

Godsword Season Episode 63

by Ken Graves

Ken Graves' sermon emphasizes the importance of faith, surrender, and delayed gratification in our relationship with God, using the examples of Zechariah and Mary's experiences with Gabriel.

Duration: 29:27

Scripture: Proverbs 3:5-6, Zechariah 4:6, Luke 1:37, Hebrews 11:6, James 4:7

Topics: "Faith And Trust", "Gods Sovereign Will"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of recognizing God's truth and responding to His word with faith, drawing parallels between the reactions of Zechariah and Mary to angelic messages. It highlights the significance of surrendering to God's will, trusting in His power to do the impossible, and choosing faith over doubt in our walk with Him.

Transcript

There is a war going on. A spiritual war. A war between truth and deception.

Only one thing cuts through all the lies and opinions of man. It is the truth of an ancient book. The Bible.

It is God's word. God's sword. I encourage you.

Recognize that God is speaking, especially how he speaks out of the scriptures to us. Recognize that the Lord is speaking and respond to God's word by faith. Zechariah's reaction was great fear.

Fear fell upon him. Verse 13. But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zechariah.

For thy prayer is heard. Now again, I'm reminding you that Zechariah's job is to light the incense. And do this, which was very symbolic of prayer ascending.

The angel says, Don't be afraid. Almost always, the first thing the angel is going to say, Don't be afraid. Because, apparently, if we see them as they are, they're quite glorious, quite majestic.

There's something about them. In fact, according to Psalm 8, man is made a little lower than the angels. They are a higher form of life.

And there is this, I guess, contrast that people experience when they see them as they are. Zechariah experiences it. The angel says, Don't be afraid because your prayer has been heard.

And he says, And thy wife, Elizabeth, shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. Thou shalt have joy and gladness, and many shall rejoice at his birth. Now, I personally got to believe that this angel is smiling at the delivery of this news.

How could he not be? It's like getting to deliver somebody a million dollar check. How do you do that with a punked up face? How do you just not bust out laughing as you go, Hey, guess what? And I think this angel was. This angel, by the way, is a significant angel.

His name is Gabriel. We'll see that as we read on. Gabriel.

He is one who five centuries earlier appeared to Daniel. He has an interesting job, Gabriel. His job seems to be directly connected to the ministry and the announcement of the ministry of Messiah.

He delivers this news. He said, You'll have great joy and gladness in verse 14, and many shall rejoice at his birth. For ye shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink.

He shall be filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb. That would be the first indication that John the Baptist would be a Nazarite. That he wouldn't touch wine or strong drink.

That he would be sanctified. That he would be consecrated, set apart. That he would be somebody that was given to the very service of God even from his earliest.

He'd be a Nazarite like Samson. And that he'd be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb. Please consider that one.

He would be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb. Now be clear on this. In case you're not.

In case you're a new Christian. You haven't settled this issue. Let it be settled.

Human life begins at conception. And no later. Any attempt to try to fix a date or a point in time where a person becomes fully a person is nothing but criminal.

It's illogical. It's the kind of thing practiced by people like Hitler. It's one thing that Hitler had in common with every abortionist and everybody who was pro-abortion.

Is that he believed that there was such a thing as a person that really wasn't a whole person. That really wasn't fully human. That evolutionary thought allowed him to justify the wickedness, the brutality and the attempted annihilation of a whole nation of people, the Jews.

Even from his mother's womb. Zechariah would be filled with the Holy Spirit. He would have an experience.

He would have a direct relationship with God even from his mother's womb. Even from the earliest point of his existence. He says in verse 16, the angel continues.

And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he should go before him in the spirit and power of Elias. To turn the hearts of the fathers to the children.

And the disobedient to the wisdom of the just. To make a ready of people prepared for the Lord. Imagine the news that Zechariah is being given.

Imagine the news you guys, he's being told that not only is he going to have a son, he's going to have a great son. He will be great. Now isn't that the wish for every one of us who have babies? Be they little women or little men.

We have a hope and a wish for them to attain greatness. That they would be everything that they could be. That they would reach all of their potential.

Now here you got an angel announcing, think about this. Announcing that not only will this old man who has never had a child have a son. He's going to be great.

