



Empowering People to Change the World

**Second Sunday of Advent 2021
Hail Mary: Conceiving a Miracle**

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If you look up the definition, you will find first, “A prayer to the Virgin Mary used by the Catholic Church.” But you will also find a second definition, “A long typical unsuccessful pass made in a desperate attempt to score late in the game.”

If you look on YouTube and put in “Hail Mary Football,” you will see the Top 10 Hail Mary plays:

- From the 2013 Divisional Playoffs, Joe Flacco of the Ravens - last second pass defeating the Denver Broncos.
- To the September 27, 2009 game between San Francisco and Minnesota, considered the greatest “hail Mary” in pro football history.
- I think the greatest “hail Mary pass” in history has to be the 1984 Doug Flutie 64-yard pass in the Orange Bowl.

My definition would be: “Like the Virgin Mary’s miracle of conceiving Christ in her womb, God still conceives miracles at the last minute in our lives.”

When you look back in biblical history, we observe just how often God has shown up in miraculous power in a “hail Mary” way. Right when everything looks hopeless, God shows up. A few examples:

- The Exodus from Egypt, an amazing “hail Mary” as Moses lifts up his rod at the Red Sea
- The 13th time marching around Jericho
- David and Goliath in the valley of Elah
- Elijah against the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel
- Hezekiah cries out for deliverance against the Assyrians
- Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego in the fiery furnace

- Peter and Silas in prison worshipping the Lord and the earthquake
- The greatest “hail Mary in all of history” was the birth of the Son of God from the womb of a virgin.

Our God is a fourth-quarter, Kingdom-comeback, hail-Mary God.

**God chose a poor virgin girl 2,000 years ago:
from an obscure country,
from an obscure village,
from an obscure family to birth a miracle.**

God is still taking obscure people from obscure backgrounds to birth miracles today!

- God is still taking normal people like you and me...where life or love, hope or strength, promise or patience have disappeared, or maybe were never present at all.
- It's a timeless kind of wonder that is still happening today.
- It is not mystical, but miraculous.
- What Almighty God did in the physical/biological realm - supernaturally begetting life, promise and hope where none existed - He is fully ready and able to do now with anybody, anywhere today!
- Let's look at one of the most beloved passages in the Bible...

Luke 1:26

- When God wants to move, He often uses these powerful messengers, angels.
- The purpose of angels is to minister to the saints. We will talk more about angels next week.

Nazareth

- Nazareth is usually forgotten in the Christmas story, but this is where it all began.
- Nazareth is a very forgettable town. In ancient times, it is hardly mentioned.
 - The Old Testament and Talmud never mention it.
 - Even later on, one of Jesus' disciples said sneeringly, "*Can anything good come out of Nazareth?*" (John 1:46)
 - The city of Nazareth was so small that Joseph would have had to travel four miles northward to get to the town of Sepphoris to purchase his tools and items not available in Nazareth.
 - Even today, Nazareth is a small town of 57,000 nestled in the hills of lower Galilee.
- Nazareth is 70 miles north of Jerusalem, in the province of Galilee, the northern most region of Israel.

Verse 27

- Yosef and Miriam, as pronounced in their own languages, were common names among Jews at that time.
- God invades a drama that is already taking place; two people who are about to be married.
- Romance and courtship did not play a large role in ancient times, and most marriages were arranged by the parents.

- Parents were watching. Couples were not just thrown together in a loveless match. Directly or indirectly, their comments and conduct often alerted parents as to which family to contact.
 - Probably what happened is Joseph asked his parents if he could marry that shy village girl who was a distant relative.
 - The parents knew the family well. There were family outings and festivals that they attended together.
 - They already had a hunch...they had seen the conversations at the well, and they had watched the eyes of both.
 - Both were poor and humble; everyone in Nazareth was.
 - More than likely, Joseph was around 25 years old, having needed to work and save to provide for a wife. But he was now ready.
 - Mary would have been about 15 or 16 years old.
 - But one day, during the months of preparation for the wedding ceremony, Mary's wedding plans are momentarily interrupted...

Yosef and Miriam were ordinary people in an ordinary place in an ordinary time.

Verses 28-30

- I think the most surprised person in all of history was Mary that day.
- Mary is troubled and fearful.

- And yet it is the greeting that we must consider...

Luke 1:28

“...the angel said to her, ‘Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!’”

- A form of the phrase, “blessed are you among women,” occurs three times in Luke’s account.
- Over the years strained meanings of this phrase “blessed are you among women” have caused entire church movements to separate.
 - Some so venerate Mary to the point of worship.
 - Others barely acknowledge the unique and profound role that she played.

First, clarity must be brought to the word “blessed.”

“Blessed” comes from the Greek word, “eulogeo” and is a simple forthright prophecy that Mary will be “well spoken of” in generations to come.

