

## HOLY MOMENTS – 2 of 4

### A Moment to Surrender

December 8, 2024

**INTRODUCTION** This Christmas season all of us have something to surrender. Perhaps a relationship, maybe a job opportunity. Perhaps your future. Maybe it's a wayward child.

But God's saying we need to surrender to a lifestyle of generosity and being a blessing to people around us.

What does surrender look like?

**SURRENDER IS NOT A MOMENT IN TIME; IT IS MOMENTS ALL THE TIME.**

So, this Advent season, if you have something you need to surrender, and you're looking to God, you need to pray and ask God to help you.

Luke 1:26 says, *<sup>26</sup>In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a village in Galilee...*

Gabriel shows up three times in Scripture, once to Daniel, once to Zechariah, who is Elizabeth's husband, and then right here to Mary.

Scholars believe that Nazareth is between 10 to 30 acres. Nazareth is not a big place.

In John 1, Jesus is calling his disciples, and he tells Philip, **"Come on, let's go."** Philip says, **"I'll go get Nathanael."** And he runs over to Nathanael, and says, **"We gotta go because Jesus, the son of Joseph from Nazareth, says, 'Let's go.'"**

And Nathaniel's reply in John 1:46 is, *<sup>46</sup>"Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked.*

Today, some of you are coming from a Nazareth. It may not be a small town, but it's a broken background. It's places you never thought you were going to be.

But God is pulling you out of those places, and you think, **"I don't have the looks, I don't have the education, I don't have the experience."**

But guess what? It doesn't matter. You're exactly who God can use for your circumstance and situation. So never doubt what God can do. And it's in this context of Nazareth that the angel Gabriel comes down.

Continuing in verse 27, ***<sup>27</sup>to a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David. <sup>28</sup>Gabriel appeared to her and said, "Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you!"***

***<sup>29</sup>Confused and disturbed, Mary tried to think what the angel could mean.***

Mary is a 14, 15-year-old girl, from a little town that's only 20 acres. Nazareth had a population of somewhere between 200 to 400 people, max 400. We're talking like little bitty place. That's where she's from.

Let's go back to verse 28, ***Gabriel appeared to her and said, "Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you!"***

Gabriel appeared two times before, both to Daniel and to Zechariah. The Bible records that at the sight of Gabriel, they fell down face to the ground, and they shook with fear.

But Mary was confused and disturbed by what Gabriel said. He said, **"Greetings, favored woman, the Lord is with you."** That should be empowering, right?

Unless you don't believe it. Unless you think, **"How could you come to me? I'm just this teenage girl from Nazareth."**

Sometimes God calls you in moments where you don't feel worthy. But God is calling you to do his work. You're the perfect person for God to do His work.

She's disturbed because she knows, whatever's about to happen. She's going to have to surrender.

In verse 30, the angel says, ***<sup>30</sup>"Don't be afraid, Mary," the angel told her, "for you have found favor with God!"***

Favor with God, in this context, is this word called **charis**. It's like this unmerited favor. The first time in the Old Testament a biblical character is described as having found favor in God's eyes is Noah.

Noah built the ark. And when the Earth flooded, he saved his family through the ark. The first time in the New Testament this idea is portrayed of finding favor with a character, it's Mary.

Mary's going to give birth to Jesus, the Messiah, the Savior of the world, and will save His people from their sin.

In verse 31, he says, *<sup>31</sup>You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus.*

This is the fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14, where the Scripture says, *The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel (which means "God with us").*

Mary's heard this all her life. God's going to send this Savior through a virgin, and it's going to be amazing. She's thinking, **"It can't be me. I'm from Nazareth, I'm just Mary."**

Verse 32, it says, *<sup>32</sup>He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. <sup>33</sup>And he will reign over Israel forever; his Kingdom will never end!"*

Gabriel is saying, **"There's a covenant promise back in Psalm 89, that God made to David, where he says 'I will establish your descendants as kings forever.'"**

After 400 years of silence, the last time God showed up was through his prophet, Malachi, way back in the Old Testament. And then Gabriel shows up, first to Zechariah, then six months later, he goes to Mary, **"Greetings, favored woman."**

Moving on, verse 34, *<sup>34</sup>Mary asked the angel, "But how can this happen? I am a virgin."*

That's a great question, Mary. How is that going to happen? **"Gabriel, I don't know how it works, but, I'm a virgin."**

He says to her, <sup>35</sup>*The angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the baby to be born will be holy, and he will be called the Son of God."*

But he didn't stop there. He says, <sup>36</sup>*What's more, your relative Elizabeth has become pregnant in her old age! People used to say she was barren, but she has conceived a son and is now in her sixth month. <sup>37</sup>For the word of God will never fail."*

<sup>38</sup>*Mary responded, "I am the Lord's servant. May everything you have said about me come true." And then the angel left her.*

What just happened? Mary and Elizabeth are cousins. And Elizabeth and Zechariah are well advanced in years.

There may be a few of you listening today who feel you're well advanced in years. What does that mean? A lot of scholars debate she could have been in her late 60s or as high as early 80s.

Other than the fact that she's well past childbearing years, did you see what Gabriel called her? He said, **"Remember the one that people call the barren one?"** Do you know the sting of infertility?

Zechariah was a priest. How many times did they pray? **"We prayed for kids, but my wife's being called the barren one? And now she's passed child bearing years."**

**But then Gabriel shows up, and tells me Elizabeth is going to get pregnant?"**

But it happened. Why does six months matter? Ladies, if you're six months pregnant, do people know? Yeah, you got the baby bump going.

