

virgin?" (Luke 1:34)

- Mary's reaction towards Gabriel is similar to the reaction of Zechariah (see Luke 1:8-20). Both are clearly surprised to have an audience with an angel, and both clearly do not believe in a God of miracles.
- We can probably be more forgiving of Mary, given that she was probably only 12 years old, when Gabriel visited her. She came from a small village, of approximately 500 people, situated in the northern part of Israel, who relied on agriculture for their livelihood. She is unlikely to have been educated coming from a working class agricultural family.
- God, interestingly, chooses a working class girl from a small village in northern Israel to be the person who will bear His son. God loves to use ordinary people, like you and me, to perform His great tasks.
- If God has called you to a 'Mission Impossible' and you are currently struggling to get your head around the task, then rest assured that you are in good company and that the calling you have received is indeed from God.

2.4 **Mary trusts** - "I am the Lord's servant, may it be to me as you have said." -(Luke 1:38)

- Mary's response to Gabriel rings down the centuries: *Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.*' (Luke 1:38)
- Mary is prepared to trust that 'with God nothing is impossible' (Luke 1:37). Are we?

3. Questions to consider at home

3.1 What are the 'impossible missions' God calls Jesus, Mary, Joseph and Elizabeth to perform?

3.2 What 'Mission Impossible' is God calling you and your church to?

3.3 How would you test whether this calling is genuinely from God?

Matthew Street 28th November 2021



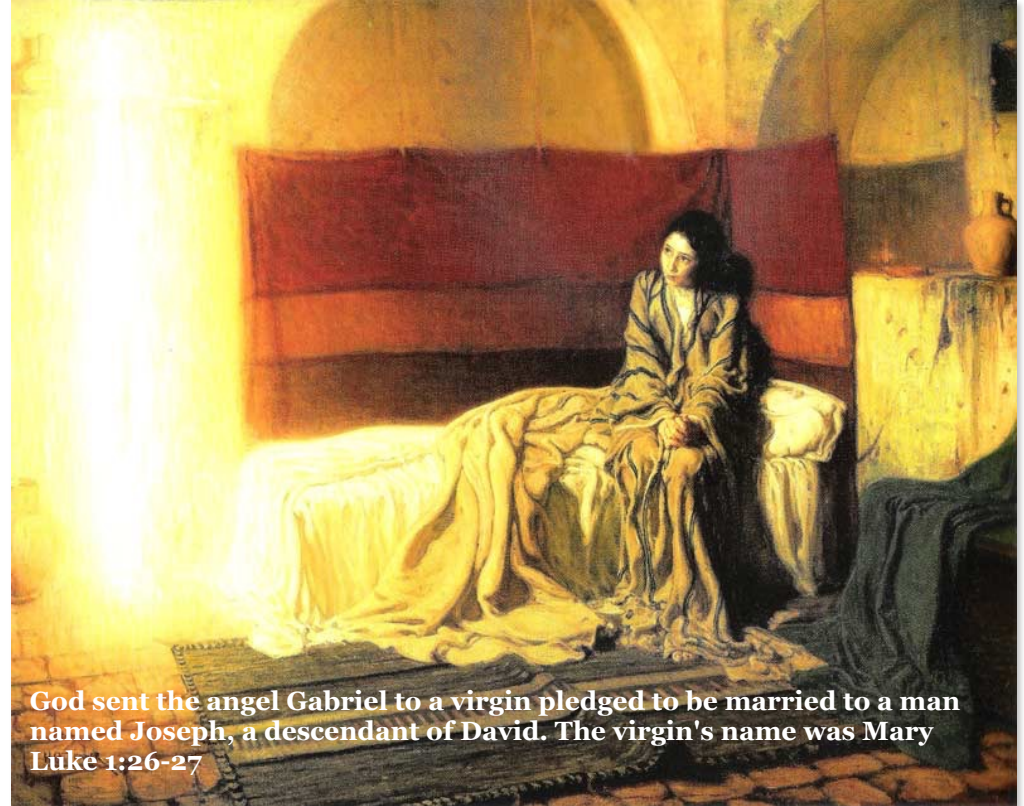
The Parish of Wellow

Luke 1:26-38 - God's plans involve extraordinary events in ordinary peoples lives

Passage, Talk Notes and Questions

Please feel free to take these talk notes home with you and you may wish to find some time during this week to consider the questions below.

