

# Day Twenty-one

## **Scripture:**

Luke 1:26-38

## **Reflection:**

One of the first things we notice when we read over today's passage is how familiar it is. The Annunciation to Mary is part and parcel of the Bible stories we weave together as the Christmas story. The essential information in the story of a young woman being visited by a Messenger named Gabriel is not new information. People know the basics: Gabriel's greeting and prediction of an unexpected pregnancy. Then, Mary's confusion. And, finally, her submission to what God wants to do.

But, if you go back and re-read the passage, and use your imagination to frame this from Mary's perspective, the entire experience takes on a different feel. Rather than excited at being chosen, Mary seems frightened and reluctant. Finally, she agrees to go along with God's plan.

With a little imagination, you can also see Mary returning to her home later that day. Everything there would have seemed unchanged. Indeed, no one would stare at her and exclaim, "Oh my goodness, you're glowing! And, there's some kind of big golden circle on top of your head!" Whatever evening chores were routine, those same chores were still waiting for her when she walked in the door before supper.

What is also true, although most people do not think much about it, is that Gabriel never comes back and follows up the first visit with any kind of check up on Mary. There are no more visits. No voices in the night. Angels may visit shepherds in Bethlehem, but not Mary. God may warn Joseph in a dream about Herod's plans, but not Mary. As far as we know, Mary is left not only with an unexplained pregnancy but with birthing and raising a precocious child without a single word of divine guidance or encouragement. While our own picture of Mary might be forever focused on the visit from Gabriel or the birth in the stable or standing with the apostle John near the cross, those are only three short moments. The truth is that nearly all of Mary's life was going through day after day without angelic messages or times of personal crisis.

The question we have to ask is not what kind of a woman would submit to an angelic announcement? The real question is: what kind of a woman could live so faithfully, year after year, with nothing more than a five-minute angelic dialogue as the basis of her faith? There may well be things we would do if given a supernatural visitation or a thundering voice calling down from on high. But, for how long? Hasn't God, in fact, given you moments of clearly answered prayer? Hasn't God given events that have confirmed His presence and love in your life? But, in the long flow of time, how many of these have largely cooled and been forgotten in the middle of all the stuff that has made up your life between now and back then?

In Mary of Nazareth God found a woman for whom one talk with an angel would be enough for a lifetime of service and sacrifice. So absolute was her faith that, even as she finally neared death many decades later, her trust in God remained

unwavering and resolute. So much so that, if she had looked up and seen Gabriel standing by her bed, she might have just smiled and said, “Are you back, already?”

## **Family:**

What do you think when you're doing something and suddenly you hear somebody calling out your name? Do you think you're in trouble? Do you think somebody has made some cookies for you to eat? Do you think it is time for supper or time for bed? Have you ever heard someone call out your name when you have been out shopping or maybe over at a friends' house playing? Do most people call out your full name or only your first name? Does it make you feel any different if it is your full name?

Mary is out doing her work for the family. We do not know exactly what she was doing. But, she may have been out in the garden picking weeds or going to a stream to get water or going out to find wood for the cooking fire. She may have been so far away from her house that she could not have heard her parents, even if they had yelled really loud.

“Mary!” came a voice. Mary did not know who was talking to her, because she did not recognize the voice. Then she saw a man who seemed to be all glowing. Even though he looked kind of like a person, Mary knew it was not just a regular guy. He was an angel. And do you know who this angel was? (let them guess)

This was the angel, Gabriel. The word Angel is just another way to say a messenger, someone who may go out and tell people a message from the King.

Gabriel told her that God was very happy with her and decided she was going to be the mother of Jesus. Mary was very confused, because she wasn't even married, yet. But, the angel told her this would not be a normal baby. This would be a miraculous birth. This baby would not have a human daddy (although Joseph would help take care of him as he grew up). For this baby would have a mother who was a human being – Mary. But, his father would be God. This baby will be the son of God.

Mary did not really know how God would make all of this happen. She did not know how people would feel if she had a baby. She did not know what would happen to this baby when he grew up. But, even though she did not know any of these things, do you know what? She said, "I am willing for God to use me."

The Jesse Tree ornament for today is an angel. The angel has wings because that is how we picture angels. Notice the angel is holding a star. That's because God would use a star in the sky to point the Wise Men to the baby Jesus. That star is to remind us the angel's message was also about the baby Jesus. Mary had been picked to be the mother of Jesus.

That's why many people think Mary is the most important woman in all the world. The reason Mary is so important is not because she fought battles or led armies. Mary is the greatest woman of all time because she told the angel she would do what God wanted her to do.

What is something that Bible teaches that God wants you to do? If an angel told you to do it, would you decide to do what the angel said? That is what God wants us to do. He wants us all to be like Mary.

## **Prayer:**

Many Protestants are hesitant to put too much emphasis on Mary. This is unfortunate since she is such a remarkable person. Take a few minutes at the beginning of your prayer time to thank God for the life of Mary. And, remember, even though we might not pray to Mary, that does not mean we think Mary is not in heaven along with all of the other Christians who have died. So, it's okay to thank God for Mary and to think about Mary being there with God and being able to hear what we pray.

For the primary focus of your prayer, turn your thoughts to Mary's willingness to submit to what God wanted, even though she understood it would mean many people would wonder if she was actually a good person or not. Talk to God about following him at times when people around you not only do not understand but think you are being very foolish or even doing something wrong. Are you willing to not worry about what other people think of you when obeying God and doing what He asks?