

December 4, 2016 – Second Sunday of Advent
The Call of Christmas
Mary: A Call to Provide Luke 1:26-38

<https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=the+honeymooners%2c+%22hello+mom%22&view=detail&mid=6F30244FF997594C70286F30244FF997594C7028&FORM=VIRE>

[3:51 to 5:55]

On January 11, 1838, Samuel Morse sent the first telegram in the United States across two miles of wire near Morristown, New Jersey. While the telegram continued to gain momentum as a means for delivering messages, people became anxious at their arrival because they often contained messages of bad news.

A death has occurred. An accident has happened. A sickness has spread. A war has begun. Or your mother-in-law was coming for Christmas. Tragic news in short phrases is hard to receive.

However, in 1933 Western Union, the American telegraph company began offering singing telegrams as a way to make receiving messages more enjoyable and even fun.

While God did not see fit to send a singing telegram to deliver the message of the coming Messiah, Luke's gospel records the unexpected message that was delivered by Gabriel, the angel, and received by Mary, the young maiden, from Nazareth. It was the opposite of bad news. In fact, it would become the start of good news, the gospel that would lead to salvation for all who would receive it into their lives as a personal message.

During Advent we are looking at the Call of Christmas

Last week through the angel Gabriel's appearance to Zechariah it was the Call to Prepare

On this 2nd Sunday of Advent we return to Luke 1. This time Gabriel comes to a young woman, Mary. It's the Call to Provide. [VIDEO]

Luke 1:26-38

26 In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a village in Galilee, **27** to a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David. **28** Gabriel appeared to her and said, "Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you!"

29 Confused and disturbed, Mary tried to think what the angel could mean. **30** "Don't be afraid, Mary," the angel told her, "for you have found favor with God! **31** You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. **32** He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. **33** And he will reign over Israel forever; his Kingdom will never end!"

34 Mary asked the angel, "But how can this happen? I am a virgin."

35 The angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the baby to be born will be holy, and he will be called the Son of God. **36** What's more, your relative Elizabeth has become pregnant in her old age! People used to say she was barren, but she's now in her sixth month. **37** For nothing is impossible with God."

38 Mary responded, "I am the Lord's servant. May everything you have said about me come true." And then the angel left her.

This message from the angel was anything but tragic or sad. On the contrary, this unbelievable news from the lips of Gabriel to the ears of Mary was a call to provide. Every Jewish girl prayed and dreamed of the privilege of one day being the one to carry and provide the long awaited Messiah of God's people. The thought of being chosen to be a part of the plan that would provide the rescuer, redeemer, and savior for Israel was a hope and a future any young Jewish lady would be honored to experience. And it's just like God to extend the Call of Christmas to come forth from the place, person, and circumstances that we see in the story.

Verse 26 sets the stage for us.

In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a village in Galilee...

The city of Nazareth is quite a contrast to the city of Jerusalem that is the staging ground for the earlier section in chapter 1. If a city was to provide a carrier for the Messiah, it seems like Jerusalem would be much more of a natural option. Jerusalem was the center of the Jewish world. Nazareth was off the beaten path. It was accessible to trade routes, but one had to want to go to Nazareth to get there. Jerusalem was seen as significant; Nazareth seemed insignificant. [John 1:46](#) records the contemporary Judean opinion of Nazareth.

"Can anything good come from Nazareth?"

And the region of Galilee was such a contrast to the region of Judea. Galilee was rough around the edges. Judea was much more polished, prim and proper and followed all the religious rules. But at the end of the day, God sends an angel both to Jerusalem to give a message to a priest in the temple just as quickly as He seeks out a quaint town on the outskirts of the country hills in Nazareth for a visitation. All real estate is an equal opportunity for God to do something great and place a call to provide for the next part of His plan. God knows where you are and how to send a message your way. He is calling you this Christmas!

Wherever you are this Christmas, God can use you to be a part of His plan and to do

His will. He is aware of your whereabouts and has plans for you regardless of where you come from or where you live.

Verse 27 goes on to tell us about the one who would be called upon to provide the savior and she would be a most unlikely candidate in the eyes of the world.

God sent the angel Gabriel... to a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David.

Mary was “engaged” to Joseph; A Jewish engagement resulted in a marital status which was as sacred as marriage itself. The commitment and covenant were just as strong beforehand in the eyes of that culture and time. The fact that she is signified as a virgin looks back to the prophecy of the Messiah from Isaiah that all Jews would be aware of in that day.

Isaiah 7:14

The Lord himself will give you the sign. Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel (which means 'God is with us').

