

Sermon: A Life of Peace

Text: Luke 1:26-50

Discussion Questions:

Peace can be a difficult topic to wrap our minds around. On a surface level, it can be easy to talk about peace. We think of “peace and quiet,” or “tranquility.” We see the “Coexist” bumper stickers that seem to make peace such a simple and achievable ideal. But down deep—I think we all know that peace isn’t quite so simple. Sometimes keeping peace isn’t the best choice when there’s a bully in the room. Here are some general discussion questions to “warm you up” to this topic of peace:

- What comes to mind when you hear the word “peace”?
- How important is peace to you?
- What is “peace of mind,” or “inner peace”?
- Do you think there will ever be peace in the world? Why or why not?
- What is the best way of achieving peace?
- Would you be a good peacemaker? Why do you think this?
- Do you think everyone who dies rests in peace?
- Which is more important, freedom or peace?

Examination:

- Read **Luke 1:26-38**
 - The story of Jesus begins in the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy. Who is she pregnant with? In what ways are the baby in Elizabeth’s womb connected to the coming of Jesus?
 - We learn from the first 25 verses in Luke 1 that Zechariah and Elizabeth were “both very old”—well past child-bearing years. Are there other stories in the Bible that feature very old parents well past the age of child-bearing? What do you think the connection might be?
 - When you hear the word “Podunk”—what do you think about? What’s the most Podunk place you’ve ever been? Nazareth was that place in the days that Jesus was born. It was uncelebrated, forgotten, out-of-the-way, and did not have a good reputation. Read John 1:46—and talk about what might have caused Nathaniel to say this?
 - Gabriel is known in Scripture as the “messenger angel.” When God needs a message delivered to humans—off goes Gabriel. What do you think Gabriel looked like? Why do you think Mary (and all the others Gabriel visits!) are told not to be afraid (v. 30)?
 - Mary was an obscure young virgin—from an obscure Podunk town—pledged to be married to an obscure young man—in uncertain times ruled by a ruthless empire and unpredictable governors. On a scale of 1-10, what was the likelihood that God would come to save the world in this way?
 - Why does it matter that Joseph was a descendant of David?
 - What do you think it was about Mary that made her “highly favored” in the eyes of God? What do you think her most outstanding quality was?
 - Mary wasn’t just slightly troubled by Gabriel’s appearance and greeting—she was **greatly** troubled! Years later, when Dr. Luke sat down with Mary to ask her about

these things, I'm guessing Mary gave Luke a lot more detail about what "greatly troubled" meant. What do you think she might have said?

- What was it about Gabriel's greeting that caused her to wonder about his words?
- Do you think you'll ever hear Gabriel—or Jesus!—say to you, "Don't be afraid; you have found favor with God"? I'm not being facetious or flippant. Have ever considered the thought that this is something YOU might hear one day? What are we told in Scripture that children of God can expect to hear when appearing in the presence of God? Do you believe this is how God thinks of you today?
- When Gabriel told Mary that she was going to conceive and give birth to a son—what do you think ran through her mind?
- This is the first time we see the name Jesus. What does this name mean?
- In what way was David Jesus' father?
- Right from the start we're told that Jesus' kingdom will never end. Does that mean that Jesus' kingdom is in effect right now—today?
- Do you struggle believing in the virgin birth?
- For centuries, the Roman Catholic Church has held the belief in the "Immaculate Conception." If you're not familiar with this teaching, you might think this refers to the moment that Jesus was conceived in Mary's womb by the power of the Holy Spirit. But that's not the case. This teaching holds that MARY was conceived immaculately—and she herself was sinless PRIOR to Jesus being conceived in her womb. What do you make of this? Do you believe this? Does the Bible teach this?
- Verse 37 is quite a powerful verse: "No word from God will ever fail." Discuss the implications of this statement.
- What do you think was going through Mary's mind and heart when she said in v. 38, "I am the Lord's servant—may your word to me be fulfilled." What do you think was in Mary's heart as she said this?

- Read **Luke 1:39-50**

- Why do you think Mary hurried off to visit Elizabeth?
- Wow—what a moment when Mary entered Elizabeth's home and greeter her. What two things happened?
- The Holy Spirit empowered Elizabeth to see Mary for who she was—the mother of God! Talk about Elizabeth humbling herself before a much-younger Mary, and acknowledging that Mary was "the mother of my Lord." Have you ever considered the fact that Elizabeth was the first person to call Jesus, "my Lord!"? And to think that Jesus was a days or weeks old embryo at this point!
- What quality does Elizabeth affirm in Mary (v. 45)?
- Do you think Elizabeth's words gave Mary confidence? Do you think they encouraged her? How so?
- Mary breaks out in a song of praise—referred to through the years as her "Magnificat!" What strikes you about her song?
- In what ways does peace permeate this entire account? How does Mary demonstrate the peace of God in her responses?

Application:

Peace is not the absence of conflict—it is the presence of God. Be very intentional in your life this week to invite the presence of God INTO whatever struggle or conflict you experience.