



READ: Luke 1:26-38 (ESV)

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. 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 father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" And the angel answered her, "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 called holy—the Son of God. And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For nothing will be impossible with God."

And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from 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.

The name of this tiny village of Nazareth, 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. Nazareth (Hebrew-Netzarit) may come from the Hebrew word *netzer*, which means "branch" or "shoot."

Can you see where this is going?

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." Is it a coincidence that God sends Gabriel to the city of Nazareth, or "city of the Branch?" Of course not! Gabriel's message to Mary confirms this!

This child 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 title, "Most High," is the Hebrew phrase "El Elyōn." It is used in the Old Testament to refer to God as the King of kings and Lord of lords. It emphasizes his supremacy and sovereignty over all things. As Son of the Most High King, all of those things are also true of Jesus. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last. He is the firstborn over all creation and he is worthy of all the honor and praise and glory.

This was the message Gabriel shared with Mary, but why her? What was special about Mary?

From the outside, maybe nothing. Her family wasn't wealthy or prominent in society, and as we've already seen, Nazareth wasn't famous in that way either.

Doesn't this fit within God's pattern though? God loves to use the weak and insignificant to reveal his glory!

- Mary had surely heard the prophecies about the Messiah her whole life. 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 to term.
- *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!" And God would take his Son's new, made-into-flesh body and place him into the womb of
- a young girl who was a descendant of David and Abraham...bringing the promised One into the world a different way.
- He did not come from sinful man, and he never knew sin. All of that was necessary so that, one day, he could bless the
- whole world by being made into sin so that 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.*
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-  **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.*
- *May we joyfully accept your calling on our life and receive it with gratitude and humility. Amen.*
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