He's going to have this incredible ministry. A ministry of turning people to the Lord. Turning the hearts of the fathers back to the children.

He would affect people, he would affect human relationships, he would affect men's relationship with God. And then the most exciting thing of all. That he's told is that he's going to prepare the way of the Lord.

He's going to be the forerunner. Going to the spirit and power of Elijah. Well this is a big deal.

You guys, it's really a big deal because the prophecy about Messiah coming was that before Messiah comes, Elijah would come first. Understand that what Gabriel is announcing is that this one who's going to be born to this previously childless man and woman. Is going to be Elijah in the sense that he comes in the spirit and power of Elijah.

Oh man, along with this announcement about the birth of John the Baptist is the announcement of Messiah. The one they've been waiting for is coming. Verse 18.

And I'm sent to speak unto thee and to show thee these glad tidings. Behold, thou shalt be dumb and not able to speak until the day that these things shall be performed because thou believest not my words which shall be fulfilled in their season. Now you can't convince me that Gabriel did not go from smiling to frowning.

You've got to be kidding me little man. He announces like, guess what? He announces, check it out man, you're going to be a dad. Oh yeah.

And not just a dad, you're going to be a dad of one who is great. And I can just see this angel going, huh? Waiting for a reaction, waiting for a response. And the response of Hoseachariah is, how do I know this isn't some kind of joke? How do I know that'll happen? I'm old.

My wife's old. How about a sign? You can't not convince me that angel didn't go on. He didn't just go, are you kidding me? Alright, how about this one? Shut up and stay that way.

How about this one? And he goes, I don't know who you think I am. I'm Gabriel. I am Gabriel.

I stand in the very presence of God. I've been sent to give you this good news. You don't talk for nine months.

Come out of here. You don't talk, I mean think about that one. Struck him numb.

Every wife's dream. Every. He doesn't enter, certainly not, let alone win an argument for the next nine months.

He doesn't answer back. He doesn't talk back to his wife. His ability to speak was taken.

Taken. It needed to be. And he's going to explain to Elizabeth with a note.

Well, this happened, see, because I was dumb enough to ask for a sign. I questioned, I doubted. He had to explain this.

He had to explain that the last thing that came out of his mouth before he lost his ability to speak, was unbelief. It was kind of stupid. But I'm still convinced.

He went out of there smiling. Smiling and dumb. Smiling and mute.

He comes out of there going. He wants to yell, but nothing comes out. He wants to explain.

Think about all the things. He's coming out of there and he's doing charades. All excited.

He's doing the whole, just trying with every gesture. I mean, how do you do angel? And he's mute. He's absolutely dumb.

Unable to do this thing, but he's trying to describe. All that happened, finally, I'm sure he just goes. Give him something to write with.

And he tells everybody what happened. This is heavy. It's intense, isn't it? Well, verse 21, the people waited in Zechariah.

They marveled that he tarried so long in the temple. It's a simple job, just went there to light the incense, get back up here. They're out there going.

It's taking the guy so long. When he finally comes out, he can't talk. Verse 22, when he came out, he could not speak unto them.

And they perceived that he had seen a vision of the temple, for he beckoned unto them and remained speechless. Like I said, desperately doing gestures. And it came to pass that as soon as the days of his ministration were accomplished, that he departed to his own house.

Okay, so he's there at the temple. He's not planting any seeds. He's away.

Verse 24, but after those days, after those days, his wife Elizabeth conceived and hid herself five months, saying, Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days when he looked on me to take away my reproach among men. Five months! She just hid herself. She did not come out of hiding until she had something to show.

And then, imagine that moment for Elizabeth. When she comes out of seclusion. Imagine that she comes out with a little baby bunch.

How sort of vindicating. Can't you just imagine? Listen, I've observed this phenomenon. That I think a lot of... Forgive me if this is offensive, I don't mean for it to be.

A lot of ladies are apparently holding their stomach. Because it's like as soon as they get a positive test. I'm telling you.

It's like as soon as you receive the news you're pregnant, just let that thing hang. And they're like, they'll want to announce to everybody. Oh yeah, and like a month pregnant.

Elizabeth had something to show, I guarantee it. She was sporting that thing. She was doing all the things that ladies do.

Little shelf. Holding on to her back. Like, hey, did you notice I'm pregnant? I guarantee you.

