

Pastor Jon's Sermon from Saturday, 12/16/2023.

"The Annunciation" from Luke 1:26-38

Have you ever seen the movie Frozen 2? Do you remember the song "Into the Unknown" sung by Elsa when she hears a voice calling out to her. She is afraid to hear the voice or follow it. She's afraid to step out and perhaps change as her powers grow stronger, but she is also afraid to make a mistake.

The story of the birth announcement of Jesus to Mary by the Angel Gabriel is an into the unknown story. It is a story of young girl, trusting in God's word even when things don't seem possible. But in the end, she trusts God's word and says, "Here I am Lord, let it be with me according to your word."

When in your life have you had to take a leap of faith into the unknown? In the Bible, we call this a call story. In Scripture, God calls ordinary, flawed humans like us to do extraordinary things. God partners with us humans, regardless of our frailties and failings, to do God's work of love and justice in the world today. But call stories rarely are cut and dried. They are complicated and oftentimes met with great resistance. Remember when Moses was called by God in the burning bush, he started off saying, "Here I am." But later he doubted... "Suppose they don't believe me that the Lord appeared to me. Plus, I have never been eloquent, I am slow of speech and slow of tongue. O my Lord God, please send someone else." God

All of the elements of a typical call story are found Annunciation story. There is a greeting, a startled reaction, a command not to fear, a divine commission, an objection, and the offer of a confirming sign.

a greeting (1:28), The Angel Gabriel is sent by God to the small town of Nazareth, to a young girl virgin, named Mary. "Greetings favored one, the Lord is with you." How would you react if an angel greeted you this way? Who me? Favored? You would look around to see if anyone was behind you.

a startled reaction (1:29), Mary is perplexed and wondered what sort of greeting this might be. Perplexed literally means greatly troubled. What have I done to deserve this? Mary was among the most

powerless in society: young in a setting that valued age, a female, and poor.

A command not to fear (1:30), “Do not be afraid Mary, for you have found favor with God.” Whenever you see the words “Do not be afraid” a call will follow. What would you be afraid of? Leaving family and friends behind? Leaving the old ways behind? Doubting that you are qualified?

a divine commission (1:31-33), You will Conceive, bear a son, name him Jesus. Called great, son of the most high, God will give him throne of David, he will reign over house of Jacob forever, his kingdom will have no end. What would you say?

an objection (1:34), You got it. Are you sure you got the right person? I’m from Nazareth. How can this be, since I am a virgin or young girl who hasn’t been with her husband yet.

a reassurance (1:35), The Holy Spirit will come upon you, the power of the most high will overshadow you. Your son will be holy and called the Son of God. I would be thinking, what will I tell Joseph and my family? They won’t believe me. I will be a disgrace.

the offer of a confirming sign (1:36-37). Elizabeth, Mary’s aunt has conceived and will bear a son, in her old age. For nothing is impossible for God. Mary will go and visit her. She will have someone to share the experience with who is gracious and non-judgemental. For people at the margins facing difficult situations, what matters most is someone who will share in their experience, stand with them, and walk with them.

³⁸Then 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.

Mary is the ideal role model for all followers of Jesus. She simply believed God’s word. According to Lutheran Professor Mark Allen Powell, Mary is the model for Christian discipleship, the person who all people, men and women alike should emulate,

I like the fact that Mary went through a transformation in her call story. She moved from fear and from being greatly troubled to saying Here I am. Let it be so.

In our baptism, we are called to bear Jesus to the world. You are a God bearer. Jesus commissions us in Matthew 28 to go and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and teaching them everything I have commanded you. Making disciples doesn't happen just with words, but actions. Loving the neighbor as ourselves. Doing unto others as we would have them do unto us. Maybe you will be like Elizabeth who will take a vulnerable Mary into her home during her pregnancy and walk with her.

How is God calling you to use the gifts you have been give to bear Christ to others? Amen