

Fourth Sunday in Advent
December 24, 2017
St. Luke 1:26-38
I've Got Good News For You
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Dearly loved by God in Christ Jesus,

God's angels have the blessed work of bearing good news to every home. The holy messenger, Gabriel, had gone to Zechariah about six months earlier. Now, Gabriel appeared to young Mary. Even his first word "Greetings," has a positive and joyful tone. We might say, "Good day."

We call the angel's encounter with Mary, the Annunciation; the announcement of something. This young girl, Miriam in Hebrew, would never have imagined such a conversation when she arose that morning. Who would have? From now on nothing would be as she had imagined.

What Mary heard from God's spokesman would, as they say, be life altering for her, and for her betrothed, Joseph. Gabriel's message is life altering for us. God includes you and me as the recipients of Gabriel's two pronged message, **I've Got Good News For You**. You have found favor with God. Nothing is impossible with God.

Mary was one in a million. I do not mean that Mary was unique or special among all the other virgins in Israel. There was nothing in Mary's nature or in her virtue that moved God to choose her as the mother of his eternal Son. Mary was one in a million for the reason Gabriel referred to when he called her "You who are highly favored. The Lord is with you."

God's choice of this Miriam among all the others was a matter of his favor, his grace. The reason for God's choice was in him, not in her. In God's sight, by his judgment alone, she was the one. God had the special work for Mary to bring the long promised Savior into the flesh. Her conceiving and giving birth were completely acts of his love. He was with her for them.

Since Mary had a great awareness of her sin and unworthiness before God, Gabriel's good news greatly troubled her. It would be like someone telling you how they were going to do good things for you when you knew that they knew you did not deserve them! Mary, just as greatly, "was wondering what kind of greeting this could be." She considered the different reasons the angel would say such a thing to her.

Mary did not have to consider the possibilities for too long a time. Gabriel told her literally, stop being afraid. He repeated the reason, "You have found favor with God." What he was about to tell her was good news from the throne of her Father in heaven. It came from God who loved her.

Gabriel's words to Mary, "I've got good news for you, you have found favor with God," just as surely apply as much to us and to the entire world as they did to her. What takes place in the conception and birth of God's eternal Son has no cause in us. It is entirely because of God's favor. God called Mary in his favor to serve him. God calls us out of our unbelief and sin to serve him in righteousness and blessedness. Mary's vocation was to be God's mother. Our various vocations are the way we serve God daily in thankfulness, and praise him for our forgiveness of sin and eternal salvation in heaven.

We, too, might consider what kind of greeting that is. When we look into our hearts we find no cause for God to grant us such a high calling. There are no reasons in our nature or virtue for God to choose us and be with us. There is but one reason. You have found favor with God.

What specifically was the good news Gabriel had for Mary? Nothing is impossible with God. This is the underlying truth and assurance for Gabriel's more specific good news to Mary and to us.

This good news bears repeating as we prepare to celebrate this afternoon the fulfillment of Gabriel's words. "Listen, you will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and his kingdom will never end."

Mary did not question the good news. As a descendant of David and a believer, she was looking for the advent of her Savior. The fact that now was the time for his appearing certainly excited her. She would conceive and bear him. She even did not have to choose a name. She would give him the name Jesus, Joshua in Hebrew, which means the one who saves. Her son would be the great One, the Son of the Most High. He would rule the kingdom of God as the eternal David. Thus from Mary, Jesus was David's son and David's Lord as Psalm 110 prophesied.

How would all this take place? Mary asked this logical question. She did not ask because she doubted it could happen. She was asking about the means of all this since she was a virgin. Humanly speaking this would be impossible.

Nothing is impossible with God. In the miracle of the incarnation and Virgin Birth, the Son of God would come to redeem the world. "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God."

Gabriel told Mary about another miracle related to his good news. In modern terms Gabriel said, "Your geriatric relative so long considered sterile has conceived a son and is six months along. " Her child was John the Baptist. John would grow up and would prepare the way for the revelation of his cousin as the Messiah.

Nothing is impossible with God. This is the second prong of Gabriel's good news. Mary relied on that. In great faith and in spite of all the negatives she and Joseph would face in the days ahead, Mary offered herself a living sacrifice to God as her spiritual worship. "See, I am the Lord's servant. May it happen to me as you have said." What an outstanding example to follow. We rely on the possibilities God can perform in spite of all the negatives and apparent impossibilities we must face as we serve him.

Because nothing is impossible with God we no longer stand condemned. It was possible for God to be with us in Immanuel. It was possible that God would keep the law and die on the cross. It was possible that God rose from the dead for our justification. All of this was possible because of the good news that Mary believed and willingly carried out.

Every indication of Luke's words is that Mary was at first frightened and confused. The gospel of the coming Savior from Gabriel's lips removed her fear and compelled her heart to joyful service amidst difficulties. That sounds pretty much like us, doesn't it, when we hear our gracious God say through Gabriel, "I've got good news for you." Amen. <.SDG>