

**“It’s A Boy!” *Mary Speaks***  
**Message for North East United Methodist Church**  
**December 2, 2018**  
**Rev. Dr. Drew M. Christian**

This Sunday is the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of December. It is the day the church enters into the Season of Advent, a season of preparation.

Advent means “coming” or “arrival”. It is through the weeks of Advent, leading up to Christmas, we prepare. We prepare for His coming, His arrival. We light the first candle on the Advent wreath. We begin to count down the weeks until Christmas Eve, the weeks until the night we celebrate God becoming man, the night Jesus was born. As John says, John 1:14 (MSG) – ***“The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood.”***



Advent is not only a time to prepare for the coming of a child a Bethlehem. Advent not only points us toward Christmas and the moment God entered the world in flesh as Jesus, but Advent also points us forward to “the second coming”...



...when Christ will return, will judge wickedness, and will prevail over every evil, will take His faithful home...His children to be with Him.

Therefore, we prepare our hearts for Christ’s arrival, not just 2000 years ago, but perhaps days from now. We spend time in self-examination, prayer, and transformation.

We prepare our lives, our homes, our hearts to receive the Christ, both the babe born in a manger, the man crucified on a cross, the Son of God resurrected, destined to return.

Over the next five weeks we are going to spend time looking at different responses to the news, *"It's A Boy."* We are going to look at different responses to Christmas, to the coming of the Son of God, the One who will come again, descending upon clouds of glory.

## PRAYER

How did Mary respond to the news of a child, a prophecy fulfilled, a promise received? How did Mary respond to the birth of Christ? What can we learn from her story?

The moment the angel visited Mary and told her of the coming birth of Christ is called the Annunciation.



The Annunciation by Bartolomé Esteban Murillo

In Christianity, the Annunciation is the revelation to Mary, the mother of Jesus by the archangel Gabriel that she would conceive a child to be born the Son of God. The Christian churches celebrate this with the feast of Annunciation on March 25, which is nine months before the feast of the Nativity of Jesus, or Christmas. The traditional location of the Annunciation is in the town of Nazareth, Israel...



... where is currently located the Church of the Annunciation.



**Luke 1: 26-38 (NIV)** – *In the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin’s name was Mary.*

*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 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. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. For no word from God will ever fail.”*

*“I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May your word to me be fulfilled.” Then the angel left her.*

What can we learn about God from the angel’s visit to Mary and what can we learn and apply to our lives from Mary’s response to the angel’s visit?

First, **God Keeps His Promises.**

JESUS WAS PROMISED LONG BEFORE HIS BIRTH.

Throughout the pages of the Old Testament, God reveals a promise to His people.



He said to David concerning his offspring, *“I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he will be my son...Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever”* (**2 Samuel 7:14, 16**).

*“Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel”* (**Isaiah 7:14**).

When Gabriel shows up to visit Mary, it is an announcement that God’s promises are being kept.

*“You (a virgin) will be with child and give birth to a son.”* (v. 31)

*“He...will be called the Son of the Most High.”* (v. 32)

*“The Lord will give him the throne of his father David”* (v. 32)

*“He will reign...forever; his kingdom will never end.”* (v. 33)

There are hundreds of prophecies throughout the Old Testament concerning Jesus.

Professor Emeritus of Science at Westmont College, Peter Stoner...



...has calculated the probability of one man fulfilling the major prophecies made concerning the Messiah. The figures were submitted for review to a committee of the American Scientific Affiliation. Upon examination, they verified that his calculations were dependable and accurate.

Christ fulfilled hundreds of prophecies. These prophecies, many spoken centuries before His birth, came true in this one life, the life of Christ.

Stoner and his students calculated that the odds that one person could fulfill just eight (8) of the prophecies was 1 in 10 to the 17<sup>th</sup> power. What does such a number look like?

