

*“Nothing Is Impossible: #morepeace”*

During this Advent Worship Series, we are paying close attention to the way God’s Presence and Message is communicated, especially through angels. Last Sunday, we looked at the experience of Zechariah and Elizabeth, which hit its high point with the miraculous birth of their son, John, who would later be called the Baptist. In the middle of that amazing story, Luke reported an even more surprising event!

The Angel Gabriel came to Mary with another of the Divine Parent’s Marvelous Promises! However, on the face of it, Mary had good reason to be extremely afraid – disquieted – alarmed by the angelic report. **Her young age, total lack of sexual experience, along with the social mores and laws converged in the moment of the angel’s appearance and declaration, in such a way, Mary had many good reasons to fear the repercussions of what was about to happen to her!** Since Mary’s situation has been used by some Evangelical folks in Alabama to justify supporting a political candidate, I believe it is important to be clear on a few aspects of Mary’s experience. First, she did not have sexual relations with anyone, not even her future husband, Joseph, prior to or during the time connected to the Christmas Story. Trying to justify a 30+ year old man seeking sexual relations with an underage child of 14 by using the story of Mary is a gross misreading of the Text! Second, in the Jewish Society, if there was evidence of any unmarried woman having been sexually active, such as being pregnant, then she was in danger of being punished by everyone stoning her to death. It was this second concern, which included potential danger for Mary. Third, Mary understood how becoming pregnant was accomplished and she knew what was required had not, in fact, taken place, so, she was very confused about how she would become pregnant and give birth to her son. That was why, according to the Voice translation, upon which our Scripture Skit was based, Mary asked the angel in **verse 34**, *“But I have never been with a man. How can this be possible?”*

There is an interesting contrast between the way the angel Gabriel answered Zechariah and Mary when they questioned his declaration. Remember, the angel kept Zechariah from being able to speak until after John was born and named. However, no such punishment was put on Mary when she asked, “How can this be possible?” **Instead, Gabriel explained in verse 35**, *“The Holy Spirit will come upon you. The Most High will overshadow you. That’s why this holy child will be known, as not just your son, but also as the Son of God.”*

Evidently, Gabriel recognized Mary was still not at peace with his message but, again, he did not carry out the same kind of reprimand, which the angel had imposed on Zechariah. **Gabriel went on to say in verses 36-37**, *“It sounds impossible, but listen — you know your relative Elizabeth has been unable to bear children and is now far too old to be a mother. Yet she has become pregnant, as God willed it. Yes, in three months, she will have a son. So the impossible is possible with God.”*

Having received the new information from the angel about Elizabeth being pregnant, Mary realized she had a way to verify the truth of Gabriel’s words, so she perhaps, provisionally, accepted the call to be the mother of the Son of God. The qualifying of her commitment was demonstrated by Mary when she decided to check out Gabriel’s assurances by visiting

Elizabeth. As Mary greeted her cousin, Elizabeth, she began to be engaged with another of the Divine Parent's Messengers – a different kind of angel! Indeed, it would be Elizabeth's testimony because of her unborn son's leaping for joy, which led Mary to come to accept the service to which God was calling her. Not only did Mary receive verification of Elizabeth being pregnant and, therefore, had evidence of Gabriel's veracity, but she also came to be at peace with what God was calling her to do and was then fully committed to carrying it out! **Mary did that by singing in verses 46-49, "My soul lifts up the Lord! My spirit celebrates God, my Liberator! For though I'm God's humble servant, God has noticed me. Now and forever, I will be considered blessed by all generations. For the Mighty One has done great things for me; Holy is God's Name!"**

Ironically, as Mary continued to sing her song, she became one of God's Messengers – angels to both Elizabeth and to all who have since heard of it! Mary's musical testimony affirmed for Elizabeth and revealed to us how our Divine Parent brings justice to all people, especially those, who have been oppressed, abused, rejected, down trodden, and powerless in this world.

**Mary came to be at peace – no longer afraid because the angel, Gabriel, had told her the truth about Elizabeth's pregnancy and both Gabriel and Elizabeth had testified to God's Purpose for Mary's own pregnancy.** Gabriel and Elizabeth were responding to the Divine Parent's urging for them to be deliverers of God's Message. Mary was given the most important task of giving birth, raising, and supporting God's Son. The angel, Elizabeth, and Mary were at peace with the meaning and purpose of their lives – no longer afraid because of their callings from God and the fulfilling nature of them. Especially since there is a societal expectation that the Christmas Season is full of joy, it is quite disquieting – a fearsome time when we are reminded of the difficulties and hardships we and our loved ones are facing or have faced. Have you ever struggled with finding your purpose of life and being at peace with it? Are you yearning to overcome your fears – to have more peace in your life and relationships? **#morepeace in the world happens when all of us feel #morepeace within ourselves and live out that message each day.** Because our Divine Parent's Agape Love for us and all people was demonstrated in the pregnancy of Mary, the Birth of Jesus, his life, his public ministry, his death, and his resurrection, we have reason to not be afraid – to be more at peace. Accepting our own role – that of God's Messengers – Angels in words and deeds will quell our fears and bring each of us more peace, as well as, will enable God to bring more peace to many others, who are struggling with their fears and are in need of more peace. Finally, we are all tempted to let the fear of not being up to the task lead us to reject our own call to have more peace – to be angels or messengers to others through our agape love and invitation. Confidently have more peace by accepting and living out your call to be one of God's Messengers – Angels by loving and welcoming all people because, as Gabriel told Mary, "So the impossible is possible with God." **Yes, I believe there are angels among us. God is making us ready to be messengers of peace – confronting fear, in an ever-changing world.** Amen.