

Series: ALL I WANT FOR CHRISTMAS...

Text: Luke 1:26-38

Title: "To Pursue Full-Term Faith"

Introduction: MERRY CHRISTMAS EVERYBODY! WELCOME to BMZ! Glad you're with us TODAY for "**ALL I WANT FOR CHRISTMAS...**" Now, you and I MIGHT KNOW what WE WANT for CHRISTMAS, but ... YOU GUESSED IT ... WE are going to TALK about what JESUS WANTS **FROM US** and **FOR US** as we CONSIDER CHRISTMAS.

Last Week – JESUS said, "ALL I WANT for CHRISTMAS is for YOU ALL to LOVE EACH OTHER." So, THIS Christmas, we will MAKE a DIFFERENCE in our WORLD by being CHRIST-LIKE. "**Love One Another, as I have Loved You, you MUST LOVE EACH OTHER.**" They will KNOW we are CHRISTIANS by our LOVE. Let's LOVE by HELPING people in our AREA as well as ORPHANS across the GLOBE. Let's LOVE by being KIND to OTHERS in this STRESSFUL TIME of the YEAR.

THIS WEEK – TOUGH STUFF. IF we ASK JESUS WHAT He WANTS for HIS BIRTHDAY, PREPARE to HEAR The TRUTH. Today, the STORY of MARY, the MOTHER of Jesus. MARY – ONE of TWO THINGS HAPPEN: 1) We give Mary TOO MUCH CREDIT and she BECOMES MORE than INTENDED. MARY is SPECIAL, but NOT MORE SPECIAL than JESUS, IMMANUEL, God With Us, Our CREATOR, LORD, and SAVIOR. Or ... 2) MARY does NOT get ENOUGH CREDIT because we kind of IGNORE her STORY.

Today, I HOPE we find a GOOD BALANCE as we DISCOVER, although Mary is NOT our SAVIOR and LORD, she was an AMAZING EXAMPLE of what FAITH LOOKS LIKE.

I don't know if you've NOTICED, but over the past FEW DECADES there has been a SHIFT in our NATION from CHURCHED to UNCHURCHED. People have NOT made a CHRISTIAN CHURCH their PRIORITY for GENERATIONS now. WHY? Well, MOST studies SHOW the PROBLEM with CHRISTIANITY in the U.S. is there are MANY who CALL themselves CHRISTIAN, but they SELDOM ACT like CHRIST.

There are PEOPLE in OUR NEIGHBORHOODS SEARCHING for something to BELIEVE in. They might READ The BIBLE or HEAR a TEACHING of CHRISTIANITY, but THEN the LOOK at PEOPLE who CLAIM to be CHRISTIAN and realize the GREAT TEACHING of The BIBLE does NOT TRANSLATE into EVERYDAY LIFE. People in our country are NOT CHALLENGING the CREDIBILITY of JESUS, they are CHALLENGING the CREDIBILITY of THE PEOPLE who CLAIM to FOLLOW JESUS.

Here's the DEAL: Many people STAND in GARAGES, but NEVER become a CAR! Or MANY attend a CHURCH BUILDING, but NEVER SURRENDER to JESUS as LORD and become FOLLOWERS of HIM. People are HEARERS of His WORD but are NOT DOERS. Jesus said something about THAT LIFE ending in a LOUD CRASH! If we do NOT ACT on our FAITH, OVER TIME, we become VERY COMFORTABLE with our ACTING LIKE Christians without ACTING AS CHRISTIANS. **For Full-Term Faith:**

Merry Christmas! According to HIS WORD, JESUS WANTS people with FULL-TERM FAITH for CHRISTMAS. It's REAL. NOT just TALK. JESUS came into the WORLD, LIVED, DIED on a CROSS, ROSE AGAIN, and LEFT an EMPTY TOMB for a REASON. NOT so you and I would TALK like we BELIEVE in HIM. Jesus DIED and CAME BACK to LIFE so HE could LIVE IN and THROUGH YOU and ME! FILL us with HIS SPIRIT and LIVE.

That is CHRISTIANITY ... JESUS LIVES IN US! Jesus GETS His WAY in US. We are OBEDIENT to HIS SPIRIT that FILLS US, and HE gets HIS WAY BECAUSE we SURRENDER and LET it HAPPEN. CHRIST IN YOU and ME is the HOPE for this WORLD!

Here we go ... LUKE 1:26-30 = <sup>26</sup> *In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a village in Galilee, <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. <sup>30</sup> "Don't be afraid, Mary," the angel told her, "for you have found favor with God!"*

Did you HEAR the COMFORTING WORDS of GABRIEL?

