

[00:00:00] If you turn with me in your Bibles to Luke chapter one, this is my Christmas message.

[00:00:09] And I love this story and what it tells us. And so important we remember why Christmas at the very, very beginning. Why Christmas? And we're going to break in to the story at verse 26 of Luke chapter one and read through to verse 38.

[00:00:33] And yeah, it's great. It's great to see all this one actually surprises as many of you as there are with the impending festivities.

[00:00:42] So thanks. It's great you're here. In the six months of Elizabeth's pregnancy. So, Luke 1:26, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. I mean, we've heard this so many times, it's just going to wash in your brain and out your brain. But we're going to read it anyway because it's a brilliant story. So the virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, greetings, you are highly favored.

[00:01:16] The Lord is with you. Mary is greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be, which you would, wouldn't you?

[00:01:27] What's this? But the angel said to her, do not be afraid, Mary. You have found favor with God. That's a pretty amazing thing to have happened.

[00:01:38] You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will call him Jesus. He will be great. And he will be called the Son of the Most High God.

[00:01:47] The Lord God will give him the throne of his father, David. He will reign over Jacob's descendants forever. His kingdom will never end.

[00:01:55] Man, what a baby. How will this be, Mary asked the angel. Since I'm a virgin, the angel said, it's simple, Mary. Well, I inserted that bit just like this. The Holy Spirit will come on you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. And that's how it's going to happen.

[00:02:18] They never told me that in my biology class.

[00:02:24] Even Elizabeth, your relative, is going to have a child in her old age.

[00:02:31] And she who's said to be unable to conceive is in her six months. For no word from God will ever fail.

[00:02:41] I am the Lord's servant, Mary answered, may your word to me be fulfilled. And the angel left her. What a shocking thing.

[00:02:49] It's biologically impossible.

[00:02:54] And yet here is one of the things I've just been meditating on. This story just grew and grew on me is this sense of, you are the favored one of the Lord.

[00:03:06] You have found favor with God. And so many people just hope they've got favor with God, but the truth is you've got favour with God.

[00:03:16] Last time I spoke, we referred to Romans, chapter 5:1 and 2, and it says that by faith, we now stand in God's favour.

[00:03:26] We now stand in God's favor because of what Jesus later went on to do. We, every single one of us, is looked on with as much delight and favor in this moment as Mary was in that moment.

[00:03:43] Every single one of us is looked on with as much delight and favour, with as much impact as what was happening to her. His gaze is on you in the same measure now and yesterday and tomorrow because of what Jesus went on to do. You are the objects of the favor of God. You and I are the objects of the goodness of God. We're the objects of his affection. That's what really. What. The verses Anne was reading earlier on. Isn't that amazing? That has the. What does that look like that. Because what I just said can just be a nice Christmas concept and. Yeah, yeah, yeah. And we go back to presents and food and all the things we were thinking about at the beginning. What's it mean to you, our family and, you know, bucks fizz, you know, alcohol before midday and all these kind of things that go on in our life. But what the heck? Where did you know, Getting in the Christmas spirit, whatever that is. What the heck? Where did this all happen? This happened because. And this happens because of this thing that's happening here, which is being spoken to Mary, is something called incarnation.

[00:05:00] Incarnation is the divine joining with the ordinary and the human and producing something divine that is also human.

[00:05:11] Now there's as much favor on you as it was on her, and that is exactly what God is doing in your life.

[00:05:24] Incarnation.

[00:05:27] We're celebrating the incarnation which made our incarnation possible. And how does it happen? It happens when the Holy Spirit moves.

[00:05:40] So it's not biologic. You won't find this in any biological text, but this is telling us something fantastical that we've been celebrating for 2000 years and mostly forgotten about. But the momentum of the celebration continues even though we can't remember why we did it. It's a bit like Guy Fawkes, you know, we all still like fireworks night, but why did we do that now?

[00:06:05] Who was Guy Fawkes? What was it? You know, if that was 400 years ago, but we like having fireworks.

[00:06:12] Let's make some. You know, I love a bit of pyrotechnics, you know, and who doesn't like A bit of Buck's fears and family. And somehow the momentum of the event was so ginormous that we live in the momentum and we've forgotten the event. And this is so important that we understand that this event, this season, is because there was this incredible miracle called incarnation. And that incarnation meant that you are being incarnated by Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit. So this isn't what's happened in the church has all become like doctrine and stories and getting the theories right and remembering. Yes, we remember Jesus came and he was man and he was God, but we forget that. The point was that meant he could come in you.

