

Rev. Timothy M. Crummitt

Fourth Sunday of Advent - Year B

St. Paul's Lutheran Church

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16

Psalm 89:1-2, 19-26

Romans 16:25-27

Luke 1:26-38

12/24/2017

### **Gospel**

The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke;

26 In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, 27 to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. 28 And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." 29 But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. 30 The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31 And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. 32 He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. 33 He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." 34 Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" 35 The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called

Son of God. 36 And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. 37 For nothing will be impossible with God." 38 Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

The Gospel of our Lord.

### **Prayer**

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

### **Here am I**

In my office you will find two icons. The first is one is not important for today's story, but the second one fits perfectly. The second icon is of the Holy Mother holding the infant Jesus. It was given to me by my best friend who happens to be Catholic and who routinely reminds me that us Protestants often fail to give Mary the credit she deserves. So there it sits, always there in the corner of my eye, reminding me that our God was born of the flesh, born of a woman, a young girl.

In fact, the writer of the Gospel of Luke goes out of his way to make it clear that Mary is just an ordinary person, with nothing particularly special about her at all. It stands in stark contrast to the story of John's birth that we discussed last week. John the Baptist is born to parents of privilege. Elizabeth is a descendent of the tribe of Aaron, the priestly tribe, and her husband is a temple priest in the largest town in the area, Jerusalem. John's parents had the

comfort of the respect that was granted to elders... Mary was a young girl. A young girl in a small town in the middle of nowhere. It is like finding out that Wonder Woman is real, and she was raised in Cowen, West Virginia.

Yet somehow, God has chosen her to bear the child of God. Where Zechariah questions the angel Gabriel and demands a sign, Mary questions only the mechanics, committing to God with the same words that her ancestor Hannah spoke; "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." We are shown here the wonderful and unique ways that God has continually worked in the world to bring about change. Dr. Stephanie Buckhanon Crowder writes "Luke connects the status reversal to gender reversal; two *women* become the center of God's attention. Gabriel silenced Zechariah, and Luke is silent about Joseph's whereabouts."<sup>1</sup>

One of the things that makes this story so impactful is the fact that we are forced to confront the reality that God works through everyday people. If you are waiting for special sign, some miracle to show you the way, I have bad news for you... You might be waiting for awhile. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), the Lutheran church to which St. Paul's belongs, has a wonderful saying: "God's work, our Hands." It captures perfectly the message we see here in the Gospel of Luke that God works through people all over the world to make God's kingdom a reality. In fact, God is working through YOU right now to do that very thing!

Scary, right?! It requires only one thing from us, a simple yes. Our agreement sparks a revolution, it kick-starts the changing of the world. Every time we say yes to God, we get to participate in God's redeeming action in the world that is ALWAYS happening! It truly is

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<sup>1</sup>Blount, Brian K., et al. *True to Our Native Land : an African American New Testament Commentary*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007. pp. 161

amazing stuff, but fear not, just as the angel said to Mary, I say to you: “For nothing will be impossible with God.” Amen.