

A Young Girl Is Chosen by God to Give Birth to Jesus.

Fourth Sunday of Advent December 20, 2020

Luke 1: 26-38

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Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer.  
AMEN

I want to start out this morning with a quote I found by Augustine of Hippo. Augustine of Hippo is also known as St. Augustine and was born in Hippo Regius now known as Algeria. He was a Christian bishop and theologian and one of the early Church Fathers. He wrote a number of famous books, two of which are *Confessions* and *The City of God*. His quote goes like this, "He who wrote on tablets of stone without iron made Mary with child of the Holy Ghost; and He who produced bread in the desert without ploughing impregnated the Virgin without corruption; and He who made the rod to bud without rain made the daughter of David bring forth without seed."

God sent His messenger, Gabriel to a small village in Galilee called Nazareth. Gabriel which means "strength of God" greets Mary who was most likely busy helping around the house and tells her that she is blessed among women. The word blessed here in Greek means graced one or honored one. Gabriel bore witness to the coming birth of God in the flesh to Mary who was a young girl probably around the age of 13 to 16. She is referred to as a virgin in the Bible which means maiden, unmarried daughter and virgin as we know it.

We already know that Mary is engaged to Joseph who was quite a bit older than she was. Girls, back then, were married off at an early age because their life expectancy was only until about 35 or so years because they had so many babies. They had many babies because there was a high level of infant mortality and families needed many children to help with chores around the home and gardening and other duties.

When Gabriel announces to Mary that she will conceive and bear a son she offers herself to God to bear His Son when she replies “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word” Mary strove to imitate the life of an angel and was exceptionally worthy to enjoy the encounter with the angel Gabriel.

The Venerable Bede, who is also known as Saint Bede, Bede, and Bede the Venerable, was an English Benedictine monk at the monastery of St. Peter in the Kingdom of North Umbria. He was also an author of many books and commentaries. A famous book of his, which I highly recommend is *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*. In his commentary on Luke, he says “Truly full of grace was she to whom it was granted to give birth to Jesus Christ, the very one through whom grace and truth came.” He continues and says, “Truly blessed among women was she who without precedent in the womanly state rejoiced in having the honor of parenthood.”

Through one woman, Eve, came death and another, Mary, came life. Eve sinned because she was tempted by the serpent and as a result came death to man. So, it is fitting that Mary gave birth to our Savior that we may live. Jesus by His human birth overcame death for us. Eve was seduced by the devil that brought death and Mary was instructed by God through the angel Gabriel and she was obedient. Her obedience produced for us the Author of salvation.

A New Creation was made when Mary conceived Jesus by the Holy Spirit. A New Creation where sin will be atoned by the child in her womb. From creation to the moment of Mary's conception man was unable to remove the stain of sin that came from Adam and Eve.

Before Jesus, God had chosen men to act as priests and prophets. Now Mary who will give birth to Jesus will accomplish what no man was able to do before Him. The priests offered up sacrifices to God for the sins of the people but could not remove the stain of their sins. That could only be done by Jesus offering his body as a sacrifice for us on the cross.

God chose Mary not because she deserved it, but because she was favored by Him. As we have read in the Old Testament God will choose whom he chooses. He chose for example Abram, Isaac, and especially Jacob and David. God chooses whom God chooses. In Exodus 33:19 Moses wrote "And he said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name 'The LORD'. And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. Again, Paul quotes in Romans 9:15 "For he says to Moses, "I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." Some Bibles in these two verses use **Mercy** in place of compassion.

We know Mary was very obedient because when Gabriel visited her and told her she was going to conceive and bear a son and call His name Jesus and without hesitation, other than wondering how she will conceive and bear a son, since she had not known a man, she replies in Luke 1:38 "Behold I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word."

Sometime after the announcement of her immaculate conception she takes off for the hill country of Judah to visit her cousin Elizabeth or as some commentaries say her aunt. When Mary arrives the baby, who will be John the Baptist, leaped in Elizabeth's womb and Elizabeth was

filled with the Holy Spirit. ““She exclaimed with a loud cry, “Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb! Any of you who say the Rosary will recognize that verse. Mary responds with the beautiful Song of Mary or The Magnificat.

“My soul magnifies the Lord,  
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior;

For He has regarded

The lowliness of His handmaiden.

For behold, from now on,

all generations will call me blessed;

For He who is mighty has magnified me,  
and holy is His name.

And His mercy is for those who fear Him,  
throughout all generations.

He has shown strength with his arm;

He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.

He has brought down the mighty from their thrones,  
and has exalted the humble and meek.

He has filled the hungry with good things,  
and the rich he has sent empty away.

He, remembering His mercy, has helped His servant Israel,  
as He promised to our fathers, Abraham and his seed forever.” Luke  
1:46-55

I want to share a beautiful poem I found while preparing for today's sermon. The title is Mother Yet Virgin and it goes like this:

A heavenly fire engenders him, not flesh  
 Nor blood of father, nor impure desire.  
 By power of God a spotless maid conceives,  
 As in her virgin womb the Spirit breathes.  
 The mystery of this birth confirms our faith  
 That Christ is God: a maiden by the Spirit  
 Is wed, unstained by love; her purity  
 Remains intact; with child within, untouched  
 Without, bright in her chaste fertility,  
 Mother yet virgin, mother that knew not man.  
 Why, doubter, do you shake your silly head?  
 An angel makes this known with holy lips.  
 Will you not hearken to angelic words?  
 The Virgin blest, the shining messenger  
 Believed, and by her faith she Christ  
     conceived.  
 Christ comes to men of faith and spurns  
     the heart  
 Irresolute in trust and reverence.  
 The Virgin's instant faith attracted  
 Christ into her womb and hid him there  
     Till birth.

This is from the Divinity of Christ by Prudentius who lived from 566-584. Prudentius was a Roman Christian poet.

Let us pray,  
 Stir up our hearts, we beseech thee, O Lord, to make ready the  
 ways of thine only-begotten Son: that, when he cometh he may

find us watching; and attentive to meet him with minds that wait for his presence; though Christ our Lord. AMEN.