



READ: Luke 1:26-38 (NIV)

In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He 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, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

"How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on 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. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. For no word from God will ever fail."

"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." Then the angel left her.

ENTER THE STORY:

The same angel who visited Zechariah in the temple now goes to Nazareth to bring a message from God to a young Jewish girl named Mary.

Is it a coincidence that God sent Gabriel to this specific girl in the town of Nazareth? Of course not! The name of this tiny village, a town that isn't mentioned anywhere in the Old Testament, could hold a clue to the identity of this promised child that Mary will bear. The Hebrew word for Nazareth (Netzarit) comes from the Hebrew word *netzer*, which means "branch" or "shoot."

Do you remember talking about a special branch or shoot in this Advent?

We've seen this a few times in our Advent, so you should be very familiar with it by now. This is connected to the prophecy in Isaiah 11, that speaks of a "shoot that will come forth from the stump of Jesse's tree." It was NOT a coincidence that God sent Gabriel to the city of Nazareth or the "City of the Branch!" There are no coincidences with God!

Gabriel's message to Mary confirms this! The child that Mary will have is the One everyone has been waiting for – the promised Messiah. He is the royal descendant of David, the branch from Jesse's tree, and the Son of the Most High. He is set apart from everyone that has come before him and everyone that will come after him.

This all sounds amazing, but why her? Why did God choose Mary?

From the outside, nothing seemed special about Mary. Her family wasn't wealthy or prominent in society, and nobody famous had ever been born in Nazareth, so it wasn't famous for anything.

Can you already see how this fits within God's pattern?

God loves to use the weak and insignificant to reveal his glory! He looks at what is on the inside, and like her long-ago relative David, Mary had a heart that loved God. She may not have understood everything, but she received the news with humility and gratitude because she knew it was a blessing! She had heard the prophecies. She knew how long her people had waited, so she gladly offered up her body as a vessel that would safely carry the Living God into this world.

- *Most of us have heard this story a time or two, but have you ever stopped to wonder why God chose to bring Jesus*
- *into our world in such a unique way?*
- The answer lies all the way back in Genesis chapter 3. God's promise to Eve was that her "seed" would strike the head of
- the serpent, the tempter who led her and Adam (and with them, all of humanity) into sin. By having his own Son born of
- a human mother, but not a human father, God was shouting loud and clear, "THIS is the promised snake-crusher! THIS is
- the one who will destroy sin!"
- When it was time, God would fashion his Son into a tiny baby through the power of the Holy Spirit and place him into
- the womb of a young girl who was a part of David and Abraham's family tree...bringing the promised descendant into
- the world just as he said he would.
- Jesus did not come from sinful man, and he himself never sinned. This was necessary so that, one day, he could bless
- the whole world by becoming sin on the cross. He did this so we could "...become the righteousness of God."
- (2 Corinthians 5:21)
- *May God's precise attention to detail NEVER cease to amaze us. This is, truly, the most incredible story ever told.*
-  **PRAY:** *Most High God, you are the supreme and sovereign Lord over all, and we praise you for that. You are worthy of*
- *all of our praise and honor. Give us servant hearts like Mary this season, and help us make space in our hearts for you.*
- *Amen.*
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