

**Luke 1:26-38**

**Advent 4; December 24, 2023**

Our lives are filled with conversations. Every day we talk with family and friends. Some of those conversations they are about the weather. The Packers. The kids. The Grandkids. Work. School. Many of those conversations are not really deep conversations. For some of those conversations, we forget them not too long after having them. There are other conversations that have a lot more depth in them. Maybe they were the last words spoken by a parent before the Lord calls them home. It was the deep discussion with your future spouse that sealed the deal. Or it may have been a conversation that led you to change careers, or choose a college. Then there are those conversations that literally changes your life. The conversation, that is going on in our Gospel Lesson today, not only changes the life of a peasant girl, but it is a conversation that changes the world.

Mary was a teenage girl. She may have been too young to drive. She lived in Nazareth, a small town in far-away Galilee. We know almost nothing about her prior to this conversation. She was a distant relative of Abraham, Jacob and Isaac. She probably lived in poverty. To this otherwise insignificant peasant girl came the angel Gabriel. Their conversation begins: **“The angel went to her and said, “Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.” Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. 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’s that for an opening conversation? You can hear the excitement in Gabriel’s voice. This was a BIG deal. In Eden, mankind fell into sin, bringing death and despair to Paradise. God immediately promised to send a Savior who would undo that devastation. The Savior would be a descendant of Adam and Eve – a human being. Century after Century, the prophets would speak about this coming Savior. The day that the human race was waiting for was about to happen. Yet, this King didn’t come with a lot of fanfare. Even though both Mary and Joseph had royal blood (as descendants of King David), they were very simple pious people. They were just very ordinary people. They lived in an area of Israel with a rustic reputation. No one expected great things of people who lived in Nazareth or Galilee. Yet, it also shows that God was not restrict salvation who were the more well-off people in the world. He was meant for all. He had come to save all the ordinary people of the world. He came to save me and you. Jesus is one of us.

At that moment in time, I can’t imagine how Mary thought. Mary couldn’t have imagined something like this happening to her. What the angel is telling her was impossible. How can a child be born of a virgin? What the angel was telling was about to change her whole life ahead of her. All she wanted to do was to get married, settle down, have a couple of kids and go about her life in the town Nazareth. In the eyes of the world, they would just be considered to be a couple of “nobodies.” Mary and Joseph were okay with that. But now, everything was about to change. **“How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?” The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come on 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.”** This makes no sense.

God has a way to make sense out of something that doesn’t make sense. After all, he has been doing that for a very long time. Why did God create Adam and Eve as the first human beings? Why did God choose Israel to be his chosen people. Why did God choose Moses to lead his people out of Egypt? Why does God choose a tax collector to lead people to the real treasure in this world – Jesus? Why does God recruit Christian persecutor to be his missionary? Why would God choose you to be one of his people? The answer: Grace! That’s the only answer.

If you look at the Christmas story, you will see that no one could have dreamed up such a plan, such an improbable setting, such an impossible event. Maybe that’s the whole point of the Christmas story. God wants us to know that this is His story. This is his plan that had been orchestrated by God himself. This is truly a Christmas miracle. God became one of us. Maybe that’s why God sent the angel Gabriel to Mary to demonstrate to Mary that she did not find favor because who she was. What made Mary **“favored”** was not her family line, or her personal achievements, or her pure heart. She was favored in that God chose her. God chooses us to be his sons and daughters out of nothing but his favor. You see, in the end we are not all that different than Mary. We have done nothing to justify God coming to us. God has had favor on

us the simple reason that he loves us because of his grace. All the glory of God sending his Son to save us is his glory. The glory goes to God, not us.

There is nothing that lasts forever in this world. The computer that is the most state of the art, will someday be thrown away. The body that you have will not last forever. At some point, it will cease to operate. The car that you drive today, will eventually end up in the scrap yard. Everything in this world will eventually fail. But in the Christmas story, God gives us something that will last forever. Jesus will never get old. His message will never get old or outdated. As we focus on the birth of Jesus later today, you can't help but to stand there and be amazed. That is conversation that we can all take part in with Jesus. May God grant it. Amen.