

"A Power-Filled Preparation!"—Luke 1:34-38

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, "A Power-Filled Preparation!", is Luke 1:34-38 → *Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the Child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For nothing will be impossible with God." And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word."* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

The excitement of opening a Christmas gift for a little child is filled with a lot of energy. However, that excitement can be quickly stifled when it is a toy which cannot be used immediately because the batteries were not included. What was the company thinking? You don't allow a child to get a treasured toy only to tell him he can't play with it until you can find him some power. While a child can get over such a disappointment without too much trauma, imagine what it would be like to receive a pacemaker and be told afterwards that the battery was not

included! It is vital to include the power with the gift for a satisfied outcome.

What happens, though, when your battery dies. Since electrical power is so crucial to nearly every area of life, a dead battery can bring your activity to a stop in view of no other electrical options available. A power outage can completely shut down work on job sites, cripple the enjoyment of recreational activities and stop communication through social media, along with affecting a host of other dynamics of life. Thus, you must prepare yourself as you plan your day to assure that you are powered up and/or have constant access to power in order to function satisfactorily.

If there was ever a time of year filled with the investment of huge amounts of energy and power connected with tradition it is the Christmas season. Adults expend much energy in an effort to satisfy traditional expectations of their own and others around to make Christmas special for all involved. It is interesting how many times a person may feel “drained” of their power and energy by the time the celebration of Christmas arrives. I used to own a t-shirt which said in huge letters, “HAPPY HOLIDAYS!” However, a closer look revealed tiny print between the letters HAPPY and HOLIDAYS, so that it read, “I’ll be HAPPY when the HOLIDAYS are over!”

We get the picture from Scripture that the Christmas celebration

involved a “power-filled” preparation for the coming of the Christ Child. It was a preparation by the Almighty, all-powerful Lord of all creation as Yahweh prepared to act in faithfulness to His promises given to the Old Testament Church. That promise was spoken by Him to the devil after Adam & Eve lost their perfect relationship with Him by eating from the tree of which He commanded them not to eat. The promise is given to all mankind, now enslaved to sin, in Genesis 3:15 → *I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her Offspring; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.* The time had finally come for God’s power to be revealed and Mary was *the woman* whose *Offspring* would restore that perfect relationship with God again.

As God prepared Mary for “Christmas” (i.e. the coming of Jesus at His birth), He did it in a traditional way—through a “birth announcement.” However, this announcement was given with a power which far surpasses our communication processes, amazing as they may be. God sent the angel Gabriel to reveal His gift to all mankind **and** assured her of **His power** working in and through her to make it all happen properly according to His plan.

Naturally, Mary was genuinely puzzled as expressed in her question in verse 34 of our text: *How will this be, since I am a virgin?* Actually, this is a normal response. Whenever God acts in the lives of people they are

usually puzzled. Why? Because God usually acts through the ordinary in an extraordinary and miraculous manner. His actions place people in faith dilemmas. They demand you to take God at His word, trust Him, and patiently look for Him to fulfill His Word. At the same time, you will be tempted by the devil, the world and your own sinful nature to doubt God and disobey His Word in unbelief.

The angel explained how it would happen. He said, *The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you* (verse 35). Then he made reference her *relative, Elizabeth*, stating that this same powerful working of God was why she *who was called barren . . . has also conceived a son . . . in her old age* (verse 36). Surely this information would clear up any questions which Mary may have been entertaining over the past months about Elizabeth's pregnancy since she was so old. If it is possible with Elizabeth certainly *nothing will be impossible with God* in her own situation (verse 37).

She may have even recalled how Zechariah, John the Baptizer's father, doubted the angel's announcement concerning the birth of John because he was *an old man, and his wife* (i.e. *Elizabeth*), *was advanced in years, far beyond the age of childbearing. The angel answered him, "I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. And behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take place,*

because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time.” (cf. Luke 1:18-20) Zechariah ended up “speechless” for the next nine months because he failed to simply trust God at His Word.

On the other hand, Mary’s question,—*How will this be, since I am a virgin?*—was actually spoken in faith, not disbelief. How do we know? In light of the energy draining struggles which her pregnancy would bring amongst family, friends and neighbors, she still said in verse 38 of our text: *Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.* She responded in humble submission. Elizabeth also confessed Mary’s faith when she paid her a visit, saying, *Blessed is she **who believed** that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord* (cf. Luke 1:45). Her faith is also expressed in her prayer of praise following this birth announcement that we have come to know as the Magnificat (cf. Luke 1:46-55).

It is vital to include the power with the gift for a satisfied outcome. Thus, when Yahweh brought forth Jesus, *the Child* “conceived by the Holy Spirit” and “born of the virgin Mary” (cf. 2nd Article of the Apostles’ Creed), His power was at work, since Jesus is the *holy . . . Son of God*. He made it clear in this power-filled preparation that **it would be completely His doing**, based upon His age-old promises and not upon anything in Mary. One of those promises, given through the prophet Isaiah some 700 years before this birth announcement, revealed how this powerful Baby

would be called *Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace*. It promised a *peace of which there will be no end* and emphatically stated that ***the zeal of the LORD of hosts would do all this*** (cf. Isaiah 9:6-7). God taking on our humanity in order to restore a perfect relationship with us sinners in the Person & Work of Jesus is a miraculous, power-filled mystery indeed.

As you prepare for your celebration of Christ's birth how is your "power level?" Do you feel "recharged" or totally "drained?" It's amazing the amount of power or energy we expend at this time of year, all connected with our own expectations to satisfy our Christmas traditions. Traditions such as gift purchasing and giving, sending Christmas letters and/or cards to family and friends, baking special goodies, decorating, attending or participating in special programs & concerts, family gatherings with huge meal preparations, and so forth. One can soon feel "drained" rather than "re-charged" by the time the holidays are over, wondering where the power-filled Christmas celebration for which they so longed went.

This gift of Jesus was so powerful that He satisfied all of God's just requirements for the forgiveness of your sins. He lived in perfect obedience to God's laws **for you**. He redeemed you from slavery to the power of the devil and sin by His perfect sacrifice on the cross **for you**. It is a power-filled preparation in that the Holy Spirit gives you faith to

trust God's working on your behalf in Jesus so are prepared for a perfect relationship in His presence eternally. He also provides you with His means of grace (i.e. the Gospel; Baptism; Absolution; the Lord's Supper) by which you can be re-charged with His forgiveness of sins, life and salvation anew. Thus, God continues to give His power with His gifts to satisfy His desire for you to have a perfectly restored, power-filled relationship with Him again. Amen.

*According to the riches of His glory . . . may God grant you
to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in your inner being,
so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.*

(Ephesians 3:16-17)

Unless otherwise indicated, all scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.