### **#1 = Do NOT Be AFRAID**

So, you HEAR the WORDS of COMFORT from The ANGEL ... Did you ALSO HEAR the WORDS of MARY that BROUGHT them ON? And ANGEL of the LORD APPEARS to this TEENAGE GIRL from Nazareth Region, and MARY was **"CONFUSED and DISTURBED."**

A COUPLE THINGS: #1 = I think ANY TIME we HEAR from JESUS it's a LITTLE CONFUSING and DISTURBING. The THINGS JESUS asks us to FOLLOW HIM in are NOT of THIS WORLD. They do NOT come NATURALLY to US. When JESUS SPEAKS it MEANS we will need to be DISCIPLINED (Self-Control) ... WORK at it. God's THOUGHTS are NOT OUR THOUGHTS ... OUR THOUGHTS are NOT GOD'S THOUGHTS. IT'S CONFUSING and DISTURBING.

Mary is a POOR GIRL from a POOR Family in the POOR REGION of NAZARETH and the ANGEL just said SHE is a **"FAVORED WOMAN."** WHAT?! Nazareth is in GALILEE, a REGION known as the SLUMS of ISRAEL in those days. GALILEANS had to LIVE CLOSE to and ASSOCIATE with GENTILES. JERUSALEM on the other hand, was the EPICENTER of their FAITH / NATION. They looked DOWN their NOSES at GALILEANS / NAZARENES ... **"Can ANYTHING GOOD come from NAZARETH?"** But GOD calls her **"FAVORED."** His THOUGHTS are NOT OUR THOUGHTS.

THING #2 = You KNOW what I KNOW? I KNOW there are PEOPLE HERE who KNOW what GOD WANTS them to DO, but YOU are REFUSING. Do you KNOW WHY? You're CHICKEN. We get SCARED. When we do NOT RELY on God's SPIRIT of POWER and LOVE, we STOP being OBEDIENT to GOD and HIS WORD. Jesus is NOT having HIS WAY with US. STOP IT!

Jesus REMINDS us HE will be WITH us ALWAYS. Let THAT BUILD our COURAGE so we CAN be HOPE that JESUS wants us to BE to OTHER PEOPLE. Without COURAGE, we can NOT be OBEDIENT. Christianity is NOT for the FAINT of HEART!

THINK about MARY. In 1<sup>st</sup> Century ISRAEL, WOMEN had NO RIGHTS. ONLY WORTH came from her FATHER and then her HUSBAND. NOW she's going to be PREGNANT OUTSIDE of MARRIAGE. She will CERTAINLY LOSE her 'HUSBAND,' Joseph. BTW – PREGNANT OUT of WEDLOCK was PUNISHABLE by PUBLIC STONING.

With ALL that on the LINE, the ANGEL says GOD is ON her SIDE. Do NOT be AFRAID to TAKE on the MIRACLE GOD might WANT to DO THROUGH YOU! Me too!

Think about MARY. She had NO IDEA her LIFE would CHANGE FOREVER ... like, JUST HAVING a BABY, RIGHT? When we're OBEDIENT to GOD, LIFE will NEVER BE

the SAME. When I FINALLY STOP being CHICKEN, my IDENTITY will CHANGE. When I TAKE ON the RESPONSIBILITY GOD CALLS me TO, LIFE IS FOREVER DIFFERENT.

PICTURE MARY. Picture her attempting to EXPLAIN to JOE that the HOLY SPIRIT DID IT. Think about MARY and her FAMILY in that REGION. She was FOREVER going to have a REPUTATION. She DESERVED to DIE. She was PREGNANT OUTSIDE of MARRIAGE. How LONG do you SUPPOSE SHE tried to HIDE her PREGNANCY?

Back in the DAY, my DAD had a CB RADIO. His HANDLE was "Little Devil" / Peugeot. He would be TALKING with TRUCKERS as we TRAVELED and after a WHILE they would ask "LITTLE DEVIL" what he DID for a LIVING. CRICKETS. Trying to figure out what they'd SAID they needed to COVER ... SWITCH CHANNELS?

Sometimes I get the SAME. Get to KNOW SOMEONE and they do NOT PICTURE ME being a PASTOR, but once the FIND OUT ... ACT DIFFERENT. Listen, IF we are WHO GOD CALLS us to BE, our LIFESTYLES, VALUES and PRIORITIES will be DIFFERENT from our CULTURE. IF we're going to BE HOPE in OTHER'S LIVES as JESUS WANTS, we need to MAKE SURE we are "PREGNANT," and it SHOWS. NOT in our TALK, but our ACTIONS and REACTIONS REFLECT the ONE we SAY we FOLLOW. We are CHRIST-LIKE. We LOVE OTHERS ... UNCONDITIONALLY. New Commandment ... LOVE ONE ANOTHER!

