

Birth of Jesus told to Mary
Luke 1:26-38

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. (English Standard Version – ESV)

Background:

- The Greek word Luke uses in this passage for "virgin" indicates that Mary had not yet had sexual relations with a man. Nazareth was an insignificant village of 1600 to 2000 inhabitants.
- God often let his people know that was "with" them (e.g. Jeremiah 1:8). Greetings like "hail" were normal, but rank and status within society determined whom one should greet and how.
- As a woman and young person, perhaps 12-14 years old, Mary had virtually no social status. Neither the title ("favored") nor the promise ("The Lord is with you") was traditional in Jewish greetings, even with of people of status.
- "Do not fear" appears often in the O.T. (e.g. Josh. 1:9; Judg. 6:23; Jer. 1:8; Dan. 10:12). Here Mary here joins the list of those who found favor before God (Gen 6:8; 19:16, 19; Ex. 33:13).
- Jewish tradition used the language of "overshadowing" for God's presence with his people.

Questions:

- + What is the most remarkable feature of this passage, and why? How can you apply it?
- + Why do you think God favored Mary? Do you feel favored by God? Why or why not?
- + What impresses you about Mary's response to the angel? How would you have responded?
- + Mary said to the angel, "I am a servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." What would it take for you to become a fully devoted servant of the Lord like Mary?