Luke is writing details that tie back to Old Testament prophecy in such a way as if to say to all his readers: “Here’s your sign!”

Luke goes on to what God’s messenger, Gabriel, said to Mary upon his arrival in verse 28.

Gabriel appeared to her and said, "Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you!"

The message from the angel for Mary includes the reminder that “The Lord is with you.” And the name stated in Isaiah’s prophecy we just noted from 7:14 for the coming Messiah was Immanuel. The meaning: God is with us. The Lord is with you. The Call of Christmas is a reminder that the Lord is with you. The call of Mary is a call to provide. Only a favored one in the eyes of God would be given the privilege and the call to provide the Christ-child who soon would be with us in the form of a baby from her womb. The fact that she was a virgin would mean God would have to be the one to create inside of her this one she was being called to provide for the salvation of the world. Such a call to motherhood in this fashion would be frightening to consider. But the appearance and speaking from an angelic visitor would cause one to be full of fear as well. Verse 29 and following confirms such an emotion.

Confused and disturbed, Mary tried to think what the angel could mean. **30** "Don't be afraid, Mary," the angel told her, "for you have found favor with God! **31** You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. **32** He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. **33** And he will reign over Israel forever; his Kingdom will never end!"

Many times the names parents choose for their children indicate their parental hopes, and this name certainly would stir the hopes of God's people. The name, 'Jesus,' means "the Lord is salvation." She was being called to provide the womb and nurturing motherhood for the salvation that would be put in her provided place from the Lord. God chose to put His favor on her and create the salvation source in her that would be provided through her because of the goodness and favor from God.

The theological truth being: Mary by herself could not produce a son, but God could give her one whose name, Jesus, means "God saves." This, in essence, is the gospel: humans cannot produce their own salvation, but God can and has chosen to accomplish it for all of humanity. He just desired for the Call of Christmas to come through the womb of a virgin from a remote country village. Mary's call was a call to provide what God had decided. She provided herself, and God would do the rest. As Mary is processing the message from the angel that certainly was no singing telegram, she did so by asking a logical question. She knew that she had not been with Joseph yet, or any man so...

Mary asked the angel, "But how can this happen? I am a virgin." - Luke 1:34

This was not a statement of unbelief. Rather, it was a question of trying to understand. God never gets tired or frustrated with our honest questions. He invites us to stay curious as we seek to understand who He is and what He wants us to do and become in our lives.

Mary was going to have to trust God with the details. Mary was being called into the promise; her part was to provide the womb that would lead to a legacy of salvation from sin, death, Satan and hell. God provided the details. Mary provided her life for the fulfillment of the promise to take place. It was a call to provide. And only God had the power to do it and make the promise come true. Mary had the opportunity to join God in the call of Christmas.

Gabriel explained God's plan to Mary's question of 'how?'

The angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the baby to be born will be holy, and he will be called the Son of God. - Luke 1:35

As Luke writes of this conversation, he mentions the Holy Spirit just as he did earlier in verse 15 and as he does six more times in his first two chapters: (1:41, 67, 80, 2:25, 26, 27). The reason this is so important is that Luke does not want his readers to forget that the Call of Christmas is wrapped in the activity and working of the Holy Spirit. Verse 35 references that not only will the Holy Spirit come upon Mary with this incredible detail of how this promise is going to come to fruition, Luke also notes that God's power is going to "overshadow" Mary in the process.

The word for 'overshadow' in the original language is epi-ski-azo (ep-ee-skee-ad-zo) and carries the sense of the holy, powerful presence of God. The same meaning from this word is how the cloud that covered and overshadowed the tabernacle when the tent was filled with the glory of God from the Old Testament story in [Exodus 40:34-35](#).

Then the cloud covered the Tabernacle, and the glory of the LORD filled the Tabernacle. Moses could no longer enter the Tabernacle because the cloud had settled down over it, and the glory of the LORD filled the Tabernacle.

The same imagery and feel from how the presence of God is described in the Old Testament reference above is the same imagery and feel with the word "overshadowed" here in the details of Gabriel's message to Mary. God's presence through his Holy Spirit is going to be thick and at work in such a way that it is clear something holy is happening in our midst.

There are places and moments on this earth where and when you sense that you are standing on holy ground; Times and places, in silence or with music, alone or in a congregation when a person can have a feeling of being overshadowed, epi-ski-azo (ep-ee-skee-ad-zo), by the presence of God's Holy Spirit.

