

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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Second Sunday in Advent, December 5, 2021

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)
Hymns: 274, 39:1, 339:1-4, 97:1-3, 644.
Lessons: Isaiah 7:13-14, 1 Timothy 3:16, Luke 1:1-25.
Sermon Text: Luke 1:26-38
Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

We have two most amazing, astounding events in our text. An angel appeared. And a virgin was told she would bear a son. Wouldn't we be shocked if an angel appeared to us? But we are reading the Word of God today, not some work of fiction.

So when God tells us it happened, we accept it as perfectly true that an angel appeared to a virgin named Mary who was a descendant of David, the great king of the Jews. The angel is named Gabriel, who is mentioned by name 4 times in Scripture: twice in the book of Daniel and twice in this chapter of Luke's Gospel. You heard in our Gospel lesson of the other appearance of Gabriel in Luke's gospel.

But even more amazing is the message of the angel: ***“Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name 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 the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end.”*** A virgin would be with child and her child will be the Son of God!

Two most remarkable, and even, to an unbelieving heart, impossible events in 5 verses! But it happened! It is true! Today let us look at this most remarkable event:

THE ANNUNCIATION

1. **God chose Mary.**
2. **She was the virgin foretold by Isaiah who would give birth to the Son of God, and**
3. **She believed the word of God's angel Gabriel.**

God is very specific here. ***“In the sixth month, 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.”*** This is the sixth month of the pregnancy of Mary's relative, Elisabeth. The same angel who announced to Elisabeth's husband Zechariah that he and his wife would conceive a child in their old age now tells of an even greater miracle to a young virgin. God chose Mary. According to Gabriel's wonderful salutation or greeting, she is the one whom Jews had looked forward to since the time of Abraham. Perhaps even Jewish girls for generations had dreamed of being the chosen one. Perhaps they had played games about this promise of God, in the way that girls today play their make-believe games with their dolls, or play house with their toys and pretend to have their own children. But this is no make-believe scene of fiction. This is a genuine angel, sent by God to the one whom God chose.

“The angel went to her and said, ‘Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.’” This is simply a statement of fact. This is what God wants and she is the one whom God has chosen. This is the fulfillment that St. Paul writes about in Galatians: ***“But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.”*** (Galatians 4:4-5 NIV) This is how it was to be and this is the woman who would bear that Son of God.

But we read that ***“Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be.”*** She didn't know what to make of this.

“But the angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God.’” First of all the angel tells her: “Fear not”. “Don’t be afraid.” For Mary this was a special gift of God. In words with which Mary was likely familiar from the Old Testament prophecy, the angel explains his greeting. The first phrase ***“You will be with child and give birth to a son”*** reminds us, by the very words used, of what Isaiah tells us: ***“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. (NIV) “

These words are to remove at once whatever there may be of offense in the circumstance that she, the virgin, is to bear a son. The Lord himself tells her that in her will be the fulfillment of the Lord’s own prophecy.

“And you are to give him the name Jesus” is the wording of the second phrase. On different occasions, both Mary and Joseph to whom she was betrothed, were directed to give the Son the name Jesus, the one who will save his people from their sins.

“He will be great.” The greatness of Jesus depends on the fact that he is the one and only Son, the “only-begotten” Son of God the Father. He is the Son of the Highest God as well as true man.

The angel goes on: ***“The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David.”*** He will fulfill the Messianic promises attached to the house of David and restore the kingdom which in the prophecy is entrusted to the Messiah. He will be the Messiah, the promised one, the anointed, the Christ. He shall be a King over the house of Jacob, which is not just Israel according to the flesh, but the spiritual Israel assembled from all the nations of the world. The house of Jacob must not be considered as only those who are Jewish but as all those who believe in the Messiah. He shall have dominion in the Kingdom which cannot be seen until judgment day, but exists in the hearts of all those who believe in him as their Savior. It is a Kingdom which ***“is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”***

“And he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end.” There shall be no end of his Kingdom or of his ruling. He is true God forever, even while he is on earth.

But humanly speaking, there is a problem with the angel’s message of prophecy. ***“How will this be, Mary asked the angel, ‘since I am a virgin?’”*** That the words spoken by the angel should cause amazement and wonder in the heart of Mary is natural. However, there is not in her heart the doubt which characterized Zechariah, as we heard in our Gospel lesson today. Mary knows and believes that God is able to accomplish what the angel declares.

Her question is promptly answered. ***“The angel answered, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon 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 barren is in her sixth month. For nothing is impossible with God.’”***

The Holy Ghost is the one who is to create in a miraculous way the very human body and soul of Jesus within the body of the Virgin Mary, just as a human child comes to life at conception. These words are confessed in the Apostolic Creed when we confess that Jesus Christ “was conceived by the Holy Ghost”. This conception of the Holy Spirit was necessary in order that Jesus as a human being might have no sin, so that he could suffer only for the sins of others and would not have to pay for his own sins.

The angel also adds ***“therefore that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.”*** (KJV) That he shall be called the Son of God means to be recognized as being what he really was, the Son of God.

Now Mary receives evidence about the truth of the angel’s message. Gabriel says that her kinswoman, her relative, Elisabeth, is expecting a child even though she is beyond the natural age of being able to bear a child. Mary believed God. ***“And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.”*** ***“I am the Lord’s servant,”*** ***“Mary answered ‘May it be to me as you have said.’ Then the angel left her.”*** (Luke 1:38) This is the language of humble faith. She places herself entirely in the hands of God. She accepts what God says. She believes and trusts in God even though she, an unmarried woman, a virgin, will become pregnant. Regardless of what supposed or possible shame may result from this promise of the angel, the very messenger of the most high God, she accepts in faith what God tells her. And we may believe that it is at this very moment, as she humbly submits to the words and the will of the angel, that Jesus is conceived; for when she shortly after this pays a visit to Elisabeth, we read ***“At that time Mary got ready and***

hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed: 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished!'" (Luke 1:39-45 NIV)

So we see in the annunciation, in God's angel announcing to Mary that she will be the Mother of the Son of God so that he can be true God and true man, that God is the one who chose her, Mary, descended from the house and lineage of David as the virgin foretold by Isaiah who would give birth to the Son of God. She believed the Word of God's angel Gabriel. She trusted, she put all her confidence in God. May God give us such faith! Amen.