We LIVE it OUT LOUD. BACK to MARY and GABE ... LUKE 1:31-37 = <sup>31</sup> *You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus.* <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!"* <sup>34</sup> *Mary asked the angel, "But how can this happen? I am a virgin."* <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.* <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>2</sup>

Think about THIS: MARY CARRIED in the WOMB, The SON of the LIVING GOD. The SAVIOR of the WORLD. The KING of KINGS. IMMANUEL ... God WITH US! Jesus was IN HER BEING. IMMANUEL.

Jesus ALSO wants to be IMMANUEL IN US. When He LEFT (Acts 1) ... He must LEAVE, but they would be "BAPTIZED with the HOLY SPIRIT." IOW – THEY / WE could have GOD WITH US ALWAYS. JESUS = WHEN the HOLY SPIRIT comes UPON YOU, you will RECEIVE POWER and will TELL people ABOUT ME EVERYWHERE.

Verse 31 = You will BECOME PREGNANT. There are MANY in the CHURCH who have NEVER been FILLED with CHRIST'S SPIRIT. They TALK a GOOD TALK, but they do NOT have the POWER NEEDED to LIVE like JESUS ... LOVE like HIM.

Back to MARY. SHE KNEW she could NOT get PREGNANTY by HERSELF ... LUKE 1:34 = <sup>34</sup> *Mary asked the angel, "But how can this happen? I am a virgin."* <sup>3</sup> IF YOU'RE attempting to DO CHRISTIANITY on your OWN, that is RELIGION. RELIGION is when we TRY in our OWN POWER and EFFORTS to FOLLOW the RULES. When we're SIMPLY RULE-FOLLOWERS, it is POWERLESS and, well, IMPOSSIBLE. So...

## **#2 = Stop TRYING**

We need, LIKE MARY, for the HOLY SPIRIT to COME UPON US and the POWER of the MOST HIGH to OVERSHADOW US. Being a CHRISTIAN is NOT TRYING to LIVE by

CHRISTIAN RULES (that is us attempting to control). Being a CHRISTIAN is about being INVADDED by the VERY PRESENCE of GOD! Jesus DIED and ROSE AGAIN to LIVE HIS LIFE IN and THROUGH YOU.

But STAN, HOW do I RECEIVE the Holy Spirit? IF we go to PETER who was THERE at PENTECOST and RECEIVED The SPIRIT, HE SAYS ... ACTS 2:38 = <sup>38</sup> *Peter replied, "Each of you must repent of your sins and turn to God (SURRENDER), and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."*<sup>4</sup> REPENT / TURN from YOUR SINS / PRIDE / RIGHTS / Turn AWAY from being MY OWN PERSON and START being JESUS' PERSON. THEN ... BAPTIZED for the FORGIVENESS of MY SINS. BAPTIZED = DIE to SELF / NEW LIFE in CHRIST! THEN ... we RECEIVE the GIFT of The Holy Spirit. But do NOT STOP ... FILLED with the SPIRIT is NOT the SAME as being CONTROLLED BY the SPIRIT.

It's LIKE the FURNACE at your HOUSE ... the PILOT LIGHT is LIT, but that does NOT MEAN the FURNACE is RUNNING. RECEIVING The Holy Spirit is your PILOT LIGHT. LIVING by The POWER of The HOLY SPIRIT ... Think Sermon on The Mount = FURNACE is NOW KICKED ON!

PAUL wrote THIS ... 2<sup>nd</sup> TIMOTHY 1:6-7 = <sup>6</sup> *This is why I remind you to fan into flames the spiritual gift God gave you when I laid my hands on you.* <sup>7</sup> *For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline.*<sup>5</sup> Conversion is NOT the SAME as LIVING as a DISCIPLE by the POWER of the HOLY SPIRIT (Disciple).

Remember, WHEN The SPIRIT is ALIVE in you, you will NOT be TIMID in the THINGS of FAITH ... NOT TALKING ... LIVING IT! We will have POWER, LOVE (like Christ), and SELF-DISCIPLINE (to BE a DISCIPLE).

Now, BEING FILLED with The HOLY SPIRIT does NOT HAPPEN through PASSIVE BELIEF, but THROUGH and ACT of SURRENDER! Mary ... LUKE 1:38 = <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.*<sup>6</sup> I AM the LORD'S SERVANT ... NOT The Lord's ADVISOR! MARY had a CHOICE. GOD did NOT FORCE her. Servant ... Does NOT MATTER ... IF JOE marries ME or BELIEVES ME ... does NOT MATTER if I'm STONED to DEATH ... Does NOT MATTER what MY PLANS WERE for my LIFE.