Biblical scholar William Hendriksen notes that the overshadowing or covering which Luke speaks of here in verse 35 is not static but active. It is creative and productive. It causes Mary to conceive a child.

The overshadowing Spirit, therefore, not only protects but also creates. It brings about conception in Mary's womb that she provides. The Call of Christmas for Mary is a Call to Provide. N.T. Wright goes on to suggest, "The Holy Spirit will come upon Mary, enabling her (as the Spirit always does) to do and be more than she could by herself. But at the same time, the 'power of the Most High' will overshadow her. This is something different: God Himself, the Creator, will surround her completely with his sovereign power."

God's power from outside, and the indwelling Spirit within, together result in things being done which would have been unthinkable any other way. At the same time, God supernaturally is providing the details of how the Messiah will be born inside the womb provided by Mary, notice the kindness of God in how He provides someone to walk alongside Mary during this unique time of her calling. [Verses 36-37](#)

What's more, your relative Elizabeth has become pregnant in her old age! People used to say she was barren, but she's now in her sixth month. For nothing is impossible with God."

Experts of that time and culture suggest Mary likely suffered embarrassment and loneliness as a result of being the person picked by God to be the mother of God's Chosen One. The angel not only delivers God's message with a sign to her regarding her conception while still a virgin, but also suggests someone with whom she may share

her strange and wonderful experience - her relative Elizabeth. It always is better to walk through unique and challenging seasons of life when we have someone by our side to help experience the journey. God knew this. And God provided for even the smallest details and every emotional need that Mary would experience along the way.

Robert Dean notes many interesting parallels between the angelic announcements to Elizabeth's husband, Zechariah, and Mary found in Luke 1. In each case the angel Gabriel appeared and announced the birth of a son who was to play a crucial role in God's plan; a son who was named by the angel and who was to be born under unusual circumstances. However, in spite of the parallels, there are at least three significant differences.

First: Messenger and Messiah. John was to be the prophetic Messenger, and Jesus was to be the Messiah.

Second: Old Age and Virgin Birth. John was born to an old couple beyond normal childbearing years. Jesus was born of a virgin. The language of Luke 1:35 is that of Genesis 1, where the Spirit of God was active in creation. John's conception has Old Testament parallels in Isaac, the child of promise born to Abraham and Sarah in their old age from Genesis 21; but the conception of Jesus has its parallel in the miracle of the divine creation. Jesus was born to a virgin, but he was born.

Third: The Priest of God and the Servant of the Lord. Different responses to Gabriel came forth from Zechariah and Mary upon receiving their respective messages and calls to Christmas. Each initially was troubled, afraid and questioned how such a thing could be. However, there the similarities end. Zechariah was struck dumb by his unbelief. Mary, by contrast, believed. The angel told Mary of Elizabeth's conception in her old age in verse 36 and used words reminiscent of God's words to Abraham and Sarah; "With God, nothing will be impossible." (cf. v.37 and Genesis 18:14 "Is anything too hard for the Lord?")

Mary responded with trust and submission to God's will in verse 38 because she believed what the angel reminded her of in verse 37.

(v37) For nothing is impossible with God.

(v38) Mary responded, "I am the Lord's servant. May everything you have said about me come true." And then the angel left her.

The fact that nothing is impossible with God is one of the most hopeful statements of reality found in the entire Bible.

What is your "impossible" this Christmas that the Lord wants to remind you is not impossible with Him?

Is your "impossible" a situation at work, at school, with your finances, your marriage, a strained relationship with your kids that seems all but lost? Is your "impossible" a slate

of responsibilities that feels crippling and consuming? Is your “impossible” a never ending debt payment that soaks up all you make and leaves you with little to live on without taking on more debt?

What if your Call of Christmas is a reminder that nothing is impossible when the Savior is on the scene?

What if your call is like Mary’s: a call to provide God space to take up residence within your life and begin to work?

What if God wants you to provide real estate in your life that can be overshadowed by Him as His Holy Spirit goes to work on you, in you and through your life circumstances? The process may be painful but necessary for something new to be created. It may require counseling. It may include a total budget rework. It may be cause for confession and a request for forgiveness. But whatever God may lead you to do in your “impossible”, know that you will not be asked to walk alone. He is with you. He is Immanuel. He is Jesus. The Lord is salvation.

All you need to do is provide the Spirit of God space in your life to take up residence and being a new work in you. Mary did. And her call of Christmas was a call to provide her whole self to grow the Son of God inside her womb.

What might you ask God to produce in you as you answer His call this Christmas?

Will you provide all of who you are to all of who God is?