

I. ME

- A. I love Xmas
 - 1. Liz and my goal to be Mr. and Mrs. Claus
 - 2. Xmas music after Halloween, tree, lights, village
 - 3. Drive around looking at xmas lights
 - 4. Kids make it even better
 - 5. Want to buy them everything I can.
 - 6. Xmas is magical.
- B. But every Dec 26th... life just doesn't seem as good.
 - 1. Back to lame music, almost feel guilty leaving lights up, tree is just making a mess, toys are already breaking, diapers still need changing.
 - 2. Makes me either want to just ignore it in the first place... or move to the North Pole with Buddy the Elf.
- C. It's like I'm hoping xmas will change everything for the next 364 days
 - a. I have unrealistic expectations.
- D. We saw last week, that a lot of the disillusionment with Xmas and even Jesus is due to unmet expectations... makes us cynical, bitter, disappointed, frustrated, and even angry.
- E. And we discovered that celebrating Jesus as the Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, and Prince of Peace... gives us the ability to Confide in Him, Trust in Him, Lean on Him, and Rest in Him... not just on xmas but everyday.
- F. And we saw that this relationship begins with belief or trust.
 - 1. Believing there is more to reality than we can see
 - 2. Trusting that Jesus is who he said he is.
 - 3. Trusting that Jesus is the answer to our brokenness
 - 4. And trusting that his death and resurrection make an eternal relationship with God possible.

II. WE

- A. At Xmas we want to believe don't we?
 - 1. We want to believe there's a sweet old man up at the North Pole getting our gifts ready
 - 2. Reindeer noses light up in the fog
 - 3. Bells help angels mutate into flying babies
 - 4. John McClain will always be there to save us from terrorists.
- B. We want to believe that this year will be different
 - 1. The kids will get along with each other
 - 2. You'll find the perfect gift for everyone that says how much you care on your budget.
 - 3. Family members that haven't gotten along for years will be excited to play Jenga together and it won't break out into a passive aggressive belittling match.
 - 4. That this joy and kindness will last all year
- C. We want to believe that this year won't just end up being an ordinary Xmas but that it will be something extraordinary that only Charles Dickens could dream of.
- D. Why?
 - 1. Why do we want to believe so badly?
 - 2. I think a lot of the time we are hoping for just a break from our ordinary lives.
 - 3. We want something magical to come into our regular routine and make everything better.
 - 4. We've had a long year and now we just want something to make it easier.
- E. We want to believe... but we don't, do we?... **b/c we know better.**
 - 1. Kids still fight, dogs still poop, in-laws are still weird.
 - 2. You still have to do the dishes after Xmas dinner and now those lights you thought were so magical are just another chore to take down quick enough so your neighbors don't judge you.

- F. We hope for a break from our ordinary lives and we might even get it a bit, but then reality comes crashing back...
1. And Dec. 26 is just like every other day.
 2. We **want** to believe all of it... but we discover through experience, that all of that is just too good to be true.
 3. Like someone is about to rip off the fake beard and it's just some fat guy.

G. We want to believe but we know it's just too good to be true.

1. We want this Xmas to change everything ... but it's hard to believe that something extraordinary will happen when the ordinary keeps peeing on your rug or arguing with your cousin.
- H. What we're about to discover is that it was hard to believe on the first Christmas too.
1. Hard to believe that the ordinary would be invaded by the extraordinary.
 2. That there would be one event that would change everything.
 3. And we'll see that the things we find hard to believe were hard to believe on that first Xmas too.
 4. But that the best Xmas ever is easier to have than you might think.
 5. **The best Christmas ever belongs to those who believe.**

III. GOD

- A. Luke
1. Historian... wrote around 50-60 AD... 20-30 yrs after Jesus
 2. Investigated
 3. Wrote some things that are pretty hard to believe. Some are more difficult than others.
- B. Read **Luke 1:26-38**... **What's hard to believe?**
1. Explanatory Commentary while reading.
- C. **Angel?**
1. It is hard to believe that first, angels and all that supernatural stuff exist?
 - a. I've never seen one. Maybe you have.
 - b. All this mythology around these beings.
 - 1) Elaborate
 2. It's hard to believe that there is more to this universe than what we can see.
 3. But we believe in this type of thing all the time don't we?
 - a. Gravity
 - b. Other Galaxies
 - c. Love
 - d. Maybe there is more than we know
 4. Jesus believed in angels
 - a. If someone can predict their death and resurrection and then pull it off they are pretty trustworthy.
 5. Supernatural is pretty hard to believe... but it's not the hardest thing to believe in this story.