Little old Elizabeth. She went around showing that tummy. The Lord had taken away her reproach.

The Lord did this to her. He gave her a baby. He gave her a little tummy to show.

It's a good thing, girl. Just let it hang. Look at what is written next.

In verse 26. In the sixth month, that is six months after the conception of John. The angel Gabriel was sent from God into a city of Galilee named Nazareth.

To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came in under her and said.

Hail, thou that are highly favored. The Lord is with thee. And blessed art thou among women.

When she saw him, she was troubled at his saying. And cast in her mind, what manner of salutation this should be. She was more blown away by what he said than who he is.

Then he said, Hail. He greeted her with respect. He said, you are highly favored.

Think about what he says to her. Hail, thou are highly favored. Graciously accepted.

Alternate translation. And told the Lord is with you. And that you are blessed among all women.

That troubled Mary more than the sight of an angel. More than his presence or the glory of this angelic being. What he says to her.

What? Tells you something about her. Tells you what a humble girl she was. She didn't hear that and go, you betcha.

That's right. I know. She didn't have any of that attitude.

She was just a humble girl. See, I do maintain, based on her response, that she was not head cheerleader at Nazareth High. And she was not prom queen or most popular anything.

In fact, I don't think, contrary to all of the paintings and all of the artist's conceptions, that she was probably the most beautiful. She may have been. But her humility comes from something.

I think she was a plain girl. I think the Lord's very plan was to enter this world as a plain man. Highly favored.

Blessed among women. He said in verse 30, We'll talk about that more in our study tonight. Yeshua.

Man, check it out, brothers. What she had just heard was that her baby was going to be the heir to that throne. And he would be the son of God.

Verse 33. And of his kingdom there shall be no end. Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not of a man? You can tell by the reaction from Gabriel, this was completely different from the question that came from Zechariah.

Same messenger delivers this news to a human girl, who delivered the news to Zechariah. And you remember what happened to Zechariah. You see, it came from two different places.

Zechariah did something. It was an expression of unbelief. Basically, Zechariah went, No way.

Whereas Mary just said, Okay, well, tell me how. How? How shall this thing be, seeing I know not of a man? She meant in a sexual way. She's espoused.

Espoused to Joseph. That means she's committed. That means she is already as much his as if they were married legally.

But because they've not had the wedding, they have not consummated their marriage. And it didn't happen. It was prohibited.

It was completely outside the will of God. And everybody knew it. A little different today.

Today you shack up and you know each other on every level. Before you even get engaged. Everybody that tells me this is my fiance, usually I interpret that to mean this is the person I'm having sex with regularly.

I'll be clear on this. Mary said, I know not a man. She was promised and yet knew not a man.

I want you to know this. She did not know what his lips tasted like even. She knew who she was going to marry.

She was as much legally his as she would be as a married woman. But the marriage hadn't happened yet. They were espoused.

A legal contract bound them together for marriage. But she still did not know him in an intimate way. I think it's a big mistake.

Their common practice today is to know each other on just about every level. Get way too comfortable, way too familiar. Even the Christians who are committed to and trying to get to their honeymoon night as virgins.

Trying to make it to the wedding. Even they are still going as far as they legally can. It's a mistake.

It's a big mistake. To get to know too much. Physically.

Intimately. Mary could say something that I think every single virgin ought to be able to say. In fact, I know not a man.

Or I know not a woman. To be able to arrive at your wedding and say I don't know anybody in that way. That's plan A. Now, you've already blown it.

You've already missed plan A. Well, then plan B is. As soon as you are right with God. As soon as you become a virgin again in a sense spiritually.

In the sight of God. Maintain that virginity. Maintain that until you're there.

At that place where God has blessed the sexual union. And that is at your honeymoon. And not one hour sooner.

Not a day before it. You know, by the way, take advantage of Christmas. You're going to do the tradition.

You're going to wrap gifts for your children. And make them wait. Let them know they're there and make them wait.

You are given the opportunity then to teach the concept of delayed gratification. You've got to wait. Teach them that.

With your gifts. Don't let them open anything early. Alright, some of you guys do Christmas Eve.

My kids have always done that. My wife always caves. She wants to bless them Christmas Eve.

