

Saying Yes To God

Luke 1:26-38

December 21, 2008

UM – Advent 4

Well, good morning everyone.

My, what a large gathering!

Do you recognize me without my blue shawl?

You know me as Mary, although I was more commonly called by my Jewish name, Miriam.

And this is the kind of thing I wore most days, not the blue of royalty, although I am honored that I have been shown in blue, and I did have a blue sash, but that was for very special occasions.

But I certainly didn't have it with me when Joseph and I had to make that trek to Bethlehem.

We didn't have much money, and I was a thrifty wife and mother.

I couldn't spend money on fine clothes for myself when my children seemed to go through clothes as fast I could make them...

That was just not part of my life!

James was always catching them on a nail or something, and Jesus, well between ripping them and wearing them out... I could hardly keep up with it.

And that is not counting my other children.

But Jesus is the reason you have gathered here this morning isn't he?

Jesus, my first born son, the one whose conception caused me the most trouble, whose birth was the most fearful, whose life gave me the most joy, whose death caused me the most grief...

Mothers are not supposed to have favorites, but you know secretly, we all do.

And Jesus was mine.

Perhaps it was because of the circumstances of his birth.

Perhaps it was because he was my first born.

But for whatever reason, Jesus had special place in my heart.

But that is not what I am here to talk about.

I am here to tell you of what really happened when Gabriel visited me, and what happened between that time and the time I sang that most magnificent song of praise to God.

Your scriptures go right from Gabriel saying “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you, therefore the child will be holy; he will be called the Son of God,” to me saying, “Here I am, the servant of the Lord; let it be according to your word.”

Well, let me tell you, it might look like it was just like that, and in some respects it seems to have happened in an instant, but in other ways it seemed to have lasted all night.

Your scriptures don't tell you how I felt when the angel of the Lord visited me.

How do you think I felt?

I was a young girl!

Sure, I was betrothed, but that was the custom of the day and we were not yet ready to marry.

And there I was lying in my bed, sound asleep, after all I had worked hard that day.

And suddenly, a light entered the room, a light so bright...

Well, it woke me right up; at least I thought it did.

Then when Gabriel spoke to me I thought I must still be dreaming.

An angel of the Lord!

To visit me, an ordinary Jewish girl, I couldn't believe it.

I thought if an angel would visit anyone it would be the priests in the temple.

But there the angel was, that wonderful light...

It glowed and pulsated and hummed...

And Gabriel said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you!"

The scriptures say that I was perplexed.

Well, I was perplexed, I couldn't figure out why the Lord was choosing me?

There was nothing special about me.

I was also terrified that I was going mad, and I knew where they put mad people.

It was a terrible place and if I were going mad, Joseph and I would never be able to marry.

I was scared.

What was I to think?

How could I possibly conceive a child when I was still a virgin and unwed?

What would my parents think?

What would Joseph think?

What would the villagers and priests think?

As I thought of all these things, I became even more frightened.

People were not always kind to those who broke the law.

I don't even know where I got the courage to open my mouth to speak to him.

And believe it or not, I was also embarrassed because I was in my oldest nightshirt!

Imagine, an angel seeing me in that!

Now, this might seem like a small thing to you, but let me tell you, if you ever get a visit from the angel of the Lord, you are going to want to be in your best nightgown!

But I still remember that light...

And in the light was love, a love so powerful and real which seemed to roll over and through me and into me like no other love I have known, before or since.

It washed from the top of my head to the very tips of my toes and set up an echo inside me, an echo which would become Jesus.

With the love came assurance.

This love would not let me down.

This love would help me endure whatever I had to face.

This love would keep watch over me.

And so I said, "Here I am, the servant of the Lord, let it be with me according to your word."

And it was.

I said yes to God.

And then the light and the angel gradually disappeared from my room.

But not from my memory.

And sure enough, the next month, I knew that I was carrying a child.

The memory of that love made me hold my head up when I told Joseph the reason why I could not marry him

The memory of that love kept all the whispers of the villagers from piercing my heart.

The memory of that wash of love sustained me through telling my parents.

They were so ashamed and bundled me off to see my cousin Elizabeth, who miraculously was going to have a child as well. A child in her old age.

The memory of that love enabled me to come back to my village and look people in the eye, for I knew I had done no wrong.

But I was lonely, I missed Joseph, I missed the easy laughter between my mother and father, I missed my girlhood friends who were no longer allowed to associate with me.

Sure, the memory of the angel still shone in my mind, but I needed someone in my village.

And then one day, Joseph came to see me.

My parents didn't want to let him in, but he was stubborn, and said he MUST see me and he wouldn't take no for an answer.

And he came to me and said, "Mary, I have had a visit from an angel too, I know what is going on. We need to get married very soon"

And so we did, and that is when I said Yes to God again.

That is when I sang my song: "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior."

Those words that came to me, "He has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty."

Those words that I sang that day.

They had echoed from our scripture.

They echoed in Jesus voice when he was older.

They still echo in the songs of those who say yes to God.

And so I leave you now to sing your song of yes!

For if I, an ordinary Jewish girl can do it, so can you.

Say yes to that baby lying in a crib, say yes to the angel that fills your heart with trembling, say yes to love.

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