

# GraceCity Advent Study

## *Good News, Great Joy, All People*



Week #3

December 9-December 15, 2019

“Mary the Servant” (Luke 1:26-56)

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Mary was a young woman from Nazareth, a small town with a poor reputation. While living in expectation of soon tying the knot to her beloved Joseph, an angel from God arrived with a shocking message, a message that could jeopardize her impending marriage and push her even further to the margins of society. Yet the angel Gabriel’s message was one of good news. Mary found favor with God and was to give birth to His son. No matter the optics to a skeptical world, Mary was chosen to fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah 7:14. Mary was to bring into this world the God incarnate, initiating God’s kingdom for all people.

### Preparation:

- What does Mary being chosen to bear the Son of God tell us about who God uses in His story?
- When have you received good news from God that you did not initially see as good? How did continued prayer change your perspective?

**Read:** Luke 1:26-56

### Notes/Definitions:

Gabriel – One of the highest-ranking angels who “stands in the presence of God”; he is always seen as a messenger-type figure.

Messiah – Hebrew equivalent of the Greek word *Christos*, meaning “anointed”

Nazareth – Hometown of Jesus, which was the object of much ridicule and contempt among the citizens of Israel (see John 1:46)

Elizabeth – Descendent of Aaron, mother of John the Baptist, and relative of Mary. Elizabeth’s pregnancy was also a miracle as she was an elderly, barren woman. Refer to the [Weeks 1 and 2 study guide](#) for more information.

### Questions:

1. The angel Gabriel declared that Mary was highly favored and the Lord was with her. How did Mary initially react to this message? What were her concerns? Did it seem like good news?
2. As Gabriel continues his message, Mary’s outlook changes to where she ultimately says in verse 38, “I am the Lord’s servant. May your word to me be fulfilled.” What does Mary’s response tell us about her? What does being the Lord’s servant mean to you?

*Mary’s choice to use the title of Lord in addressing God is a recognition of the power and authority of God, and by calling herself a servant, she puts her relationship with God in a proper perspective. Yet, while we are the Lord’s servant, Jesus declares in John 15:15 that we are his friends as He has made everything known to us.*

3. Describe a time when an unexpected pronouncement from God changed the course of your life. How did you react to a future that was different than your previously held expectations?

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This study has been developed for personal reflection and group discussion. To participate in the conversation, join a GraceCity small group. For more information on times and locations, email [smallgroups@gracecitybaltimore.org](mailto:smallgroups@gracecitybaltimore.org).

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4. When Mary arrives at Elizabeth's home, Elizabeth offers praises (v. 42-45). What about Mary makes Elizabeth exclaim that she is blessed? What is our reaction when we encounter others embracing a call and serving God?

*In other words, do you get excited to see others grow and mature into the person that God made them to be? Does that joy push you to encourage and to develop intimate relationships that allow you and others to reach that goal?*

5. In verse 45, Elizabeth exclaims, "Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!" How does this speak to the depth Mary's faith? How does this recognition by Elizabeth reflect her own faith and experience?

*In the telling of Elizabeth's pregnancy carrying John the Baptist, she is the one commended for her belief in the Lord's promises. Here Elizabeth recognizes the same faith in Mary as Mary reflects on an equally unlikely pregnancy.*

6. In this passage, both Mary and Elizabeth are filled with the Holy Spirit (v. 35, 41). This same Holy Spirit is given to us (see Acts 2). How does the Holy Spirit lead us today?

*In John 16:7, the Holy Spirit is referred to as an Advocate or a Helper. In Romans 8:26-27, the Holy Spirit intercedes in our prayers.*

7. As mentioned in the introduction, Mary was a young woman from Nazareth. Have you been discounted by others based on your age, your gender, or your hometown? How did it make you feel? How have you overcome those prejudices, and how do you continue to confront them? If you are instead in a position with status, how do you use your position to highlight or elevate those that may be seen by others as less than?

8. In a recent sermon, Pastor Bob declared the choice of "thy will be done" led to a life marked by self-sacrifice, service to others, and suffering. How does Mary's story fulfill each of these attributes? How can we pursue greatness through service?

*The sermon was based on Mark 10:35-45 where James and John ask to sit on the right and left hand of Jesus in Glory. Jesus concludes saying, "whoever wants to become great must become a servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all" (v. 43-44).*

9. God's call to Mary was not just for her life but for the whole world. Often when we talk of calls on our lives, we focus on how it affects us. How can we keep the bigger perspective of being used for greater things beyond our own lives?

10. In Elizabeth's and Mary's pregnancies, each should have been disqualified due to either age or virginity. How can we be open to calls in our lives that we feel disqualified for? How does God equip those that are called?

### **Closing Prayer:**

*Our lives can feel programmed as we move from one goal to the next. Yet sometimes God has different plans for our lives than we have. Sometimes those detours are momentary, and sometimes they change the trajectory of our lives. Pray for ears to hear and a willing heart to follow God's leading and call. Find a community for support and to support as you all run the race together. Seek opportunities to serve others and share the security that comes from knowing Christ.*