And that's going to be the key for Mary, because we see in our next verse. <sup>39</sup>*A few days later Mary hurried to the hill country of Judea, to the town <sup>40</sup>where Zechariah lived.*

*She entered the house and greeted Elizabeth. <sup>41</sup>At the sound of Mary's greeting, Elizabeth's child leaped within her, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.*

Mary goes to see Elizabeth, whose pregnancy is showing. But Mary is not showing and she's still wondering, **"Why, me?"**

Gabriel shows Mary that Elizabeth is pregnant and Mary thinks, **"How could that be? Elizabeth can't have babies. She's even called the barren one. How is that possible?"**

God sends Gabriel to go tell Mary. But when God calls you to do something big, you don't believe in yourself. You just need to surrender.

The fact that Elizabeth is six months pregnant helps Mary think, **"If Elizabeth can get pregnant, I can too."** So Mary goes to see Elizabeth.

It says in the next scripture, *<sup>42</sup>Elizabeth gave a glad cry and exclaimed to Mary, "God has blessed you above all women, and your child is blessed."*

And before Mary can even say anything, Elizabeth says, **"God has blessed you above all women, and your child is blessed."** Who does that sound like?

Sounds like Gabriel, right? When Gabriel said, **"Oh, greetings favored above all women."** It's the same greeting, because sometimes God's just gotta remind you that you really are favored.

So Elizabeth says in verse 43, *<sup>43</sup>Why am I so honored, that the mother of my Lord should visit me? <sup>44</sup>When I heard your greeting, the baby in my womb jumped for joy. <sup>45</sup>You are blessed because you believed that the Lord would do what he said."*

Mary believed and surrendered her will. Mary doesn't pray, **"Lord, change your will."** She prays, **"Lord, your will be done. I surrender to you."**

Gabriel tells her, **"You're going to have a baby. You're going to fulfill all these prophecies. God has chosen you."**

And Mary's thinking, **"How can this be?"**

Then Gabriel tells her, **"Elizabeth's pregnant."** So she goes to see and in the moment she walks in to see her cousin, Elizabeth, and Elizabeth says, **"Mary, God has blessed you above all women and your child is blessed."** Mary knew that she was called; she was chosen.

She has to tell Joseph she has become pregnant even though she has not been with a man. And Gabriel speaks to Joseph and confirms that Mary has become pregnant by the Holy Spirit.

Mary has to surrender more than once. She has to surrender repeatedly. She has to watch her son Jesus be crucified on a cross and die!

And Mary understands that surrender is not just a moment in time, it's moments all the time. It's a lifestyle of surrender.

**CONCLUSION** Many years ago, on a trip through Tennessee, Fred Craddock, a retired minister and seminary professor, stopped into a restaurant.

As he drank a cup of coffee and ate a piece of pie, he met old man, long retired. When the elderly gentlemen found out that Craddock was a preacher, he told him the following story from his childhood.

The old man told Craddock that he had been born and raised in a little village near that restaurant. He had a single mother, and they were very poor.

He was what they called back then an **"illegitimate child,"** a child born out of wedlock. When his mother and he came into town on Saturday, they were shunned by all the good people.

They wouldn't let their kids play with him, and some of them walked on the other side of the street when they saw his mother and him coming.

He had many fights with boys at school over the names they called him and the bad things they said about his mother.

They had a little church in that village. The boy went to it sometimes. He would sneak in after the service started and slip out before the benediction so he would not have to face the church people and feel their disapproval.



One day a new pastor came to the church. To check him out, the boy slipped into the backseat halfway through the service. And he liked his sermon. The pastor was young and talked so the boy could understand him.

But then the new preacher pulled a fast one on the boy. After the sermon he walked to the back of the church, announced that he wanted to meet everyone present, and then pronounced the benediction.

The boy was trapped. He waited until the church was empty, hunkered down in the corner, hoping the pastor would not notice him. But he did.

The new preacher walked over to him, thrust out his hand, and said, **“Glad to see you boy. And tell me, who is your daddy?”**

The boy turned red and dropped his head. The preacher didn’t know the details, but he knew he had asked the wrong question.

The pastor took the boy by the chin, pulled his face up to look him straight in the eye, and said, **“Oh, you don’t need to tell me. I already know. I see the family resemblance. I see it in your face. You are a child of God.”**

The boy’s name was Ben Hooper. He went on to become two-time governor of the state of Tennessee!

All of us have something to surrender to God. And sometimes we have to remind ourselves that surrender's not just a moment in time, it's moments all the time.

What is God calling you to surrender?

Let us pray. Father, I pray we would through this season of Advent in a posture of surrender.

Ask God what He wants you to surrender. And allow Him to do His work in you.

Father, we are your servants. Help us pray. May it be done unto us. Even though sometimes surrender feels hard, hurtful, difficult, I pray You would give us the strength to surrender, not just in a moment, but moments all the time, every single day.

And maybe today God has called you to surrender your life to Jesus, to receive forgiveness of sin, and find the peace that only God can offer.

Just say to Jesus, **“I surrender my life to you. Forgive me of my sins as I accept You as my Savior. Thank You for saving me. I trust You and I’m going to walk with You from now on.”** In Jesus’ Name I pray! Amen.

**THE END**