Travel Light - Part One

# Here He Comes!

## (Luke 1:26-2:6)

We are launching into a brand-new message series today called Travel Light as Jewish people around the world are lighting the first Hanukkah candle and celebrating God’s faithfulness to bring them through great persecution and preparing them for the coming of the Messiah. In the same way, many liturgical denominations around the world are lighting the fourth advent candle as they prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. And so, today, as you and I gather together celebrating the hope, peace, joy, and love of this advent season, this is the expectation of Israel.

As we remember the events surrounding the Christmas story, we’re going to turn to the Word of God in Luke’s gospel. And as we turn to the Scriptures, we find Jesus coming down from heaven, stepping down through the corridors of time. The One who is the seed of Abraham, skipped through 42 generations, as the Word became flesh. Immanuel came down where we are, dwelling among us, tabernacling in a young virgin named Mary.

This morning I want to talk to you about that great moment in time when God became one of us. When he left the glory of heaven and the praise of angels, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness, he humbled himself and became a seed planted in the virgin womb of Mary (Philippians 2:7). As you are finding your place in Luke chapter one, verse 26, “Here He Comes!”

In fact, that is God’s Word for somebody, that might be your Word this morning, here comes Jesus. “Here He Comes” for those of you who are weary and burdened. Here comes Jesus for those of you that are tired, frustrated, and uncomfortable. Those of you today who have been waiting to get a Word from God, here comes your Word. Ready or not, here comes Jesus!

“God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary…" (Luke 1:26-27).

The angel went to her and said in verse 30,

“Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High…” (Luke 1:30-32).

Here he comes. Say it with me, “Here he comes!”

"How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?" The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So, the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:34-35).

Of course, Mary was confused, trying to understand what the angel meant, because she had never experienced anything like this.

She was greatly troubled at his words, like some of you right now. You might be confused about something going on in your life. You wish it weren’t happening right now, you don’t know what you’re going to do, but you feel like you’ve got to do something. You know you’ve got to get this under control, you need to figure this out, because things have gone too far.

What I hope you’ll understand today, what I want to encourage you to do, is to just let go. Let go of the idea that you always need to be in control. Because the truth is that you don’t always have the power or the ability to control what happens to you. In other words, you don’t always have the power to make him do what you want or to make her behave the way you want. You don’t always have the ability to get your health or your finances under control. You can’t always get your kids to do everything you want them to do. You don’t always have the power or the ability to be in control, but you do have the power to surrender.

Mary is trying to process all of this, and yet without understanding, she believes and in faith she replies,

"I am the Lord's servant; may it be to me as you have said” (Luke 1:38).

Now, before we’re tempted to idolize her, we need to remember that Mary was an average, ordinary, teenage girl. We know that because God said that is exactly the kind of person he uses.

“He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things — and the things that are not — to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him” (1 Corinthians 1:28-29).

Some scholars say that she may have been as young as 13 or 14 years of age, and so she was just a young girl from Nazareth, proving once again that God did indeed choose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise. In fact, it was one of Jesus’ disciples named Nathaniel who said,

"Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" (John 1:46).

In other words, that was a surprising place that the mother of our Lord would come from, because it wasn’t a great place. It didn’t have a great reputation, but in spite of her community, God was changing things up a little bit.

Check out this video. Travis, can you start the video. Ready or not, here he comes.

Some of you may have been in a similar situation, where you had a plan, you had some hopes and dreams, but things didn’t work out the way you thought. Maybe you had hopes for three kids but found out that you couldn’t conceive your first. Or maybe you thought you were done after two kids, but then you got a bonus round. Or maybe it was a relational conflict, a health issue, or a financial difficulty, and you never thought it would be like this.

You are greatly troubled and like Mary you have a decision to make, because you don’t always have the power to control your situation, but you do have the power to surrender your situation. And so, Mary had to choose between trying to stay in control or trusting God’s calling for her life. And what I love about this Scripture is that even though she didn’t understand God’s plan, she trusted that God’s purpose was greater than what she had planned. And so, she replied,

"May it be to me as you have said” (Luke 1:38).