So Christmas Eve becomes this opportunity to sort of experience what's coming tomorrow. It's a little gift. You can open a little one.

I encourage you to teach the concept of delayed gratification. Just remind them they're there. They're yours.

Pick them up. Shake them. Wonder what it is.

Be excited. But don't open it. Do not rip the paper.

And then get them to understand. This is the very will of God with regard to their body. And the sexual aspect of it.

Mary said, how? She wasn't doubting. She just wanted to know how. How shall this be? Seeing a note on a man.

Verse 35. And the angel answered her and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the highest shall overshadow thee. And therefore also the holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.

That's quite an answer. The very Spirit of God, the prime mover in creation. In Genesis 1 verse 2. The prime mover.

The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the deep. The same person, the same Holy Spirit would move upon Mary. As he moved upon all of creation on the face of the deep.

Energized. The same Holy Spirit would move. The power of the most high would overshadow thee.

Then the angel goes on and says in verse 36, Behold thy cousin Elizabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age. And this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For with God, nothing shall be impossible.

Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord be unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her. I would leave you today with just a reminder of those two very different responses to news from

God.

Good news. Two very different responses. One delivered good news, received the good news, and doubted it.

He said, What? No way. You're going to have to give me a sign before I can believe that. The other received the good news and just said, Alright, just tell me how.

You know, am I supposed to do something? Is it up to me? The Lord answered through the angel. Gave her the very answer and she said, You know what? Then, let your words be true. Behold the handmaid of the Lord.

Be unto me even according to your words. Now, which one of those two are you? Which one are we? You want to please the Lord? Faith is what it takes to please God. Faith is a response to His truth, to His message.

I encourage you. Recognize that God is speaking, especially how He speaks out of the scriptures to us. Recognize that the Lord is speaking and respond to God's word by faith.

Respond by faith. Just surrender and say, Lord, You will. Alright? You will.

You can do anything. Be convinced of that, that God can do anything. And I want to encourage you to choose the response of Mary.

In humility, just say, Yes, sir, Lord. You will. Torn between choices? Go with the will of God.

And surrender to Him. Let's all stand together. Listen, if you're not right with God and you want to do something about that, come and see me right after we pray and dismiss.

Other pastors will be right down here at the front, ready to pray with you, tell you what you got to do. If there is anything that depends upon you, it's good to ask. I mean, it's like Mary did.

How should it be? You know what? God wants to save you. If you're not right with God, if you're alienated from Him, He wants to make you right with Him. And it's legitimate for you to, like Mary, ask, Well, then how? We'll show you in the Scripture.

Give us that opportunity. Lead you in a prayer of repentance and acceptance. You can be born again today.

You can be so restored to a right relationship with God. So again, I ask you to give us that opportunity to pray with you. You know that most of you guys are Christians.

You know the Lord. You know His word. Let Him lead you.

By the way, where does faith come from? Were you supposed to just work it up? Faith comes by hearing. Hearing by the word of God. Choose that you're going to hear His word.

Choose that. Choose to hear what the Lord is saying to you. And respond by faith.

Father in Heaven, thank you for the time that we've been able to be together. Thank you for the study in your word. The way that your word speaks to us.

I pray, Lord, on behalf of all of those here. For those who are among us who may not be where they need to be with you. Please, move upon their heart.

To just ask, even as Mary did. What do I got to do? Lord, I pray for all of my brothers and sisters. That you would help us to recognize your voice.

To know your voice and your leading. And to choose your will. Help us to be yielded and surrendered.

Even as Mary was. Her example inspires us. I pray, Lord Jesus.

Help us to follow you. And have that faith that pleases you. To know the truth.

That with you, nothing is impossible. Nothing. Thank you for this time together.

And bless our fellowship with each other now as we go. In the glorious name. Amen.

Grace and peace to you guys. Please come by to see us at 154 River Road in Orrington. We meet Sundays at 8.30 and 10.30 a.m. And again at 6 p.m. Or Wednesdays at 6 p.m. If you're in the Southern Maine area.

We meet at the Greater Portland Christian School. 1338 Broadway in South Portland. Saturdays at 7 p.m. You can also check us out on the web at www.ccbangor.org There you will find audio and video teachings by Pastor Ken.

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