"I am YOUR SERVANT. I NO LONGER have RIGHTS to MYSELF or MY LIFE. I will NOT ARGUE with YOU ANYMORE, GOD." IF you are RATIONALIZING with GOD ... "God, can we TALK about what YOU REALLY MEAN about MY RELATIONSHIPS, FINANCES, TITHING, My NEIGHBOR..." ... DO NOT expect to BE FILLED with The HOLY SPIRIT or EXPERIENCE the JOY GOD has for YOU or be HOPE in OTHER'S LIVES. **#3 = Give BIRTH Already!**

So, MANY of YOU have your PILOT LIGHT LIT, but your FURNACE AIN'T ON! It is NOT ENOUGH to CONCEIVE ... you do NOT CONCEIVE for the PURPOSE of BEING PREGNANT. Some of YOU have been PREGNANT for 20-30 YEARS! You have the SPIRIT IN YOU, but you have NOT LET The HOLY SPIRIT OUT ... LIVED by HIS POWER!

Women, can you IMAGINE being PREGNANT for YEARS? Men, can you IMAGINE being WITH a WOMAN who has been PREGNANT for YEARS? The LONGER you are PREGNANT, the MORE UNCOMFORTABLE you BECOME, right?

<sup>4</sup> Tyndale House Publishers, (2015). [Holy Bible, New Living Translation](#) (Ac 2:38). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.  
<sup>5</sup> Tyndale House Publishers, (2015). [Holy Bible, New Living Translation](#) (2 Ti 1:6-7). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.  
<sup>6</sup> Tyndale House Publishers, (2015). [Holy Bible, New Living Translation](#) (Lk 1:38). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.



That's WHY so MANY are UNCOMFORTABLE HEARING God's WORD. It REMINDS them that ALL they've EVER BEEN is PREGNANT ... it's INSIDE of THEM, but they've NEVER SEEN it IN ACTION!

Anyone else TIRED of NOT SEEING what GOD PLACED INSIDE of YOU? Do you NOT want to SEE WHAT can HAPPEN IF we just SURRENDER LIKE MARY DID?

You and I have the POTENTIAL to MAKE a HUGE, CHRIST-LIKE IMPACT in this WORLD ... but WILL WE? Will we REALIZE that GOD is WITH US ALWAYS and we can TRUST HIM as we SERVE HIM?

Jesus wants to CHANGE the WORLD for SOMEONE THROUGH YOU ... All I want for Christmas is to see people LIVE out FULL-TERM FAITH! Let's Pray!

Next Steps: *Memorize 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 1:6*

*Read Luke 1 and Acts 2*

*Invite someone to Worship with you*

### Hosting (Closing)

HEY, it has been a GREAT DAY here at BMZ... Glad you've been here with us! In a moment, we are going to RECEIVE the OFFERING so please take this time to finish COMPLETING any information

- Or NEXT STEPS on your CONNECTION CARD (**FULLY FILLED OUT!!**)
- AND when our ushers come around to RECEIVE our OFFERING
- You can drop that card in the offering basket.

***IF you are a First-Time Guest with us today***

• We are so glad you joined us ... And we have a GIFT for you. It's this book "**UNSHAKABLE**" and it's at the BACK TABLE / By the DOORS...

- all you need to do is HIT "**SEND**" your COMPLETED Connection Card

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As our ushers GET READY to come forward

- I just want to remind you ... STEWARDSHIP is DISCIPLESHIP ... we RECEIVE an OFFERING EVERY Sunday BECAUSE it's BIBLICAL ... AND it HELPS us GROW in our FAITH!
- STEWARDSHIP VERSE ... LUKE 1:38 =<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.*<sup>7</sup>
- FIRST of our EARNINGS go back to the ONE who Blessed us in the first place! That's why WE/I do Automated Giving! I get paid ... the TITHE comes OUT FIRST!
- God's plan for BUILDING His Church was through TITHING and GIVING!
- As Developing Followers of Jesus Christ, WE need to KNOW what the BIBLE says about GIVING ... NOT just what we THINK it should say.
- **MONEY is a HEART ISSUE.** And GOD wants what is BEST for your HEART! Listen, if GOD LOVES US so much that HE is willing to GIVE UP His OWN SON FOR US, WHY would GOD LEAD us ASTRAY in FINANCES?! USHERS ...
- Next Week: **ALL I WANT for CHRISTMAS...**

*"Truth without Grace is Fundamentalism (Brutality). Grace without Truth is Sentimentalism (Hypocrisy)."*

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