

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Luke 1: 26-38

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. We'll continue to read Luke Chapter 1 and today we will read verses 26 to 38.

Verse 26: "Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth."

These six months are counted from the time when Gabriel appeared to Zechariah; that is to say, it was six months after Elizabeth had conceived John. Gabriel is the angel who specializes in delivering good news. Six months earlier, he appeared to Zechariah in the temple to announce the good news of John the Baptist. At this time, he was again sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth.

Ordinarily, we would think that if a king were to be born, it should be in a great capital city—that is, Jerusalem in Judea. But God's way of working is very unusual. He did not choose Jerusalem; instead, He chose a small town in Galilee that was despised by others—Nazareth. Galilee was within the allotted territory of the tribe of Zebulun. In Isaiah 9:1 it says, "Nevertheless the gloom will not be upon her who is distressed, as when at first He lightly esteemed. The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, And afterward more heavily oppressed her, by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, In Galilee of the Gentiles."

In the course of Israel's history, many Gentiles later moved into the region of Galilee. In the Old Testament, the Jews did not live together with Gentiles, and as a result, they gradually came to despise the region of Galilee.

Nazareth was a mountain town, a small city within Galilee. In the time of Jesus, the entire town probably consisted of no more than twenty households, perhaps

around one hundred people—a very small place. No matter how one looks at it, one would never expect such a small place to produce a great figure. Just as God chose Zechariah—who was a priest, but not the high priest—and passed over the high priest to choose him, in the same way God passed over the great capital city of Jerusalem and went instead to the small town of Nazareth.

Verse 27: “to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin’s name *was* Mary.”

Because the entire town of Nazareth probably consisted of only a dozen or so households, Mary and Joseph were likely neighbors and should have known each other very well, having known each other since childhood. At that time, Mary had already been betrothed to Joseph. According to the custom of that time, the period of betrothal was about one year, so within that year Joseph would take Mary as his wife. It was at just such a time.

Verse 28: “And having come in, the angel said to her, ‘Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!’”

Mary was a simple young woman who loved the Lord. When she saw the angel for the first time, the angel told her, “You are a highly favored woman,” and also told her that the Lord was with her. The word “with” used here has the Greek sense of meta. Sometimes para is used, which means standing beside someone, but meta means already being within her.

Verse 29: “But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was.”

For a young and simple Mary, first, she did not know what important matter the angel had come to her for. Second, she did not understand why he greeted her in

this way. But she first set aside her fear and pondered repeatedly what this greeting might mean. This is a very good attitude.

Many times when we read the Scriptures, we suddenly realize that there is a passage we have read before without paying such close attention to it, or without valuing it so much, yet today when we read it, it feels different. In such situations, the best thing to do is to keep it in our hearts and meditate on it repeatedly. Many times, we are not able to understand the deeper meaning of a passage the first time we read it; rather, after reading it, we place it in our hearts and ponder it again and again. Through the things we experience, through the people, events, and situations we encounter, this word gradually takes shape within us. This is exactly what Mary did.

Verse 30-33: “Then the angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.’”

For a young, simple Mary, the angel’s declaration was exceedingly great. Compared with her simplicity and youth, we do not really know how much she understood at that time. The angel told her, “You have found favor.” How had she found favor? Because she would conceive and bear a son, and she was to name Him Jesus. Jesus, in Hebrew, is Joshua, which among the Israelites was a very common name. It was also a name of remembrance for Moses’ successor, who led the two million Israelites across the Jordan River and into the land of Canaan.

What Moses prefigured but could not accomplish under the law, Joshua accomplished. The name Jesus means “Jehovah saves.” Not only was the name given, but at that moment the angel also told Mary His ministry: He would be great and would be called the Son of the Most High. Not only that, the Lord God would give Him the throne of His father David, and He would reign over the house of Jacob

forever, and of His kingdom there would be no end. This directly fulfills God's promise to David in 2 Samuel 7:16.

At that time, David had it in his heart to build a house for the LORD, and God delighted in his intention. Although the task of building the temple was entrusted to his son Solomon, God greatly approved of David's heart's desire. At that time God promised him, in verse 7:16, "Your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever." Of course, the Israelites knew that by this point the kingdom of Israel had fallen, and the kingdom of Judah had also fallen, and David's throne did not appear to have been established forever. Yet the angel's words directly connect back to God's promise to David.