D. Virgin Birth?

1. Betrothed
 - a. Engaged- Legally married, but not physically married.
2. Mary understood the dilemma ...“But I’m still a virgin.”
 - a. Understood basic biology
 - b. Not “but I’m not married” can still have babies if you’re not married.
 - c. Virgins don’t have babies so how could this have happened? Goes against fundamental science.
3. Well if there is a God who made everything and controls everything... would this be too difficult?

4. **If there is a God... what would be impossible for Him?**

5. Life started somewhere somehow.
 - a. We believe God started it... why couldn’t he start it in Mary too?
 - b. **James/Mary?**... still around when Luke wrote this... might have gotten his info from him.
 - c. Virgin birth... pretty hard to believe but it’s not the hardest part of the story to believe.

E. Son of God?

1. **“Son of”- Mirror image or one who possesses all of his father’s qualities.**

2. Hard to believe that Jesus was actually God.
3. Why would he do it this way?
 - a. How else could an infinite eternal being make himself and his love known?
4. Many people reject Christianity on this claim alone.

5. **James-** Believed Jesus was God
 - a. What do you have to do to make your own siblings believe you are God?
6. **Jesus-**
 - a. “I and the Father are one”
 - b. “If you’ve seen me you’ve seen the Father”
 - c. Liar, Lunatic, Lord
 - d. Why they crucified him
7. Hard to believe, but not the hardest.
8. All hard to believe but there is one that we usually skip. It’s the hardest to believe out of all of them.

F. Highly Favored... you have found favor with God

1. To be the recipient of God’s Grace
2. **Grace- God’s goodness to those who have done nothing to deserve it.**
3. What did Mary do to earn or deserve God’s favor?
 - a. Look at verse 28... Nothing.
4. There was nothing special about Mary that made God choose her.
 - a. **Mary did nothing to earn God’s favor**
 - b. So hard to believe that people have made up stories about her... saying she had a virgin birth too or that she stayed a virgin her whole life... James might have something to say about that.
 - c. But there was nothing she did to earn this favor... God just chose her b/c He wanted to. He gave her an honor she did nothing to deserve.

G. Hard to believe God would do that for Mary... even harder to believe God would do that for us...

1. Only other time this word appears in the NT is
Ephesians 1:6

2. The same way God gave Mary His favor/grace is the same way he gives it to anyone who chooses to believe/trust in Jesus.

3. All broken the law of love

4. Can't do anything to fix it

5. God is merciful and just

6. Sent Jesus to die, rise, pay, and purchase

7. Received through faith/trust

8. Not earning it... God isn't Santa Claus... "You better watch out, you better not cry..."

9. Eph 2:8-9

10. Gift analogy.

11. You don't have to be or do anything extraordinary to receive God's favor. Just choose to accept it.

12. God chooses the ordinary and gives them the extraordinary.

IV. YOU

A. What's hardest for you to believe?

1. Angels?

2. Miracles?

3. Identity of Jesus?

B. God's Grace?

1. Maybe you feel like you don't deserve God's favor...

a. No one does.

b. We don't deserve Christmas

c. That's why it's a gift.

2. The real gift of Christmas is too good not to be true.

3. He's offering it to you

4. Will you choose to believe?

C. Maybe you have accepted God's free gift... but you still don't feel worthy of it... too good to be true.

1. Mary felt that way at first... "How can this be?"

2. But what did the Angel say?

3. V. 37

a. **John 3:16**

4. Jesus has made you good enough, he tore up the naughty list... as far as the East and West

5. All you have to do is what Mary did.

D. **V. 38-** Mary's Response

1. Choose to believe that you are His

2. Believe and trust... and walk in the confidence.

V. WE

A. Imagine what Christmas, your life, family, day to day, would be like if we fully grasped and trusted that God loves us no matter what we've done or who we are.

B. Don't have to try to win God's favor... but trust that He gives it abundantly, lavishly to people who just trust Him.

C. Would that give you peace? Would that make the subtle snide remarks RUIN your joy?

D. Imagine the freedom of not having to live up to expectations b/c you are forever accepted by your Heavenly Father.

E. Your ordinary will start to become extraordinary.

F. B/c xmas is really about the extraordinary coming into the ordinary and changing it forever.

G. And when we accept that and trust... we are free to have the best Xmas ever.

H. The best xmas ever belongs to those who believe.