- It is not extolling anything particularly worthy of Mary.
- But he is saying that Mary has been chosen, identified for a special assignment.
- Mary has been given a special calling, and if she follows that plan, she will “well spoke of” in the generations to come.
- This word, “eulogeo,” is used again in Ephesians...the Greek word meaning “blessed.”

Ephesians 1:3

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed (eulogeo) us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.”

- Mary is a type for you and me to look at.
- All of us who have a relationship with Jesus are blessed and anointed by God.
- All of us have been blessed.
- All of us are highly favored.
- All of us will leave behind a legacy.
- Like Mary, all of us are ordinary, but uniquely called to do something for the Lord.
 - God has a destiny on each person's life. It is our responsibility to discover it through seeking God.
 - God's MO, God's “modus operandi,” is to take ordinary people from ordinary places at ordinary times to use them for supra-ordinary, supernatural, super works of His Spirit.
 - God has so blessed everyone here! You have been given talents, skills, and gifts that God wants to use for His glory.

Verses 31-33

- Mary is now told by God that the purpose of her life is to bear the Son of God, the Messiah, the Son of the Highest!

Mary is pregnant with the Miraculous.

- Mary didn't expect it; it was supernaturally a work of God.

- If there were such an award in Nazareth High, Mary would have won, "Miss Ordinary."
- Mary, who is poor, is without any distinction to speak of.
- Mary's greatest desire is to be a wife and mother.
- Mary is pregnant with the greatest miracle of all time!

God wants to make you pregnant with the miraculous.

- God wants to make each of us pregnant with His divine plan.
- Redemption is the beautiful word that embraces all of God's divine program of recovery.
 - He is reclaiming the lost.
 - He is forgiving the sinful.
 - He is setting the captives free!
 - His is a Kingdom with no end. It goes on from generation to generation!
 - All miracles in the Bible point to the Redeemer! This is the purpose of every plan of God.
 - God's glory!!

Verses 34-38

Mary chooses to trust God with His miraculous plan.

- Who knows if Mary was the only virgin God had chosen? We don't know if he might have visited others.
- But God's not looking for intelligence, pedigree, or gifting! He's looking for obedience.
- Look what she said: verse 38

You always have a choice in believing God for His miracle in your life.

- This is always how God begins to work...the Lord conceives within each of us a work that He wants to accomplish.
- Ex. For Aaron Salt, Ivy Liu, and Laurie Thompson, God conceived his vision within each of them to build better schools in District 20 and District 49; so, they ran for school board and won!
- Ex. For Pastor Al, he got pregnant with a vision for ministering to the apartments across the street, and we have now provided meals this year and last year at Thanksgiving.
- Ex. For Pam Holloway, God made her pregnant with a passion for bringing health to our people at The Road, and now El Paso County and over 1,500 people have been healed of covid!

This is how it works: It is conceived by God's voice! You become pregnant with a vision, a plan, a miracle!

- All of the pastors at The Road, and many of you here, are pregnant right now! We are pregnant for a "Kingdom of God Revolution" for our city and our state!
- Are you pregnant with a vision from God? For your family...for your church...for your community?

- Are you pregnant? God wants to conceive His seed within you.

Will you seek God for His miracle in your life?

Identifying God's Voice

- It all begins with learning to identify God's voice.
- God really speaks today! God will speak to you. God wants you to expect Him to speak to you.
- But it is important to know the difference between meeting God and muddling with goofiness.

Conception and Hearing God's Voice

1. Hear the Right Voice

- In the fourth dimension, in the spiritual realm, there are angels, God, and demons!
- Demons speak, and demons deceive! And sometimes their voices sound similar.
- Ex. I know of people who have told me that God has told them to divorce their wives; get involved in an affair.

God's voice always is backed up with confirmation from godly people, the church, and the Scriptures.

2. Seek the Lord

- The idea that only a select few can hear from God. Usually it is this breed of reclusive, pensive, religiously inclined souls.

- But the Bible actually contradicts this from Genesis to Revelation.

God speaks to normal people, working people, who are seeking Him

- God uses fisherman types, tax accountants, farmers, field workers, businessmen.
- And in Nazareth, a teenager who is just preparing for her marriage ceremony.

3. Expect an Adventure

- Fear is probably the most challenging obstacle to our being open to God's voice.
- We fear that it will cost us too much.
- Or that we will do too little.

God's call is not a threat, but an adventure.

- God calls us to something that He will, in turn, provide the grace we need and resources we need to accomplish.

Do you need a “hail Mary” this Christmas? In the coming year?

- God is calling us to greater possibilities than we could ever produce ourselves, asking only that we let him work with and through us.
- Like Mary, God wants to conceive and birth fresh vision in your life! Seek Him, trust Him, and believe Him for a mighty new work in your life!

