

**“Uh-Oh!”
Luke 1:26-38
December 10, 2017**

INTRODUCTION:

**Mary’s encounter with the angel is called the “Annunciation.”
If they ever decided to make it a musical –
which surprises me that Hollywood has not thought of yet –
the would use Nat King Cole’s famous song,
“Orange Colored Sky.”**

**“I was walking along, mindin’ my business
when out of the orange colored sky –
Flash! Bam! Ali-ca-zam!”
Wonderful you came by.”**

**That would seem to border on flippant,
but look at how Luke has chosen to tell this story.**

It begins with God giving a message to the angel Gabriel.

²⁶In 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.”

**Look how Luke shifts the focus from Gabriel
standing at the side of God,
to Gabriel coming to a small town in Galilee – Nazareth
and appearing to a virgin pledged to Joseph
whose name was Mary.**

**Do you see how quickly the focus becomes a close-up of Mary?
It zooms right in on a very tight shot – Mary.**

THE ANGEL GABRIEL:

Let's do a flashback.

Let's take a look at angels and Gabriel in particular.

**The Bible doesn't focus much on angels in general,
and even less on the angel Gabriel.**

**We do know from Scripture that Gabriel is a messenger
who is entrusted to deliver several important messages
on God's behalf.**

**Gabriel appears to at least three people in the Bible,
first to the prophet Daniel, (Daniel 8:16)
after the prophet had a vision.
Gabriel's role is to explain the vision to Daniel.**

**Gabriel's next appearance is to the priest Zechariah
to foretell the miraculous birth of John the Baptist (Luke 19:19)**

**And finally to the virgin Mary
to tell her that she would conceive and bear a son.**

**We know that Gabriel's name
has tremendous significance and power.
Gabriel means "God is great."**

**Gabriel has favored position as an angel;
he stands in the presence of God
and he is selected to deliver important messages
of God's particular love and favor to individuals
chosen to be part of God's plan.**

**Of all the angels, Gabriel is the angel of the annunciation,
the one to reveal that the Savior would be called "Jesus."**

It is also clear from Scripture

**that Gabriel's appearance was rather terrifying,
Daniel fell on his face at the sight of him.**

**The Bible also tells us that he was sick for days after
his experience with the angel and the vision.**

Zechariah is likewise "startled and gripped with fear."

**Although his fear may not have been Gabriel's appearance
as it was the shock factor.**

Gabriel showed up unannounced

in what was supposed to be an empty temple.

**It may have been the sudden appearance
that was so shocking.**

The annunciation seems to follow a pattern.

That pattern begins with the appearance of an angel.

The recipient of the message is shocked.

The message contains information

that the person will play a vital role in God's plan.

This is no chance encounter at a coffee shop or the barber shop.

It is an event so startling

that the angel usually must calm the person down.

Whether it is the physical appearance,

or the sudden manifestation

or the shocking news . . .

. . . it is not pleasant at first.

MARY:

Mary was betrothed to Joseph.

**A marriage that was probably arranged by her father,
according to the custom of the times.**

Legally, the marriage was sealed after the engagement.

**If something happened to Joseph before the wedding,
Mary would be considered a widow.**

**No sooner did Gabriel tell Mary she had found favor with God
than he announced she would become pregnant with child.
And not in the normal way – or have a normal child.**

**There is no way you could ever convince me
that Mary would have simply said: “Well, all-righty then.”
How could she possibly know the role she would play
in God’s plan of salvation?!?**

**“²⁸ And [Gabriel] 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?”**

**First of all,
to be “favored by God” may not be what we expect.**

**Mary did not receive comfort, prosperity, social status,
acceptability, political power or anything else
we usually associate with being “favored.”**

**Being “favored by God” doesn’t mean our investments are safe,
or that we can cancel the insurance on our house,
or that we will win the lottery.**

**Being “favored by God” means we have been *chosen*
to be a special part of God’s plan.
The task to which we are called may not be pleasant.
But it will advance God’s kingdom.**

**Being “favored by God,”
Mary would have to endure the scorn
of being pregnant out of wedlock,
and she would later witness the execution of her son
as a criminal.**

**Mary has a question.
That should come as no surprise to us!
She wants to know “How can this be, since I am a virgin?”**

**If I received a message from an angel,
assuming I could find my voice,
I would have questions, too.
Lots of them.**

**And I hope God would forgive the first few words I would utter
if an angel ever appears to me with a message from God.**

**Mary’s question is a practical one.
Unfortunately, the answer does not fit our scientific minds.**

**My father, a doctor, wrestled with the question of a virgin birth
all of his adult life.
He tried in vain to answer it without success.**

Even though Mary did not have a medical background,

I am sure she also wondered just how this was to happen.

Gabriel said to Mary,

³⁵ “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.”

Unfortunately, that is not a satisfying explanation.

**And if that were the end of the message,
We would be left with speculation.**

**The explanation of just how Mary became with child
is beyond the knowledge of the scientific community.**

The only plausible answer

**lies in the one thing that Gabriel said,
and it is incredibly important:**

³⁷ For nothing will be impossible with God.”

Do you believe that?

Really believe that?

**What happens when you pray and pray and beg God for something
And it doesn't come to pass?**

Does that mean that God couldn't do the task?

Does it mean God didn't care enough?

That is an unanswerable question,

and if we dwell on it for too long,

we end up not believing God to be the God of the Bible.

Perhaps the most astonishing part of this whole story

is Mary's response:

**³⁸ Then Mary said, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord;
let it be with me according to your word.”**

**Remember what I said during the offering meditation last week?
“What do you think is at the top of God’s Christmas list?”**

It would have to be that we all respond to God as Mary did.

**When God calls us to a task,
our response should be that of Mary’s:
“Here I am;” prepared to serve as You have asked.**

That should be the goal of every faithful Christian.

GOD:

**OK. Let’s turn our attention to the central figure in this event.
It is God who is the central figure in this event.**

**That may seem strange
because God doesn’t actually appear in this event.**

**However, God plays a huge part in this drama.
God has decided to enter human life –
With all its depravity, sinfulness, violence and corruption.
For one purpose and one purpose only.
To demonstrate to us the scope of God’s love for us.**

**Instead of a queen or a princess,
God chose an insignificant maiden to give birth to His Son.**

**Instead of a palace or an opulent place of political significance,
God chose an insignificant town in an unimportant province
of the Roman empire.**

**All of this to demonstrate to us,
even the lowliest among us**

is considered a great treasure by God.

**With this in mind,
we can see that the message the angel Gabriel brought
was one of great hope and promise.**

And that hope and promise is for us all!

**I pray that you have come to grasp and believe in that hope.
It may not pay off your mortgage
Fill your bank account
Or cause your investments to soar.**

**But if you grasp the hope that is grasping you,
You will find a peace
beyond anything you may have known before.**

**May God bless each of us –
And draw us ever closer.**