But that was just the start, that was just the beginning, because like us, she would have to make the decision to surrender over and over and over again.

You see, as we consider Mary story, we need to understand that just because you have been called by God and anointed by God, it doesn’t mean that you are exempt from problems. And so, Mary recognized that her life was beyond her control, and she put her trust in the purpose of God, surrendering to the manifold wisdom of God and the power of God. And so, we need to recognize that we’re going to face many problems in life, and from our human perspective, most, if not all of them are going to be beyond our ability to control. That’s why Jesus said,

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me” (John 14:1).

Let’s continue following the story of Mary because there is much more for us to learn. Luke tells us that sometime after her encounter with the angel that Mary went to visit Elizabeth. She stayed with her relative for about three months before she returned home but then she discovered that it was happening again.

You know, life does that doesn’t it? Mary came home and found that situations and circumstances were beyond her control. Luke tells us in chapter 2,

“In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to his own town to register” (Luke 2:1-3).

Now, by this time Mary was heavy with child, but when Caesar said everyone, that meant everyone. And so, when you’ve got to go, you’ve got to go, and the Bible says,

“Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child” (Luke 2:4-5).

Now, any time you are required to do something for which you have no point of reference it can be troubling. And so, what do you do when you are pregnant, and you are required to travel on a donkey in the hot Palestinian heat? What do you do when you have been anointed for something, when God said something or gave you something and you believe it, but you don’t have any context?

In this passage of Scripture we find Mary 100% in the will of God and in his purpose and yet heaven is quiet. For those of you who are mothers, if you’ve ever been pregnant, you could imagine what it must’ve been like for Mary about to have a baby and traveling on a donkey. For the rest of you, let me just tell you that she wasn’t traveling light, she was heavy with child, and she was forced into a situation where she is completely uncomfortable. And yet, sometimes, like the apostle Paul tells us, you have to live by faith and not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). In other words, you may not have any confirmation that the God who said it is still with you and yet you’ve got to keep walking anyway.

Today you and I live in a culture where comfort is a high priority, a necessity. But here in the gospel, we find Mary was very uncomfortable and yet she was in exactly the right place at exactly the right time. In other words, I want to propose to you, that sometimes there is a greater purpose behind our discomfort. In fact, sometimes just being in the will of God will make you nervous and uncomfortable, but God doesn’t put a lot of value in comfort.

If you don’t believe me, just ask Joseph in prison, ask Daniel in the lion’s den, or even better, ask Jesus about going to the cross. In the garden the night before his arrest as he was sweating drops of blood he prayed,

"Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done" (Luke 22:42).

And we all know how that worked out for Jesus, we know what he went through, and so here is Mary living out the purpose of God. She is fulfilling the will of God, preparing to deliver the Savior of the world, bouncing down an ancient path in Palestine on the back of a donkey.

Now, you’ve got to understand that Mary didn’t know she was going to have a baby, she wasn’t going to Bethlehem to have a baby, her and Joseph were just going there to register for the census because Joseph was from Bethlehem. And so, in their minds, it was just going to be a quick trip, they were just going there to take care of some business. But the Bible says,

“While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born” (Luke 2:6).

And so, Joseph and Mary weren’t expecting this, and I wonder if there is someone here, someone listening who has something deep inside of you, something moving forward, something bearing down. Some sort of burden, some discomfort, and it’s wearing you down. Joseph and Mary didn’t know that this would be the trip that took her over the edge. They didn’t have a plan if her water broke, and that baby dropped, and she went into labor.

But what’s interesting is that this isn’t the first time that this happened on this road. You see, many years before, Jacob and Rachel were traveling down this exact same road. Now back in that day, Bethlehem was often referred to as Ephrath and the Bible says,

“While they were still some distance from Ephrath, Rachel began to give birth … as she was having great difficulty in childbirth, the midwife said to her, "Don't be afraid, for you have another son." As she breathed her last…” (Genesis 35:16-18).

And so, many centuries before Rachel had come down that same path and she too had gone into labor. She gave birth to her son Ben-Oni, which means “son of my sorrows” and she died just outside of Bethlehem.

