



GRACE BAPTIST CHURCH
AT CASTLEWOODS

ORDER OF WORSHIP
December 18th, 2022

MORNING WORSHIP

- The Prelude Thomas Winn — Elder/Pastor Prepare your heart for worship
- The Call to Worship Chris Kimbrell
- Hymn "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen"
- The Prayer of Confession and Praise Seth Lirette
- Hymn "O Come, O Come Emmanuel"
- Hymn "As With Gladness Men of Old"
- The Reading of the Word — *I Samuel 2:1-11* Hal Pritchard
- Hymn "What Child is This?"
- The Sermon — *"A Model Response to the Gospel" (Luke 1:39-56)* Prashant Thakkar
- A Time of Reflection Upon the Word Preached
- Hymn "Good Christian Men, Rejoice"
- The Benediction Hal Pritchard
- The Postlude

EVENING WORSHIP

Scripture
&
Carol
S E R V I C E



COMMENTARY

R.C. Sproul

The angel has the answer to Mary's question, "How?" He takes the time to carefully explain it to her: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you." In biblical terms, the Holy Spirit is often called the dynamis, the power of God. We get the English word dynamite from it. That is the Spirit of God, in which God invests His supernatural, sovereign power. It is by the Holy Spirit's brooding over the waters that the original creation came into existence. If we go back to Genesis 1, we see: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void, and darkness was on the face of the deep." In that uncreated state in Genesis, the universe is described as formless, amorphous, empty, a vacuum, and enveloped in total darkness; that is, until the Spirit of God hovered over the waters. As the Spirit of God brooded and hovered like a hen broods over her eggs and her chicks, while the Spirit of God is brooding over this unformed state, God spoke: "Let there be light." And the lights came on. The earth became filled with all kinds of creatures, and the earth was formed and shaped and structured by this omnipotent Creator. It's as if Gabriel is saying: "Do you remember Genesis, Mary? Right now, there is nothing in your womb. There is no form; it's empty and dark. But the same Spirit that hovered over the darkness in the beginning will overshadow you, and by His omnipotent power you will conceive. The One whom you will bear will be the Holy One, the One who is other from every other creature ever born, the supremely sacred and consecrated One, and He will be called the Son of God. Your relative, Elizabeth, has also conceived a son in her old age. She who was called barren is in her sixth month, for with God, nothing will be impossible." In every seminary class I've ever had, I had those students who came up with the tired conundrum, "Professor, do you believe that God is omnipotent?" "Yes." "That God can do all things?" "Yes." "Nothing is impossible for God?" "Yes." "Well, can God build a rock so big that He can't move it?" If I say, "Yes, He can build a rock so big that He can't move it," that would be something that it is not possible for Him to do, so He would not really be omnipotent. If I say, "No, He can't build a rock so big that He can't move it," then again, I'm skewered on the horns of this dilemma. I'm not only saying that God is not omnipotent, but that there are certain things that He can't do. There is a right answer to that question, and it's very simple. Can God build a rock so big that He can't move it? Of course not. Why not? Because He's

omnipotent; because nothing is impossible with God. To be omnipotent does not mean that God can do anything. God can't die. God can't lie. God can't be God and not be God at the same time and in the same relationship. God can't stop being God. As long as He is God, He controls and has power over whatever He makes, whatever He creates. That's the theological lesson the angel is reiterating to Mary. With God, nothing is impossible. All things are possible. That is, God has power over everything in His creation, including Mary's empty womb. I remember speaking in Pittsburgh in the shadow of Carnegie Mellon University many years ago. It was a dinner followed by a lecture, and I was seated by a professor of physics at the dining room table. I was speaking on "God Talk," on whether human language is adequate to communicate anything meaningful about God. The physicist, being something of a skeptic, said: "As a theologian, you have a tough ticket tonight. You fellows dealing with philosophy and theology have a difficult time speaking meaningfully about the concepts that you use." I said: "You should be sympathetic to that. You should be able to relate to that difficulty." He asked, "What do you mean?" I responded, "Well, you're a physicist, aren't you?" He said, "Yes." I asked: "Don't you have the same difficulty? Tell me, what is energy?" He smiled and said, "Well, energy is the ability to do work." I responded, "No, no. I'm not asking you what it can do. I am asking you what it is. Tell me its ontology. What does its being consist of?" And he answered, "Energy is MC^2 ." Then I said to him: "I don't want to know its mathematic equivalency or how it can be measured. Don't you see? I am asking you what it is because every day you talk about energy as if it were some thing, something real, some entity." It took less than two minutes to turn this physicist upside down. He had to smile and say, "You've got me there." I said, "Yes, it's a concept you talk about all the time, and we're supposed to assume that we know what it is. I don't know what it is. For all I know, it's the Holy Spirit." I still don't know what it is, except when I lose it. We need to think in terms of the transcendent reality of the One who is speaking, the One whose name will be called Jesus, because He will be saving His people from their sin. You might have noticed that I didn't read the last verse of this portion of Scripture with respect to Mary's response. It's so important that I want to wait for next week. So now we consider the announcement of this child who was born to die, to save His people.



RESPONSIBILITIES

Today's Nursery Volunteers

December 18th
<i>Morning</i> Terri & Rayah Pogue
<i>Evening/Afternoon</i> Scripture & Carol Service
<i>Wednesday - December 21st</i> No Prayer Meeting

Today's Sound Operator - Dirk de Waal



ANNOUNCEMENTS

WEDNESDAY PRAYER MEETING

We will not meet for prayer meeting December 21st and December 28th.

CHRISTMAS MAILBOX

Our Christmas Mailbox will be open again this year! The basket will be in the back foyer of the sanctuary, across from the choir room. In lieu of the postage, you are encouraged to donate to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering. Please place on the memo of your check or designate on your Venmo payment *Lottie Moon*.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH NEW YEARS PARTY

The children and youth will have a party at the Kimbrell's on Wednesday, December 28th at 6:30 pm. Details to come.