1. **Talk Passages** - Luke 1:26-38



God sent the angel Gabriel to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary
Luke 1:26-27

26In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, 27to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. 28The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favoured! The Lord is with you." 29Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. 30But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favour with God. 31You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. 32He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, 33and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end." 34"How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?" 35The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. 36Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month. 37For nothing is impossible with God." 38"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said." Then the angel left her.

2. Talk Notes

2.1 Introduction

- Do we believe in a supernatural God that can perform supernatural acts?
- Do we believe in a God of miracles? Do we believe that God performs miracles today. Do we believe in a God that can make the impossible, possible?
- Some of us have heard about God performing miracles and a few of us may have seen God do these things. But are we believing or sceptical? Do we trust someone when they say they have been healed or do we think that it is all psychological? Do we believe people when they tell us that they have prayed about something and received an answer or do we just put such things down to coincidence?
- God calls Mary to an impossible task. At first she is perplexed and confused and cannot understand how it will be possible for her to give birth when she has not been with Joseph her intended husband. But Mary is prepared to put her trust in God and she will go on to discover again and again that *'nothing is impossible with God'* (Luke 1:37)
- Like Mary, God will call us to impossible tasks and missions. We, like Mary, will no doubt be perplexed and confused. The million dollar question is, will be prepared, like Mary, to trust and step out in faith, and work with the God who makes the impossible, possible.

2.2. God Calls *'The Lord is with you.'* (Luke 1:28) *'You will be with child and give birth to a son'* (Luke 1:31)

- At the heart of the Christmas Story is 'Calling'. God calls
 - i. **Jesus** to leave heaven and come to earth.
 - ii. **Mary** to give birth to Jesus.
 - iii. **Joseph** to marry Mary.



- iv. **Elizabeth** to give birth to John the Baptist
- God has always been in the 'calling' business - right from the outset in scripture God was calling Adam and Eve back into relationship: *the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"* (Genesis 3:9)
 - What is God calling us to do? Maybe God is calling us:
 - i. Back into relationship - like Adam and Eve - *"Where are you?"*
 - ii. Perform a task or a mission - like Mary, Joseph, or Elizabeth.
 - iii. Leave our 'comfort zone' and move into unfamiliar territory - like Jesus
 - The million dollar question is how do we know what God is calling us to do? Do we wait to be spoken to by an angel, which is what happened to Mary, Joseph and Elizabeth's husband Zechariah, or does the process work some other way?
 - Analysis of **Mary's, Joseph's and Elizabeth's** calling reveals an interesting pattern that we can use today to test whether we have heard correctly what God may be calling us to do.
 - The pattern involves:
 - i. Being **called** to a 'Mission Impossible' and working with the God who makes the impossible - *'For nothing is impossible with God.'* - (Luke 1:37)
 - **Mary's** 'Mission Impossible' is to give birth to Jesus even though she knows she has had no union with Joseph. She is going to have to trust God and believe that *'nothing is impossible with God'*.
 - **Joseph's** 'Mission Impossible' is to marry Mary even though he has had no 'union' with her. Both he and Mary are going to have to operate outside the cultural norms of the day and to rely on God's power especially for their journey into Egypt but throughout Jesus' life.



-**Elizabeth's** 'Mission Impossible' is to give birth to John the Baptist, even though she knows she is barren and beyond child bearing years and to bring John up in the latter part of her life. Like Mary and Joseph, she too is going to have to operate outside the cultural norms of the day and to rely on God's power.

- ii. A struggle to understand and get our heads around our calling - feeling **confused**.
- iii. Stepping out in faith and **trusting** God.

2.3 **Mary is confused** - *'Mary was greatly troubled at his words'* - (Luke 1:29) *'How will this be, since I am a virgin?'* (Luke 1:34)

• Initially Mary is afraid and confused by God's calling. Gabriel tells her *"Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favour with God.* (Luke 1:29) Once she has gathered herself a little, she asks Gabriel *'How will this be, since I am a*