[00:07:10] Paul, when he writes to the Galatians, he says, oh, Galatians, I'm just in real labor, like I am in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed.

[00:07:27] Not in Mary, in you.

[00:07:30] In you. I'm like, wow, this is incredible, isn't it? It's the capacity of this invisible God to birth his attributes, his nature inside human life by the power of the Spirit.

[00:07:49] It's God's ability to interact with your humanity and produce divinity, produce divine, supernatural characteristics by interacting with your humanness.

[00:08:03] Isn't that incredible? He can make something glorious out of everybody that's just ordinary.

[00:08:11] He can produce and manifest glorious, impossible, amazing things out of everybody and anybody because of this story, because of this happening, because of this incarnation, he's incarnated in you. And by the power of the Spirit, the divine nature of God can be manifest through. Through your ordinary, humble human life.

[00:08:37] That's what Christmas is about. It's that God showed up in you.

[00:08:49] I get excited about this every time I read it. I'm like, this is the favor. Remember, it's favoured. We're all favored enough by God for this to be true of every one of us.

[00:09:02] And as the Galatians, the book of Galatians tells us over and over again, you can't get this by being good enough.

[00:09:10] You can't get this by praying long enough. You can't get this by working hard enough for Jesus. You can't get this by behavior, by not ever. You know, in Santa's record, you always did the nice and not the naughty. There is no Santa. God isn't Santa. He doesn't have a naughty and a nice list. He just has an in Christ list.

[00:09:38] And you're in Christ because you don't deserve it, not because you do. And that never changes.

[00:09:45] That's favour.

[00:09:47] You don't deserve it, but Christ is in you and he wants to manifest his divine attributes. Through you.

[00:09:54] That's Christmas, getting all these goodies you don't deserve.

[00:10:00] Because often we can sit there thinking, I don't deserve this. I'm not good enough for that. Exactly. True, you're not lying. But it's only half the truth.

[00:10:11] He came for those that don't deserve it. He came and made you worthy by his works so you wouldn't have to try and get worthy by yours.

[00:10:22] God has this incredible ability. See, God is a spirit and you can't see Him. All right? So that for most humans is a problem because we then move into the realm of imagination, theory, words, stories. But this story tells us that this spirit can interact with the human flesh and produce something visible and tangible.

[00:10:46] Our God can interact with you to make you different.

[00:10:54] That's Christmas.

[00:11:02] Every time the Holy Spirit moves, it's to birth something tangibly divine in you. Through partnering with your human nature, your normalness gets partnered with his supernaturalness to make something special.

[00:11:18] That's favor. That's Christmas.

[00:11:25] And that's only my first point.

[00:11:30] They'll be done shortly. Isn't that amazing, though, that we are so much the objects of his affection that we can live a completely wasteful life and he still has favour on us and he still wants to work inside us and is inside us to work for his good pleasure.

[00:12:00] See, sometimes we have such a separation mindset that we always think God has to come to us and speak to us from the outside. But actually, what Christmas is telling us that he's partnering with our very inner being to produce his life from the inside.

[00:12:22] God made Mary pregnant, Spirit encountered flesh and humanness and produced a human life that was both human and God. God showed up supernaturally with all the DNA required manifest inside of this woman's ovaries and then her womb. How about that? God can do that.

[00:12:53] God can manifest what he needs to manifest physically inside of you, supernaturally so that you can produce what he's called you to do.

[00:13:06] And the beautiful partnership that heaven has with Earth and the Spirit has with us is that he can birth inside you, but you still got to give birth to it.

[00:13:16] Every lady in the room just smiles because you know what that's about. Whereas guys just hold your hand and think that they were part of it.

[00:13:30] God births things in us that are real, that are tangible, that never let go of you, that don't. Sometimes when you want them to go away, they don't go away.

[00:13:45] But to actually fully produce the things externally that God is birthing in us internally requires us all to partner with the birthing process. And sometimes that can be pretty intense.

[00:14:03] But God is enabling us to do this thing. You see, sometimes we come and become Christians and think we've just joined a new social group or we've just joined a new belief group, a group of people who believe this stuff. We believe in God, which is a good thing. And all the people that believe in God and believe that God was Jesus all get together and they worship and sing and do the stuff we do and try and be like him.

[00:14:31] And what we don't realize is that the Christian life is impossible from the beginning.

[00:14:40] And then we get discouraged because we find we can't do.

[00:14:44] We can't sustain it in one form or another. But that's because we didn't realize we'd been invited into something that was fundamentally impossible for a human to do on their own.

[00:15:00] And the problem becomes is that we want to do it on our own because that makes us feel better. And the world that we live in, the gospel of the world we live in is just like you can be whatever you want to be if you work hard enough to produce it, which is absolutely killing people because they can't be whatever they want to be. And they can never work hard enough to produce what they want to produce. The gospel of Jesus Christ says, you cannot be what you want to be, but I'm going to help you. And you will be who I've created you to be.

[00:15:28] And you'll be like Jesus, which is impossible except with the help of the Holy Spirit.

[00:15:36] Sometimes it takes a long time just to sink in like man.

[00:15:41] To be a Christian is impossible to do a Christian life is. A true Christian life is impossible unless we've understood the incarnation, unless we know that. We know that God is in us, willing and working for his good pleasure. He's at work from the inside out. And we yield to and submit to that reality, which is reality. We're not making it up. We're not trying to convince ourselves that something is true. It is true. We just tend to forget it, or maybe we never knew it.

[00:16:22] As soon as you stop trying to make it happen on your own and dial into Holy Spirit, you're on me, Jesus. You're in me. I lean into your ability right now. You know what? You'll find that he's there. It's the real thing.

[00:16:42] So favor on your life.

[00:16:45] Looks like you producing fruit that looks more and more like Jesus. And that fruit can be more purity in your life, more patience, which I really need this time of year.

[00:17:04] I'm just preaching to myself now.

[00:17:08] More kindness, more power. More supernatural power, more endurance, more generosity. You know, actually generosity is a grace enablement by God.

[00:17:22] Paul writes to the the Corinthian Church and he talks about the Macedonians who in their poverty were given grace to be generous. So this thing, grace, this undeserved favor, this activity of God and His favorable disposition towards us produces generosity inside of us.

[00:17:51] The incarnation, God with us, God in us because he favours us, produces beautiful fruit from within us that shines out from us.

[00:18:05] God's favour is on us.

[00:18:09] It looks like fruit. It also looks like you're lucky.

[00:18:15] It looks like opportunities you don't deserve. It looks like doors that open that shouldn't have opened. It looks like prosperity. It looks like strange coincidences that are favourable to you. All of that equals his favor.

[00:18:36] It looks like energy, it looks like ability. It looks like functionality. It looks like the example of generosity. Favor produces his presence, produces actual fruit in your life. And favour on you produces events around you that look like doors opening.

[00:19:00] Golly, you're lucky. Isn't that a great coincidence? On and on and on.

[00:19:05] You are highly favored.

[00:19:10] 20, 25 is going to be highly favored. Look for the favor, follow. I think it's a Danny Silk saying. Follow the favour. Where's the favor of God manifesting in your life? What doors are opening? Where are you just constantly lucky?

[00:19:26] Where does it just constantly work? Even when you don't work at it? That's favour. That's to do where your favour has designed you and is leading you. So I'm out of time.

[00:19:38] Let's pray. God is in us.

[00:19:42] God is for us. God is at work within us to will and work for his good pleasure and produce divine beautiful fruit through ordinary humans like all of us.

[00:19:56] Father, thank you that you sent Jesus. Jesus, thank you that you came. Thank you for the mystery of incarnation, that God you combined yourself with, with human DNA and made Jesus.

[00:20:13] And that every day you want to combine yourself with our humanity and make more Jesus.

[00:20:22] Ha.

[00:20:25] And then you want us to give him away to others.

[00:20:28] This isn't just a truth to get excited about, it's one to share.

[00:20:33] So, Lord, we just, we just thank you, thank you, thank youk for what yout did in coming in the Incarnation. Thank youk, thank youk for a willing soul like Mary, just to say, yeah, yeah, whatever you want to do, Lord.

[00:20:50] Thank youk. For example, thank youk, thank youk, Holy Spirit. I pray right now that more of you would be being birthed in more of us as we just lean into this reality that Christ is in us. The hope of glory that was made possible at this moment of virgin conception and ultimate birth.

[00:21:18] Amen.