

# Harder, Yet Better

*Luke, Pt. 2*

*Luke 1:26-39*

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# I. PRAYER

## II. INTRODUCTION

**a. What causes a person to have such a deep affection for God and such a clear sense of His calling on their life, that they are willing to sacrifice their comfort to serve Him?**

- i. This is the question that I want us to ask today.
- ii. What does it truly mean to give you're all to Christ and live according to His call, no matter what that might entail?

**b. I think of a man named George Liele.**

- i. George Liele was the first African America to be ordained here in America and the first missionary sent from a church here in America overseas to go preach the Gospel.
- ii. Liele was born here in Virginia in the 1750s as a slave and eventually was taken to Georgia as a slave.
  - There, in Georgia, both he and his slave master came to Christ and his slave master gave him his freedom.
  - And so, George, now a free man, do you know what he decides to do with his freedom?
    1. He starts preaching in the slave quarters of other slaves in Savannah, GA.
    2. He didn't flee. He didn't go seek a more comfortable life. He preached God's Word.



3. And dozens came to Christ.
  4. And he was ordained and started the first African American Church in the United States in 1775.
- iii. **However, during the Revolutionary War, his former slave owner was killed.**
- And the heirs of that slave owner sought to have Liele re-enslaved and Liele was thrown into jail.
    1. Now, Liele was eventually able to produce paperwork proving his freedom.
    2. But for his safety, he needed to leave the country, so he was able to secure safe passage to Kingston, Jamaica.
  - And so, in 1783, George goes to Jamaica, a British Colony, and he discovers that slaves had been brought over there to work the sugar fields.
    1. See, for George, going to Jamaica wasn't about freedom...it was about following God's call.
    2. And so, George begins to preach to these slaves and hundreds come to Christ.
    3. And the authorities didn't like that. Liele found himself in prison once again for three years
    4. Eventually gets out and he plants a church and keeps going.
  - And as a direct result of Liele preaching the gospel in Jamaica...check this out...
    1. By 1814, there were about 8000 believers in Jamaica as a result of his ministry and by 1832, after George's death, there were over 20,000.



2. By 1838, slavery was eradicated in Jamaica...because that's what the gospel does.
  3. AND, George also preached the importance of their church in Jamaica full over former slaves to have a heart for the nations and a desire to send missionaries overseas to preach the Gospel.
  4. And so, as a direct result of his leadership, their church sent missionaries back to Savannah, Georgia, up to Nova Scotia, and all the way to Sierra Leone.
- This is an example of someone who was born into unjust, terrible circumstances...
    1. ...who found his freedom and still had such a passion for God...
    2. ...that he was willing to say to God...God, I am your servant, let it be to me according to your Word.
  - And I can all but guarantee that when that man lay his head down and took his last breath...even though he lived a hard life...he endured a lot of pain...he sacrificed much...he laid his head down a man full of joy and purpose...his soul fulfilled...happy...and ready to go home.

**c. What causes a person to live their life for God like that...with that kind of self-abandon?**

- i. What causes someone to be so in touch with God's grace in their life that when they go to their work-place, their heart overflows with love for their co-workers and it burns for them to here and respond to the gospel?



- To the point that they are willing to have gospel conversations...no matter the social consequences.
- ii. What causes someone to have such a love for their neighbors, that they get on their knees daily praying for their neighbors and seeking to share the gospel with them...actively serving them...sacrificing their time and money for them?

**d. How is that zeal for others to know God produced inside of us that we are willing to sacrifice in order to pursue that?**

- i. Well, this morning, I think we'll get an answer to that in our next passage that we'll be studying in the Gospel of Luke.
  - As you know, last week, we began what will be a long sermon series studying the Gospel of Luke verse by verse.
  - And this morning is the second Sunday in Advent.
    1. The church, traditionally, has taken the four Sundays prior to Christmas to celebrate the first advent, or the first coming, of Jesus Christ.
    2. And so, through Advent this year, we are studying Luke 1-2, which records for us the events of Jesus' first advent.
  - Last week, we read about an angel appearing to Zechariah, a priest in Israel, telling him that he and his wife would be having a son, who would be named John.



1. John, who we call John the Baptist, would be a prophet who would announce the arrival of Jesus, the Messiah.
- Well, in our passage this morning, we are going to read about an angel appearing to Mary, telling her that she would be the mother of this Messiah, Jesus.
  1. And I want us to study what the angel says to Mary and Mary's response to the angel.

### **III. READ LUKE 1:26-38**

#### **a. So, this angel appears to Mary and he calls her the “favored one.”**

- i. He says that Mary had found favor with God.
  - What does that mean? To be favored by God?
    1. Well, to be favored by someone is to give someone preferential treatment.
    2. If you're coaching a sports team, and you favor a certain player, then you are going to give that player more playing time than others.
    3. It's preferential treatment. Might be justified, might not.
  - Or to give someone a favor is to give them something that is beyond what is due to them or normal to give them.
- ii. And I think the text here is indicating that Mary was receiving some sort of preferential treatment from God.
  - And that He is calling her into something that, at this point, he has not called many people into.