In other words, God was telling Mary that this child was the true descendant of David, and that His reign would be forever, and His kingdom would have no end. As for the ministry of Jesus throughout His life, Mary probably could not fully grasp it at that moment. What she clearly knew, however, was that she was a virgin and had not yet gone to live with Joseph as his wife.

Verse 34: "Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?"

Mary's question was not one of unbelief—not that she did not believe what the angel said—but rather how what the angel said would be accomplished. The manner in which it would happen went beyond her understanding; she did not know how this could take place. So she said, "I have not been married; how can this happen?"

Verse 35: "And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God."

Mary's question was not one of unbelief—not disbelief in what the angel had said—but rather how what the angel said would be accomplished. In terms of method, it went beyond her knowledge; she did not know how this would happen. She said, “I have not been married; how can this be?”

Whether Mary fully understood the angel's answer is something we do not know. Today, we have the entire Bible, and naturally, what we are able to comprehend is far more than what Mary could understand at that time. According to Scripture, there are at least four kinds of birth that we can understand today.

The first kind of birth requires neither a man nor a woman; it is created by God. God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and he became a living being, named Adam. Adam was created by God, so in Luke chapter 3, Adam is called the son of God. This is the first kind of birth.

The second kind of birth is a woman born from a man. God caused Adam to fall into a deep sleep, took one of his ribs, and built a woman, named Eve. Thus, Eve was born from Adam; she was built by God. Later, Eve and Adam sinned, and as a result, women had to bear the pain of childbirth. From that point on, all people have been born of a man and a woman. In other words, a father and a mother are required for a child to be born.

However, in Genesis chapter 3, at the moment humanity sinned, God had already promised that in the future there would be a person who would be the offspring of the woman, and He would bruise the head of Satan. In other words, at that time God promised that there would be another kind of birth—someone born of a woman without a man. This is exactly what we see here with Mary: a virgin conceiving by the Holy Spirit and giving birth to a child named Jesus, because He would save His people from their sins.

According to our understanding today, only in this way could Jesus be 100% man and 100% God. Because He is 100% man, He could give His life for humanity; and because He is 100% God, the death of one man could become the ransom for many. Because He is man, He could die; and because He is God, He could rise from the dead. I think these profound theological truths were probably not clear to Mary at

that time. She only heard that the one she would bear would be called the Son of God. Then the angel added verse 36.

Verse 36-37: “Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible.”

The angel did not, as I have just done, explain to Mary in detail all these profound theological truths—why Jesus had to be human and why He also had to be God. Instead, the angel gave her an example that she was familiar with: Elizabeth, who had been called barren and was already advanced in years, had now conceived. From this came the conclusion: “For with God nothing will be impossible.” Although you may not be able to figure it out, although you may not understand it, God’s word carries power and is able to accomplish what it declares.

Verse 38: “Then Mary said, “Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her.”

Do not underestimate these words. Simple Mary was willing to accept God’s arrangement. Being pregnant before marriage was an extremely serious matter in the conservative society of that time. She herself knew that she had conceived by the Holy Spirit, but how would others see it? What would others think? How would her fiancé Joseph view it? This pure and kind young woman did not consider any of these things at all. Her response was very simple: “Behold, I am the maidservant of the Lord. Let it be to me according to your word.”

Today, when we encounter circumstances we do not like, or when people, events, or situations that do not suit our wishes keep happening to us, can we learn from Mary’s simplicity and say: I am your maidservant, I am your servant, let it be according to your will? In fact, when we submit ourselves to God’s arrangements, many times we will discover that this is the most blessed position. Many struggles

and many complaints only cause us to drift farther and farther away from God. On the contrary, when we are willing to submit to God's will and allow God to reveal His purpose through our circumstances, in the end we will come to know that this truly is the most blessed position.

Let us pray together: Lord, please give us a simple heart like Mary's, willing to entrust our whole life into Your hands—not according to our will, but according to Yours. Let me live today a life of obedience to You. Thank You. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen!