

Luke 1:26-38 How did Mary prepare for Christmas? Advent 4 December 24, 2017 (morning)

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God our Father's grace and peace have come to us through a baby, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen
God's Word to help us prepare for Christmas is written in Luke 1:26-38

These are Your words heavenly Father to give us confidence in Your promises. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In the name of Christ, our Savior,

New parents awaiting the birth of their firstborn child have many preparations to make. They need to check with doctors, a hospital, and insurance. They need to get baby clothes, diapers, furnishings like a crib and changing table for the baby's room, and a car seat. There is so much to prepare for just one baby! What must have gone through Mary's mind as she considered the angel's message that she her firstborn was going to be God's Son? Besides the physical needs, there was another higher level of concerns.

How did Mary prepare for Christmas?

First, what were the challenges she faced? As far as we know, Mary was young when the angel appeared to her. It was customary for women to get married while still a teenager. Couples would say their vows in a ceremony long before they lived together in marriage. Mary had said her vows, but she was still living separately from Joseph. That's when an angel appeared to her with God's message, "*Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son...*" (v.30-31) She was a virgin, but would have a child with no human father.

Can you see how this message tested Mary's faith? In a town like Nazareth, news of a pregnancy traveled fast. What would they think? Worse yet, what would Joseph think? Matthew wrote that he planned to give her a divorce, thinking that Mary had gotten pregnant from another man. Mary faced the possibility of being pregnant with no husband in a hostile town. But, God told Joseph the truth in a dream so he stayed.

Still, later in the pregnancy, they found out that they had to travel 80 miles to Bethlehem. If they were harmed along the way, what would happen to Jesus? What if demons would attack this helpless mother and child? What if she got sick and that hurt Jesus before He was born? What if there would be complications in giving birth? We have doctors, hospitals, and paramedics to help if needed for a birth. Mary was experiencing all this for the first time without expert help. There had to be so many decisions and so many questions to answer to get prepared.

If you were having a baby in your family and God told you ahead of time Your child will be a future president of the U.S.A. or your son will be a hero who helps win a decisive battle to save our country or your daughter will find a cure that will save 1,000's of lives from a disease, how would you feel about taking care of your child who will be so important? Thousands of people's lives will depend on your care. What a responsibility! How much more it was for Mary! The angel told her, "*The holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.*" (v.35) God was sending His Son inside her so He to save the world, first with His perfect life from conception and second with His innocent death for all sins. Could Mary properly care for Him?

Second, God prepared Mary by giving her faith in His promises. So often with God, when He makes a promise, it's not small but amazing. If He had told Mary that some day she and Joseph would have a son, that would be nice, but she wouldn't need great faith to believe it. But, through the angel God gave her many great promises. The first was that she was "*highly favored!*" (v.28) The angel didn't say that she earned God's favor or had God's grace to share with others, but that by His grace she received His favor.

And no matter what the circumstances of her pregnancy, her travels, and people's reactions, the Lord loved her and was with her. He would provide for her with His gracious care.

Then he promised, *"You will be with child and give birth to a son."* (v.31) This promised virgin birth had been spoken by Isaiah 700 years before this happened! The angel said, *"You will give Him the name Jesus."* (v.31) His name means *"The Lord saves."* Others had the name Jesus, but Mary's Son would be the real Lord who saved the world! Fourth, *"He will be great and be called the Son of Most High."* (v.32) "The Most High" is God. Mary's child would be God's Son. Yet, fifth, *"The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David"* (v.32) Jesus would not only be God but of the human descendent of David through Mary. God had promised King David a descendent who would rule. The angel said, He *"will reign over the house of Jacob forever."* (v.33) The "house of Jacob" was no longer only the Jews, but all believers in New Testament times. Christ is ruling over the holy Christian Church. He offered His life on the cross to make us holy in His forgiveness. Our risen Savior is ruling in our hearts as our king right now through His Word. His blessing is the reason that may live forever with Him just as He promised! (v.33) The angel also gave her a sign: that her older relative, Elizabeth, would have a baby in 3 months. (v.37)

How did Mary respond to these promises? She didn't doubt, but believed that without any marital relations with Joseph or anyone, she would have a baby. The child was conceived within her by the Holy Spirit as the power of God overshadowed her. If she would have rejected God's Word, she would not have conceived. But God worked faith in her with His great promises; and the child was created within her.

God gave Mary a humble faith that did not question what He was going to do. She knew that she didn't deserve to be chosen by God. But, God was gracious to her despite her sinfulness. She later *"rejoiced in God, her Savior."* God prepared her for the great task of being Jesus' mother by giving her a humble spirit. God can accomplish great things through us, even if they may seem ordinary in life, by giving us a humble faith too. We'll get that attitude by hearing God's Word and trusting boldly in His promises!

In this lesson we see the power of God at work in Mary. But, we can take home that this lesson is all about God. God's angel brought Mary the message of His grace toward her. God was with her. (v.28) God's Spirit would create the child within her. Nothing was impossible for God. What a great message for us! He will protect us. He will accomplish His good through us not because we are good, but because of Christ! He has forgiven our sins and freed us that we may serve Him. *"Nothing is impossible with God."* (v.37)

We may not see or feel His power and blessing this Christmas any more than Mary saw God's power as she fed and changed Jesus and laid Him down for a nap like any child. How could this helpless child accomplish so much? He is also the Son of God! By faith Mary said, *"I am the Lord's servant. May it be to me as you have said."* (v.38) Mary did what God willed no matter what the outcome! God's promises filled her heart and the baby then filled her womb. That's how God prepared her for the first Christmas!

How are we preparing? Our Christmas will most likely not have the challenges that Mary had. Even if they did, we'll remember that nothing is impossible for our God. If He could send His eternal Son to become one of us to save us, He truly can do anything needed for our good. His powerful Word has given us faith to accept and receive His promised blessings. As long as we keep focused on Jesus as our Savior and Lord, we will certainly be prepared for Christmas. God grant it to each of us by faith! Amen.