

20 Dec 20, 4th Sunday in Advent

II Samuel 7:1-11, 16; Romans 16:25-27; Luke 1:26-38

I want you to come with me on a little trip – or a thought experiment today. I want us to think about Mary – and what it must have been like for her. I will be taking some liberties with some of history – but not with a lot of it. Only because that makes it possible for us to follow the story a little bit more.

This is the story of one woman's faith. Well, perhaps wrong to say a woman. She was only 13. In that time and place that would have been on the cusp of being a woman. We might not consider a woman an adult until she is 18 or 21 – but 13 was that time for her.

This happened a long time ago. This is not a "once upon a time" fairy tale...but a story of a particular time and place.

At 13 she had started to figure out all of life. She had an understanding of who God is, and where all of those things that talk about God come in to play. That central to life...actually it is how she would organize her life.

And God – up in the clouds – is organizing what life is to look like. God is distant, while all the things that we do to practice our faith are very close. But God...well God is wholly other from us. We don't interact directly with Him.

She is at the sink now. She is washing dishes. A boring, rather mundane task. But it is one of those things that is necessary to do. And it will be one of those things she will be doing every day of her life from now on.

Actually, it won't be long until she won't be doing this in her parent's house. She will be doing this at her own house...with her own husband...and perhaps her own children.

She knows who she will be marrying. It had been planned for some time.

Thinking about the future...planning for what will be happening. Perhaps a garden next to his shop. She thinks about what married life would be like.

A voice breaks her daydreaming.

"HAIL FAVORED ONE!"

She drops the pitcher. And it breaks. This does not fit what is going on.

Kind of reminds you of someone opening the door in the early morning light singing, "Rise and shine and Give God the Glory Glory."

"HAIL FAVORED ONE. THE LORD IS WITH YOU."

She thinks back to listening to the discussions that she had heard in Schule – that is in the synagogue. It is often called schule by the people – because it is the place you go to...to learn more about God – schule means place of learning. Others may call it synagogue. That word means place to come together. It is both

But this voice reminds her to think about what she learned there.

GOD IS WITH YOU.

God was with Moses, leading us out of Egypt. But he was a great man.

Samuel.... well he was a prophet.

God was with my ancestor David when he debated building the temple. Well, David was called the apple of God's eye.

Maybe God is even with Uncle Zechariah when he goes into the temple.

But no.... she thinks...I am a girl. Perhaps a young woman. God speaks to men. As she thinks of her lessons from schule...mainly men...or is that exclusively men... no mainly Well, there were a couple of women...but.

Wait a minute. Who is it that is talking to me? And what does he mean by highly favored one? Here I am in a one room house, cleaning up. Favored one? Get serious.

Maybe this is how some foreign Jews greet one another. The rabbi – that is our teacher – greets people with "the Lord be with you. " and we respond with "and also with you."

But this doesn't look like anyone that I have seen before.

Oh....I'll have to sweep up that pitcher that just broke.

Isn't amazing how many things can flow through your head in an instant. All these thoughts and more went through in that instant....

And then the Angel...it was now registering that this might be an Angel of God since he looked so different. But throughout the scripture's angels appeared, and they were not always recognized as angels at first. They are God's messengers – and often look like ordinary people.

What is that he is saying now? "YOU ARE GOING TO BE BLESSED BY GOD BY HAVING A SON."

Well, that seems reasonable. Joseph and I will be married in another couple of months. He might be an old man. He and I could have a son. It will be about our time.

HE WILL BE CALLED SON OF THE MOST HIGH.

And not Joseph's son.

This is getting more confusing. But I think that was the experience of others when they encountered angels.... wasn't it?

Well, this is a messenger from God. Perhaps he doesn't understand how things work here on earth. They do come from heaven after all.

"How can this be? I have never been with a man, and at present I am still single?"

The angel explains. THE POWER OF THE MOST HIGH WILL OVERSHADOW YOU.

But Mary doesn't understand this. Again, her mind goes elsewhere.

Mom and dad will disown me.... if I am lucky.

I have no skills. My only possible job is to be a wife. Joseph is a good man, but will he believe me when I explain this to him?

He's been around the block a time or two.... this is not the kind of thing that happens.

What was it that the prophet Isaiah said about a virgin conceiving? Let's see, I could tell Joseph....no that wouldn't work.

Where will I live? Whose child will this be legally? I could end up miscarrying.... Sarah down the street did. But that would be too much pain. I don't think God wants that. I don't think He would let that happen if he sent an angel.

Well, I guess I will just have to be a single parent. But it will be God's gift to me. Is that really a favor...? I'll believe it when I see it.

If God can make this happen, I guess God can take care of me.... somehow??

And Elizabeth, my old aunt...she was called barren, she never had a kid...and she isold. She said something about an angel visiting uncle Zechariah. She has only 3 months till she gives birth.

THRONE OF HIS FATHER DAVID

"I'll take it....it may cost me dearly, but I will do it."

"I am the servant of the Lord," and so it was fulfilled.

What was fulfilled?

The child will be born. Mary said OK. She took a risk. One that we have difficulty imagining.

The gospel of Matthew brings out this idea of her reputation in another way. There are 4 women listed in the genealogy that he gives. Each of them at first view would have been judged as wrong. Each of them would have been seen as doing wrong in their relationships with men. At least when first looked upon. Later, each was seen to have been truly righteous Mary knew she would be judged. If she were lucky, she would be an outcast. Normal for that time and place could mean being put to death... but she risked... she trusted.

And stories were told years later that questioned her morality. But we know she was righteous.

God also took a greater risk. A child would be born. A human child. A crying child. A fragile child.

He will look like any other child He will scrape his knees. He will hit his hand with a hammer and shout in pain.

A child will be born. Son of the Most High...who will be held in the little box of Mary's womb. Something that could break.

Fulfilled...Son of David and son of God, whose house will be established FOREVER.

In Mary's words she accepted and God's plan would come to be.