We know this wasn’t an easy trip, but maybe it had to be that way, because Rachel’s son wasn’t the one that God wanted to be born in Bethlehem. Maybe she had to give birth on the road outside of Bethlehem because God had already declared,

"Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel…" (Micah 5:2).

And so, here comes Rachel pregnant with a king, but God couldn’t let her mess this up because he knew there was one coming who was going to be born in Bethlehem that would be the King of Kings and Lord of lords.

What do you do when God has a plan, but you don’t? God said,

“A voice is heard in Ramah, mourning and great weeping, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because her children are no more" (Jeremiah 31:15).

And so, God said to Rachel, “Whatever you’re going to have, you’re going to have to have it on your way.”

What are you going to do when what you are carrying drops, when you lose control, and it comes forth before you’re ready? What are you going to do when it happens? What are you going to do when your water breaks and you are fully dilated on the road? I want to encourage you to stop living in the moment and get ready for the unexpected. You’ve got to stop spending up to the limit, and get some reserve, because it’s going to happen when it happens, and when it happens you have to be ready.

You see, the problem is that God never promised to let you in on his plan. He may give you a glimpse, a shadow of things to come, but most often he will keep you in the dark because that is where your faith shines the brightest. And so, God knew that Mary was going to have her baby in the same place that Ruth had Obed, but Mary didn’t know. She knew that Joseph was a descendent of King David, but I’m not sure that she understood that his father was Jesse, and Jesse’s father was Obed. And she certainly didn’t have any idea that it was going to happen when it happened, but things broke loose quicker than they thought.

Today, I want to encourage you to live like you are expecting. Some of you know what I mean, you’ve got to have your bags packed with just enough stuff to get you through in a pinch, because it’s going to happen when it happens. I know that everything in our culture tells us that we’ve got to make it happen. If it’s going to be, it’s up to me. I’ve got to get in there, I’ve got to be strong, I’ve got to make it happen. But we need to remember that we don’t have the ability to control what happens. Mary said,

"May it be to me as you have said” (Luke 1:38).

I know that is completely opposite to everything that our culture says, but we don’t always have the power to control what happens. What we do have is the power to surrender. That’s why Jesus said,

“Whoever tries to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it” (Luke 17:33).

In other words, if you fight to remain in control, you’re actually going to lose it. But if you surrender, if you give up control of your life, Jesus says you will save it. And so, for us to fully follow Jesus, he says to surrender control. To say as Mary did,

“Let it be to me according to your word” (Luke 1:38, NKJV).

And it’s important to understand that this is not a one-time decision, it’s a daily choice. When we look at Mary’s decision to surrender, what is interesting is that every time she chose to surrender something, she would see the evidence of God’s faithfulness.

Consider her track record for a moment, she is a virgin, and the angel of the Lord comes to her and says, “You’re going to be pregnant.” And so now she’s got to have that difficult conversation, not only does she have to tell her parents, but she’s got to tell Joseph. And she doesn’t know how God is going to do this, but she says let it be to me according to your word. And so, God sends the angel to Joseph to confirm that this whole thing is legitimate, and she sees the faithfulness of God.

Meanwhile, the people all around town are whispering, “Did you hear about Mary?” “We know what she has been doing.” And so, she is shamed for this in her community, but when the Holy Spirit confirms to Elizabeth that this baby in her is of God, Mary is comforted once again.

Every day Mary is faced with the decision of trusting God with this child. I wonder what it is that you are trying to control that God wants you to surrender to him today? The Bible says it this way,

“Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you” (1 Peter 5:7).

If there is something that you are carrying, some burden that is weighing you down, whatever it is I want to encourage you to bring it to Jesus. In fact, he invites you,

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30).

And so, whatever it is that you’ve been trying to control, maybe a child, maybe a relationship, maybe a financial burden, would you confess it and surrender it to him.

This is important because sometimes God will allow you to go through things, but that’s why he wants you to travel light. It’s going to happen, when it happens, and so would you cast all your anxieties on him? God can do so much more through your surrender than you could ever do through your control.

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