Stoner states that if you 10<sup>17</sup> silver dollars and lay them on the face of Texas. They'll cover all of the state two feet deep. Now mark one of these silver dollars and stir the whole mass thoroughly, all over the state. Blindfold a man and tell him that he can travel as far as he wishes, but he must pick up one silver dollar that is marked. What chance would he have of getting the right one? The same chance that the prophets would have written eight prophecies and having them all come true in any one man.

But Christ fulfilled many more...literally hundreds.

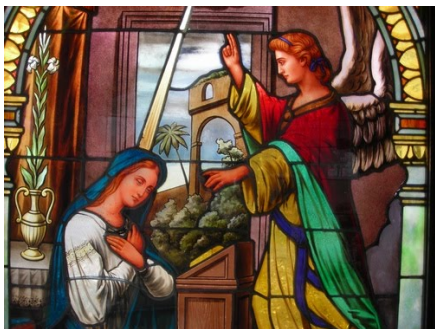
**GOD KEEPS HIS WORD WHEN HE PROMISES TO DO SOMETHING.**

Because he has made good on His promise concerning Jesus, He can be trusted to keep His other promises too.

The Bible is full of promises...blessings...and one of those promises is that...

### **God Will Walk with Us on The Journey.**

Imagine how Mary must have felt. I don't think we can imagine such a moment. Suddenly an angel appears and a thirteen or fifteen-year-old girl is told she will be pregnant. She will have a child and it will be the promised Messiah, a King. Not just any king, but God's very own Son. Remember the angel had to immediately tell Mary to not be afraid. I'm sure she was shaking in her sandals.



Through the angel, God made a very significant promise to Mary.

*"The Lord is with you."* (v. 28)

What God is asking of her is no simple matter. She is being asked to bear a child as a virgin without being married.

*As one commentary explained, "A young unmarried girl who became pregnant risked disaster. Unless the father of the child agreed to marry her, she would probably remain unmarried for life. If her own father rejected her, she could be forced into begging or*

*prostitution in order to earn her living. And Mary, with her story about being made pregnant by the Holy Spirit risked being considered crazy as well.”*

Mary would live her whole life under a cloud of suspicion from her family and neighbors.

Embedded in her decision to be fully submissive to God’s call was a willingness to suffer possible ridicule, loneliness and contempt. R. Alan Culpepper writes, *“Mary is an important example, therefore, of one who is obedient to God even at great risk to self.”*

Mary would have known the scriptures. She would have known the prophecies and God’s promises of a coming Messiah. She believed that God would keep His promise to be with her. She chose to believe that God would take care of her.



***“I am the Lord’s servant...May it be to me as you have said.”*** (v. 38)

Douglas Connelly writes, *“God certainly didn’t force this choice on Mary; she willingly embraced what God had for her. But the decision was made with no assurance that anyone except God would ever fully understand.”*



Mary said, *“Let it be to me as you have said.”*

Many years back, in Seaford, I took a course called Lifebuilders. In that course, faith is defined as *“Faith is choosing to believe that the Bible is true regardless of one’s emotions, circumstances or cultural trends.”*

We must choose to believe, regardless of how we feel at the moment. Mary chose to believe the angel Gabriel, to believe the scriptures she had studied throughout her childhood, to believe the God of her ancestors. She chose to believe regardless of her



fear, regardless of the culture and possible exile she would face, regardless of the personal risk.

She chose to believe that God would be with her.

God has given us a choice. We can choose to turn away or we can choose to believe that the Word of God, the Bible, His promises, are true.

Now God promises that He will walk with us. Do you choose to believe that? What is God calling you to “step out” and do? What’s next? Where is God leading you that you are hesitant to go?

Know that God will walk with you!

What can we learn about God from the angel’s visit to Mary and what can we learn and apply to our lives from Mary’s response to the angel’s visit?

We can learn that God keeps His promises and that God will walk with us on the journey.

Lastly, we come to understand through Mary’s story that **God Challenges Us to Become More Than We Are.**

God spoke through the angel Gabriel to Mary and told her that she was to carry the Messiah, Jesus.

