



ROSE  
HILL  
CHURCH

Luke 1:26-38  
Living as Followers of Jesus  
“His Name Will Be Jesus”

Rev. Brian North  
December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2024  
2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Advent

Pray. Read **Luke passage**. This morning I really want to let the music be what primarily ministers to us. God’s word is not just written, it’s not just preached...it is also communicated through music. And so, today we put an emphasis on hearing God’s word through music. And what better way to celebrate “joy” on this second Sunday in Advent.

But I do want to talk about this passage for just a moment...which in preacher time is 25 minutes...just kidding 😊. 10 minutes at the most – which is another reason for joy today, right? I want to touch on two things. The first is to answer an age-old question about this passage as it relates to the earlier verses in chapter 1. In verse 18, as we saw last week, **Zecharias questions the angel Gabriel about how he and his wife, Elizabeth, are going to become pregnant and give birth to a baby boy**. As he puts it, “I am an old man and my wife is well along in years.” He expresses doubt. The angel Gabriel is not pleased with this doubt of God, and so the angel gave Elizabeth an early Christmas present and makes Zecharias mute until the baby is born.

Then in today’s passage, Mary also raises a question expressing doubt about her becoming pregnant and giving birth, and yet Gabriel (same angel!) doesn’t make her mute, or even Joseph, as if it’s the men who need to be made mute. **Why the different responses, from the same angel, to the same question of “how can this be”?** The most common response I’ve ever seen about this is that the text doesn’t give us a sense of their tone of voice or their attitude...and so the thinking goes that Mary was probably responding from a place of humility and openness, and Zechariah wasn’t. Maybe there’s something to that. But I think there’s something else going on that’s more clearly in the text.

So, in a nutshell: **The difference between the two is the differing reasons they each have for asking their question of “how can this be?”**. Mary’s reason is that she’s not married yet, and so how can she become pregnant? This is rooted in the sexual ethic that we see throughout Scripture, that sex is a holy gift to be expressed between a husband and wife. Mary and Joseph are

engaged, not married. And although Gabriel doesn't give a time-frame for this pregnancy, Mary understands it to be soon, and in fact that's what we see happen as we read on. So, to her way of thinking, there's no way she can become pregnant: She's a virgin and because of her faith, she's staying that way until she's married. I realize this may sound old-fashioned to anyone here who don't have a Biblically-informed worldview of sexual relations. However, unlike secular culture: God does not think sex is casual. Rather, God thinks so highly of the sexual union that he has reserved it for the marriage bed. So, because of her purity and desire to live a life rooted in Scripture and the truths of God, Mary doesn't see how the angel's announcement is possible. Hence, "How will this be?"

**Contrast that with Zecharias, who's doubt is not rooted in a scriptural truth, but that he and his wife are too old to have a baby.** He's paraphrasing the actor Danny Glover from a 1980's movie, "I'm too old for this stuff;" It might be a great line in a movie, but it's not a good excuse with God. It's not Scriptural. So, the reasoning behind each of their questions is completely different. One is Scriptural, the other is not. God honors one but not the other. And so, Zecharias is made mute, while Mary sings for joy.

The second thing I want to touch base on is the name of Jesus. Gabriel says in verse 31, "...you are to call him Jesus." Later, in chapter 2, we read that indeed she and Joseph name him Jesus. So, we might wonder, "Why does the angel care what he's named? What's the big deal?"

**The name "Jesus" is the Greek form of the Hebrew name "Yehoshua" (sometimes shortened to "Yeshua") which in English we call Joshua.** Greek was the common language in the Roman empire and Israel is Roman rule at that time. But Hebrew was the native language of Israel and the language of the Jewish faith. The New Testament is written in Greek, the Old Testament is in Hebrew. And: **The names Jesus and Yehoshua mean: "God saves."** Matthew, in his gospel account, explicitly writes that he will be called Jesus because he will save people from their sins.

And, "Christ" is not his last name. That's a title – Jesus the Christ would be the more proper way to put it. "Christ" is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew

“Messiah” and they both mean “anointed one” or “chosen one.” So, to speak of Jesus Christ is to speak of one who is anointed to save. His name is who he is and it’s what he does. He is the anointed one – the Christ – and he’s anointed for a purpose: to save. This is all God’s doing. It’s his grace. It does beg the question: who or what is saved? Well: **From Jesus’ ministry and the rest of the New Testament we see that it’s people who recognize that they’re in need of a savior, in need of being saved from themselves and their sin.** Oftentimes, we don’t like to acknowledge that we need any saving or rescuing. That’s just part of the problem with pride. But with humility comes a recognition that we can’t save ourselves.

The good news of Jesus is that he can save us. God has given him to us, as the one anointed for this thing that we cannot do ourselves. We need all the help and saving we can get – whether it’s in our marriages, our places of work, raising kids as a single parent, a health scare we’re facing right now, financial struggles...the sin in our lives – from the obvious ones to the ones we try and hide even from ourselves...there are all kinds of things we need help to get through or flat-out to be saved from.

The ultimate one we all face is the grave. Jesus saves us even there. Not by eliminating it, but bringing us through it, to the other side into the presence of God. **We can’t make ourselves holy and righteous to be in the presence of a holy and righteous God for all eternity. Jesus does that. He saves us.** It’s the job he’s anointed for. And I hope and pray this Christmas you know his saving presence and work in your life...even if you’ve got some doubts and questions...even if you wonder “how can this be?”: Come to the Lord in faith, and trust in Jesus, because he was born to save you. Let’s pray...Amen.