- He was calling on Mary to play a significant part in a plan that He was orchestrating that the Bible says<sup>1</sup> even the angels longed to look upon this plan, because it was so good, it was so glorious.
- iii. **See, ever since mankind fell into sin in the garden, God has been on a mission to save mankind from their sin.**
- And as he has been unfolding that plan, he has called upon certain favored ones, certain individuals, to play a key part.
    1. Noah was a favored one of God and was selected by God to continue the human race after the flood.
    2. Abraham was favored by God to be the Father of the Nation of Israel.
    3. Moses was favored by God to lead Israel to the Promised Land.
    4. David was favored by God to be Israel's King...
  - And see, all of this was a part of a plan for God to raise up a nation that would be his people.
    1. God would protect this people. He would save them. He would send them a Messiah, a true King who would rule over them forever.
    2. In fact, God promises this to David. That at some point, someone in David's ancestral line, would be this Messiah, this true King of Israel.

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Peter 1:12



- iv. And so, we go back to our text this morning, and in v.26, we read of Mary who was betrothed to a man named Joseph, and Joseph was in the line of David.
- To be betrothed to someone in this culture is like being engaged but much more.
    1. When one is betrothed, a formal agreement has already been ratified for the two to marry.
    2. The family of the groom has already paid the bride price to the family of the bride.
    3. Joseph would already be referring to Mary as his wife.
- v. And this angel tells Mary that she is going to conceive a child and that this child would be the Messiah, the one whom Israel had been waiting for, the one promised to sit on the throne of David forever.
- And of course, Mary has the right to ask how this would happen since she is a virgin.
    1. And the angel tells Mary that she will conceive the child of the Holy Spirit.
    2. Meaning that God will miraculously give her a child and because she conceived of the Holy Spirit, this child would be the Son of God.
    3. He would be both God and man.
    4. And his name would be Jesus.
  - And Jesus would be the one through which God would execute his plan to redeem all of mankind.



1. And as we're going to study next week, He would be the one who would expand God's people from just the nation of Israel, but to all who believe in Him!
- vi. And so, God calls Mary "the favored one" because He is calling her to play an integral part in His mission to bring salvation to all people.
- That's what it means to be favored by God!

**b. To be favored by God is to be called and invited to participate in God's mission to redeem all people!**

- i. Like the sports analogy I used earlier...
  - I grew up playing football.
    1. The mission was to get the ball into the end zone.
  - And I played on a very large team...where the majority of those on the team stood on the sidelines.
    1. Only a few of us had the opportunity to start and get most of the playing time.
    2. We were the favored ones because we were invited to contribute to the mission...and not stand on the sidelines.
  - To be favored is to have your number called and to be invited into the mission.
- ii. **And today, God is still on this mission.**
  - See, when this angel appeared to Mary, it was just the beginning of Jesus' first advent.
    1. And we're going to take the next year to study this first advent as we work through the Gospel of Luke.



- But within this first Advent, Jesus is able to accomplish what needed to be accomplished so that we could be made right with God and invited into His Kingdom forever.
  1. Jesus lives a perfect life with no sin.
  2. Yet, Jesus offers himself as a sacrifice for the purpose of paying for our sin by going to the cross.
  3. And he rises from the dead paying off the debt of our sin and breaking the power of death giving Him the authority to give eternal life to all who would call upon His name and believe in Him.
- This is what Jesus accomplishes in His first advent...and then he ascends to be with the Father and leaves us here promising that he will return someday in his second advent.
  1. Why? Why did Jesus go to be with the Father and why didn't he just end everything during his first advent, invite those who believe in him into the Kingdom, and judge all of the wicked?
  2. Why wait longer?
  3. Because the mission is not complete!
  4. God wants more people to be saved and to call upon Jesus as their Savior!
- So, this is what Jesus says to us, the church, before He ascended to be with the Father.
  1. John 20:21b - *"As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you."*
  2. Matthew 24:14 - *"And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come."*



iii. **Brothers and Sisters, I need to tell you something about what it means to follow Jesus.**

- If you consider yourself a Christian. If you are a follower of Jesus.
  1. Then you are favored.
  2. Your number has been called.
  3. You have been invited to play an integral part in God's mission to rescue people from their sin.
  4. There is no such thing as following Jesus and sitting on the sidelines.
  5. God has called upon us, as His church, to take this gospel to all who do not believe here in Herndon and to the ends of the earth.
- As Noah was favored...and Abraham, Moses, David, the Nation of Israel...
  1. Now you are favored.
- What Jesus did is He became our mediator and Great High Priest.
  1. Meaning we all have the same access to God.
  2. We all have the same call.
  3. There is no one who is more special than the other.
  4. I don't have more access to God and I am not more favored as a Pastor.
  5. We all are in the game now...invited into His mission.

