

“Greetings favored woman, the Lord is with you!”

Lesson 01 in the series: “Christmas Greetings”

I. The first Christmas, the angel Gabriel greeted Mary with news that confused and disturbed her.

“God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a village in Galilee, to a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David. Gabriel appeared to her and said, ‘Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you!’ Confused and disturbed, Mary tried to think what the angel could mean. ‘Don’t be afraid, Mary,’ the angel told her, ‘for you have found favor with God! You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. 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. And he will reign over Israel forever; his Kingdom will never end!’” Luke 1:26-33 (NLT)

A. Gabriel said that an ordinary girl like Mary had found favor with God.

“Oh, how my soul praises the Lord. How my spirit rejoices in God my Savior! For he took notice of his lowly servant girl...” Luke 1:46-48a (NLT)

Merry Christmas! The creator God of the universe knows me and cares for me.

“O LORD, you have examined my heart and know everything about me. You know when I sit down or stand up. You know my thoughts even when I’m far away. You see me when I travel and when I rest at home. You know everything I do. You know what I am going to say even before I say it, LORD. You go before me and follow me. You place your hand of blessing on my head.” Psalm 139:1-5 (NLT)

“O LORD, our Lord, your majestic name fills the earth! Your glory is higher than the heavens... When I look at the night sky and see the work of your fingers—the moon and the stars you set in place— what are people that you should think about them, mere mortals that you should care for them?”

Psalm 8:1-4 (NLT)

B. Gabriel said that Mary would give birth to Jesus even though she was a virgin.

“Mary asked the angel, ‘But how can this happen? I am a virgin.’” Luke 1:34 (NLT)

Merry Christmas! The Holy God of Heaven made a way for sinful people like us to be made right with Him.

“Because God’s children are human beings—made of flesh and blood—the Son also became flesh and blood. For only as a human being could he die, and only by dying could he break the power of the devil, who had the power of death... Therefore, it was necessary for him to be made in every respect like us, his brothers and sisters, so that he could be our merciful and faithful High Priest before God. Then he could offer a sacrifice that would take away the sins of the people.” Hebrews 2:14-17 (NLT)

“This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin.” Hebrews 4:15 (NLT)

“God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.” 2 Corinthians 5:21 (NLT)

C. Gabriel said that the Holy Spirit would work powerfully in Mary to accomplish things she thought were impossible.

“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... For nothing is impossible with God.’” Luke 1:35-37 (NLT)

Merry Christmas! The Holy Spirit still works powerfully in and through us to accomplish things we think are impossible.

“I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God’s power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God’s right hand in the heavenly realms.” Ephesians 1:19-20 (NLT)

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” Acts 1:8 (NLT)

“Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think.” Ephesians 3:20 (NLT)

“For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.”
Philippians 2:13 (NLT)

II. Mary was greatly blessed because she responded to Gabriel’s greeting by completely surrendering to whatever plans God had for her.

“Mary responded, ‘I am the Lord’s servant. May everything you have said about me come true.’ And then the angel left her.” Luke 1:38 (NLT)

“...from now on all generations will call me blessed. For the Mighty One is holy, and he has done great things for me. He shows mercy from generation to generation to all who fear him.” Luke 1:48-50 (NLT)

Merry Christmas! We will be greatly blessed if we surrender to whatever God has planned for us.

“How joyful are those who fear the LORD— all who follow his ways!” Psalm 128:1 (NLT)

“For I know the plans I have for you,’ says the LORD. ‘They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.’” Jeremiah 29:11 (NLT)

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take.” Proverbs 3:5-6 (NLT)

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Connect Group Questions

1. What is the biggest surprise you’ve ever experienced at Christmas?
2. Read Luke 1:26-38. How would you have responded to the angel Gabriel if you had been in Mary’s position?
3. Read Psalm 8:1-4, Psalm 139:1-5, & Matthew 10:29-31. How does it make you feel to know that God knows exactly who you are, where you are, and what tomorrow holds?
4. While discussing the meaning of Christmas over lunch one day with a couple of coworkers you are surprised to hear Bob from accounting ask, “Who cares if Mary was a virgin when she gave birth to Jesus? What difference does it make?” How do you respond? (see 2 Corinthians 5:21 & Hebrews 4:15)
5. Read Jeremiah 29:11 & Psalm 32:8-9. Why do you think we struggle with surrendering to God’s plans for our lives? How do you think God’s plans impacted the dreams Mary had for her life before she met Gabriel?
6. Read Ephesians 1:19-20. How have you experienced the Holy Spirit working in your life this past year?
7. Spend some time as a group praying for each other asking for God’s direction, God’s power, and the willingness to completely surrender to His will.