

Advent 4; December 20, 2020

Luke 1:26-38

We've all been there. We've all have faced something that seems impossible. We've all experienced moments in life that seem that all hope seems to be gone. We have gone through events that we have no idea why something is happening the way it is. When we don't understand why something is happening and it feels like we have lost control, we feel fear.

When the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary, her heart was filled with fear. How it could it not be filled with confusion and fear? An angel is standing in front of her. Then the angel speaks: **"Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."** How's that for a conversation starter? What, really, do you say back to the angel Gabriel? You're 16 years old. You are looking forward to getting married. You have your whole life in front of you. You are in love with a great young man whose name is Joseph. You just want to live a quiet and comfortable life. You'll settle down and perhaps have a couple of kids. After all, she was living in Nazareth. Nazareth was a nowhere place. Somewhere I read this week that Nazareth could have been nick-named as the *"arm pit of Israel."* Nazareth was like one of those small tiny towns that you drive through on some back road. There really wasn't anything there. She was really a "nobody" person. She was okay with that. She was happy. It didn't really matter to her.

Then comes this angel along saying that she was highly favored by God. She could have wondered: *"Why me? What did I do to be called 'highly favored'?"* She doesn't seem to be someone who seems to see herself as something special or deserving. Instead, she sees herself as a sinner. A sinner who is standing in front of a holy angel with a message from a holy God. Then this angel tells you this impossible story you are going to have a baby who is the Son of God. Listen to the message that Gabriel brings: **"You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call 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, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."** *"How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"*

This makes no sense. In our human way of thinking, many would say that there had to be something about Mary that made God chose her. The only answer you'll find to the *"why Mary"* question is one word --- Grace. Why did God create Adam and Eve to be the first human beings? Why didn't he create someone else? Why did God choose Israel to be his chosen people? Why did God choose Moses to lead his people? Why didn't he choose Moses' brother, Aaron? Why did God choose fishermen and a tax collector to be his disciples? Why did he choose Paul to be a missionary for the Christian Church after he had persecuted the same church? Why did God choose you to be his own? Why are you a believer in Christ? Why are you a child of God? Why are you part of the body of Christ? The answer is "grace." That's the only answer.

If you look at the Christmas story you will see that no one could have ever dreamed up such a story, such an improbable setting, such an impossible event. Perhaps, that may be the whole point in the Christmas Story. But isn't that one of the biggest reasons to believe it? Isn't that why we believe that our sins are forgiven and why we have the hope that we will live forever in heaven? This child whose name is Jesus is the Savior that was promised to mankind. He was all that God had spoken of in the pages of the Bible.

How does Mary react to the impossible sounding words of the Angel Gabriel? **"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled."** She simply trusts the impossible sounding words. We can trust the promises of God because we have a God who specializes in making the impossible possible. We have a God who came to save and accomplished the impossible – to forgive the sins of the world. We have a Savior who walks with us through the most impossible situations. We have a Savior who brings light to a world dark with sin. Let us listen to the students of St. Paul's as they proclaim *Jesus as the Light of the World.*