**c. But here is what I want you to see in our text this morning.**

- i. That to be favored by God and invited into His mission, means a harder, yet better life.
  - I'm not going to lie to you.



1. Living for God's mission and living for the Kingdom of God and not the Kingdom of this world is not easy.
- ii. **Let's think about Mary for a second.**
- She was betrothed to be married and she was a virgin...her and Joseph would not consummate their marriage until their actual wedding.
    1. And yet, Mary was now going to be pregnant.
    2. For a betrothed couple to engage sexually before marriage was considered immoral.
    3. And Mary would most certainly be labeled an adulteress.
    4. And her story is that an angel appeared to her and said that she would "conceive a child of the Holy Spirit."
    5. Well, Mary, God hadn't appeared to His people for 400 years...and this is your story of how you became pregnant?
    6. No one would have believed her.
  - Including Joseph. If you're Joseph, you're going to need an angel to appear to you as well if you're going to believe this.
    1. And that's what happened. Matthew 1:19-20 says – ***"<sup>19</sup> And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. <sup>20</sup> But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit."***



- So, it was good that Joseph was now on board, but Mary would most certainly be misunderstood.
    1. This was not an easy thing for God to ask of her.
    2. But as we'll study next week, she will be overcome with joy as she considers the fact that God has given her life the most meaningful, satisfying purpose it could ever have...to be invited into God's mission to redeem the world!
    3. This is why Mary says in **v.38** of our text...
  - Mary knew that being favored would mean a harder life, but she also knew that it meant a better life.
- iii. **You could the say the same for Jesus Himself.**
- God sent His Son, Jesus, to step out of heaven, put on human flesh, live in this broken world, and offer his own life as a sacrifice to save us, beaten, tortured, and forsaken by His own Father.
    1. And yet, Hebrews 12:2b says - *"...Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God."*
    2. It's the same with Mary. Mary, for the joy that was set before her to be invited into God's mission, endured the shame of people assuming she was an adulteress, despising it, and now we call her blessed.



## IV. APPLICATION

### a. Let me ask you, what sounds better to you?

- i. Enduring hardship and discomfort in life for something that will fill your soul with purpose and indestructible joy?
  - Or settling for mediocre comfort while your soul wonders why it even exists?
- ii. This is a challenge for us in our context.
  - We have access to so many distracting comforts.
  - And our greatest spiritual battle is this belief that is lodged in our hearts that God would never ask us to forsake our comforts in order to follow him.
    1. That he wouldn't call us to sacrifice our money, our retirement, our homes, our time, our space, our sleep, our plans...so that we could be engaged in the mission.
  - Amy Carmichael, a faithful missionary to India for 55 years, once said:
    1. *"If we were less concerned about ease in our lives, they would tell more for Christ and souls... We profess to be strangers and pilgrims, seeking after the Kingdom of God, yet we settle down in the most un-stranger-like fashion in this world, exactly as if we were quite at home and meant to stay as long as we could. I don't think apostolic miracles have died. Apostolic living certainly has."*
    2. And when she uses that word apostolic, she is referring to the act of pushing the gospel into lost places.



**b. The question that we asked in the beginning is how does someone get this zeal inside of them for others to know Christ that they are willing to sacrifice anything for it to happen?**

i. And the answer is that we must realize that every follower of Jesus is favored by God and has been called and invited into the mission.

- And you must realize that means you.
  1. God sees you as just as an integral part of his mission as any vocational missionary or pastor.
  2. He has lavished his grace upon you, he has washed away your sin, and he wants to redeem your life by unleashing it as a part of his mission to save others.

ii. And what that means, is that your life might be less comfortable than the world could offer, but it will be a better life.

- A life where your soul is filled with indestructible joy.

**c. And so, here is my challenge for you this morning.**

i. I want you to take **Luke 1:38**...this is Mary's response to the angel...and I want you to pray this verse to God everyday this week.



- And as you pray this, put everything on the table.
    1. All your comforts, all your plans, all your expectations in life, all your desires, all your money, your career, your goals...everything.
    2. Put everything on the table.
    3. Put your YES on the table.
  - Pray Luke 1:38 and ask God what he wants you to do with your life as a favored one invited into his mission.
- ii. **Have a journal with you and journal your thoughts. Journal what you think the Lord is saying to you.**
- And would you do me a favor?
    1. If the Lord says something to you, as you pray this putting everything on the table, would you e-mail it to me.
    2. Now, you don't have to. I don't expect everyone to send me something.
    3. But, as your pastor, I want to pray for you and I want to help you join God's mission.
    4. So, if you're willing shoot me an e-mail with what the Lord says.
    5. Whether it is as small as: God is telling me to just walk across the street and begin engaging my neighbors...to as big as, I've been ignoring God's call on my life to head overseas as a missionary.
    6. I want to hear about it. I want to pray with you. I want to help equip you for what God is calling you to.
- iii. **So, if you're willing to pray Luke 1:38 this week...say amen.**

## V. PRAY

