “You've found favor with God”

At that starts to make Mary relax because you see she knows God. She belongs to the nation of Israel – God's chosen people, the one's to whom God has revealed himself so that they know who He really is.

**Mary has history with God** – or at least she knows about her people’s history with Him, the stories of how God had delivered them from Egypt, lead them through the Red Sea, fed them manna in the desert.

How he broke down the walls of Jericho, gave them the Promised Land, and on and on it could go... there is no shortage of stories of how God has shown his love as He acted to save and deliver Israel.

So this puts her somewhat at ease. And furthermore the Angel has some really good news for her...

He says that she will have a son, and this son will be named Jesus – meaning “He saves” and...

He will be called “Son of the Most High”

He will be given the throne of David

He will have a kingdom that never ends

Now think about this for a minute – Mary is just a peasant girl, a nobody really, but here she’s being told that her son will be... royalty, a King in fact. It’s incredible.

But what’s most important about this is not that Mary’s hit the jackpot, but that she knows this good news illustrates God’s love.

Friends, God’s love means that when He sees his people struggling to obey him and love him and stay faithful to him He won’t abandon them – even if they deserve it

**He sends someone to save them!**

And God’s love means that He keeps his promises – God had made a covenant with King David that his line would never end, that He would always have a descendent on the throne of Israel.

For years it looked like God had forgotten this promise- Israel had been sent into exile, and now the Roman Empire ruled over them and oppressed them

but now Mary hears the Angel say that **God intends to keep that promise**... through her a son.

This is incredible news, but then again God's love is an incredible thing is it not?

You see friends when we hear that God loves us, and has a plan for our lives and we wonder... what is that all about?

We can look back to how God has acted in the past –with Israel and with Mary, and see that God's love is and his plan for our lives is something good.

God's love saves us from what is wrong in our lives, God's love keeps promises - and the best promise God ever made was that He would make this whole world new once again.

And, His love for you and I means that He has begun to renew our world by renewing our hearts - through the power of His Holy Spirit.

But **good news can be hard to believe**, and when something seems almost too good to be true – in our experience it usually is.

And while Mary is glad to hear about the amazing things that God's love will bring into her life – it seems almost inconceivable.

So she asks “How will this be, since I am a virgin?” or as the original text says- “since I have not known a man”

Mary doesn't understand how God's word will come true because she's thinking within the confines of normal experience. If she's going to have a child, she needs a man to have one with – and she's only engaged, not married yet.

So how will this work? I don't get it, she says.

Friends, here's another thing about **God's love – it can handle our questions**, it's not wrong to ask God questions... we just need to be prepared to receive His answers!

And so the Angel tells Mary how this will all happen.

And the answer is simple – **God is going to do it!** You don't have to do the work of trying to conceive, you don't even have to have a husband – the Holy Spirit will do that work, and thus your child will truly be the “Son” of God

And if you need proof that God can do this Mary – the angel says - your relative Elizabeth is already six months pregnant.

In other words the angels says - If God can make a barren womb fertile again... and Mary would know that the nation of Israel actually comes from a number of barren women – Sarah, Rachael, Hannah, Samson's mother...

“So Mary...” the Angel insinuates “If God can do all that with barren women, **imagine what God can do** with a young woman like yourself who is fertile?”

Fertile not only biologically, but fertile spiritually - because she believes, she has faith; she knows God can do this – because she is one of His chosen people and She knows He loves her.

He is Yahweh, the Holy one of Israel, God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob, The Creator of the Heavens and the Earth...

And soon to be the Father of her child...

So she whispers back to the Angel – “**I am the Lord's servant,** may the word you spoke to me be fulfilled”

You see friends, here's another thing we learn about God's love – **It woos us.** It softens us, it attracts us and it makes us open up and respond to God with willing hearts of our own.

God's love may initially come and interrupt our lives and throw our plans off unexpectedly – but once we've been exposed to it – it brings forth a reciprocating love in our own hearts – all on its own, we don't have to try to force it.

So while the Christmas Season can be a time of anxiety and stress and loneliness, if we are reminded that the “Why” behind it all is that *God so loved the world that He sent his one and only Son...*

Then experiencing God's Love will give birth to something else in us – it will move us from being troubled to responding to Him with a love of our own.

Friends God's Holy Spirit will do this in you, you don't have to conjure it up, you don't have to try to have a supernatural experience, you don't have to fake it till you make it

Just allow yourself to be reminded throughout this season of  
**God's incredible love for you**

And then out of love for God we too will whisper with Mary –  
I am the Lord's servant, may your word to me be fulfilled as well.

Friends – remember God loves you!  
Amen.

God interrupt us,  
Break into our busy lives  
With your love  
Stir up a greater love for you in our hearts  
So we want to serve you  
For it is better to be a servant of the King  
Then to be the master of a life  
which does not love God  
Amen.