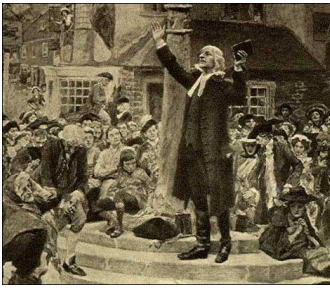


GABRIEL EXPLAINED to Mary that the Holy Spirit would come upon her and the Power of the Most High would overshadow her. Her holy offspring would be called the SON OF GOD. When Mary responded, “*how can this be...I am a virgin,*” Gabriel explained, “*Nothing is impossible with God.*”

The question becomes, **Do we have the will to give up who we are for who we might be?**

Mary, a teenage girl, had that will and trusted God to walk with her, to guide her, and to mold her.

John Wesley, founder of the Methodist Church, was kicked out of pulpits. Another preacher during that time, George Whitfield, said come preach in the fields. Wesley said, “no,” but after a time finally submitted.



He later wrote in his journal, "*I have become 'vile' so that others may know Christ.*" He was willing to give up who he was, to change, to become who he might be.

Mary was willing to risk ridicule, exile, abandonment, and even death so that the Messiah would be born, so that the world might know Christ and God's plan would come to fruition. In sharing Christ, Mary risked being shunned, beaten, and public stoning.

In sharing Christ, you and I risk upsetting someone or being embarrassed. So what?

Thank God that there was someone willing to take this risk for my sake. Thank God for my Uncle Tommy, my friend David, and so many others. Thank God there were people who thought it was worth the risk of being rejected for the sake of my salvation.

How about you? Who was willing to take that risk for you? Someone did, because many of you who are here today have a relationship with God through His Son, Jesus Christ.

There are people here who have been Christians their whole lives...

And there are people who are here still trying to figure this whole thing out...

And there are folks here because your spouse dragged you here this morning...

There are all kinds of folks in different places spiritually.

I get that. But still, someone cared enough to invite you. That is not an accident.

For the last 2000 years, that is how the Gospel has been shared. One person, to another, starting with a fifteen year old girl on the other side of the world who spoke the words, "*I am the Lord's servant. May it be to me as you have said.*"

You know, there are 1001 reasons each and every one of us can come up with on how someone else is better qualified, but look who God chose to be the example. God chose an uneducated, 15 year old, terrified little girl 2000 years ago.

And look what God accomplished through her just because she was willing.

I want you to hear that. She was willing. She was willing to give up who she was for what she might become, the mother of the Morning Star, the King of Kings, the Prince of Peace, the Christ.

Our call is the same as Mary's. It is the same call the angel Gabriel made to Mary twenty



centuries ago, to share Christ with the world, to remember that God will go with us on the journey, to remember that God will keep His promises.

Our call is to become more than we are now, to become what God created us for, to trust that God has our best interests and the world's best interests at heart.

Mary trusted. Mary was obedient. Mary was willing.

Over the next month, each week, we will take one step closer to the day we celebrate the birth of a Savior. We will light candles to count down the weeks.



We will sing carols. We will prepare.

We will prepare ourselves to come face to face with Jesus, not only on Christmas Eve in a manger, but face to face with Jesus on the day of judgment, on the day of His victory, when He will return and we will stand before Him, each one of us.

Each week brings us closer. Each week challenges us to look at our lives and ask ourselves how we are living. This week we remember Mary and we must ask ourselves, **Do I believe in God's promises?** Do I trust Him with the future? **Do I know that** like God walked with Mary, **God walks with Me?** Do I have the courage and **am I willing to give up who I am for what I might become?**

Will we ask God to and believe that God can use our lives to impact the world like He used a fifteen-year-old girl in a little town called Nazareth.

God is speaking to you, perhaps not through an angel, but through a sermon, a friend, a song, a scripture, your heart. Respond to what God is saying to you. May you, like Mary, respond to this wonderful news, *"It's a boy,"* with the same response, *"I am the Lord's servant... May it be to me as you have said."*

Amen.