



## The Nourishing Vocation Project

### Engaging the Living Word

#### [Luke 1:26-38](#)

#### What is this particular text?

- Story
  - Part of the larger infancy narrative—parallel stories of the births of John the Baptist and Jesus
- Prophetic—it is a foretelling

#### How does the text function within the scriptural story?

- Announces the coming birth of Jesus
- Luke sets forth his Gospel as an “orderly account”; and so he sees the foretelling of both John the Baptist’ and Jesus’ births as the beginning of his story
- It is our introduction to Mary

#### How can this text function in the church today?

- God equips us to do what God calls us to do
- God called Elizabeth before God called Mary—we are encouraged to seek out those whom God has called who have gone before us
- Gabriel proclaims who Jesus will be—we are invited to ponder who Jesus is now
- What parts of God’s calling to us make us afraid and perplexed?
- Reminds us that God chooses from among those who are marginalized or without earthly power

#### What does the text do to you? How do you react to the text? What feelings does this text engender in you?

- Awe at Mary’s simple submission to God’s will
- I would have had so many more questions for that angel—Mary asked only one
- I greatly struggle with the phrase “The power of the most high will overshadow you.” The image it puts in my mind is one of sexual violence.
- I worry whether Mary truly had a real choice to consent or not

#### What do you have to say to the text?

- Can one truly consent when the other party is God?
- Mary agreed very simply to something that would change her entire life and could possibly put her in danger.
- The angel tells Mary about who Jesus will be, but not about what will happen to him and the grief she will have to endure
- Talk about having high expectations as a parent for one’s child!

#### What do you see through this text from the story itself?

- The angel says “Do not be afraid”—God’s call can be scary, but God reassures
- Questions do not mean lack of faith
- God’s plan starts small

### **What do you see from within your church/community/world? (2022)**

- We do not believe women when they tell their stories
- There are extremely few resources within the church for women to talk about barrenness, miscarriages, unexpected or unwished for pregnancies, assault, abortion, or pregnancy and childbirth, yet our Scriptures are full of stories about women who experience these things
- Elizabeth’s story is just as important as Mary’s, but we often forget about Elizabeth in her old age
- Can people see the Jesus described by Gabriel in our faith communities?
- Crises of today:
  - Healthcare for women of all ages/Reproductive Rights
  - Believing and listening to women and their stories
  - Resources/Education for young mothers/soon-to-be mothers

### **What do you see within yourself?**

- I see myself in Mary when I took the leap of faith to come out as trans and live as the one God called me to be—like Mary, the plans for my life were already laid out, and it was not easy to suddenly change everything, even knowing it was right
- Fear of the unknown future
- Times when I was not willing to say “let it be with me according to your word”

### **What is the context – textual and historical?**

- Immediately follows the story of Elizabeth conceiving John the Baptist despite her barrenness.
- Precedes Mary’s visit to Elizabeth, and Mary’s wonderful “Yes” in the Magnificat
- Luke places the stories of John the Baptist’s birth and Jesus’ birth parallel to one another
- Gabriel tells us for the first time who Jesus is and will be
- This is the beginning of Luke’s Gospel—God is beginning a new thing in Mary and her womb

### **What questions does this text raise for you?**

- Could Mary have said “No thank you, this is not for me”? What would have happened?
- Is it possible that Mary was not a virgin? Could Jesus still have been Jesus if he had an earthly father as well (either Joseph, or someone else?)
- How could Mary say yes to such a calling without even being assured of her personal safety?
- What did her parents think? What did Joseph and his family think?
- Did Mary ever wonder if maybe Jesus might not accomplish what Gabriel said he would?
- What was Mary’s life like before Gabriel appeared?
- Why did God choose and find favor with her?
- Did Mary ever think back on Gabriel’s words as her son grew? Did she think back on them when he was crucified?
- What if Mary had changed her mind? What if Mary had gotten an abortion?

### **What words/themes seem of particular importance?**

- Perplexed
- Womb

- “How can this be”

#### **What is the Gospel / transforming Good News within this text?**

- Do not be afraid, for God is coming into the world
- God makes the impossible possible
- God calls us for a specific purpose and equips us to fulfill it
- We get to be part of God’s plans
- The Incarnation—God chooses to be born of Mary and live in the world to save us and love us

#### **What is the as-over-againstness of this text?**

- We can make Mary appear passive and submissive, even though her yes to God was anything but that.
- We have no problem believing Mary’s story, but disbelieve the women of our own time and place
- Our own “How can this be” stops us from responding to God’s call—I want to ask “How can this be, and why, and what if, and what will happen when....” before I make a decision
- Agreeing to something that changes your entire life and makes the future unknown is terrifying
- This text can be troubling to those who have experienced sexual violence
- This text can be troubling to those who are longing for a child
- Gabriel doesn’t tell Mary the most difficult parts about being Jesus’ mother—only the “good parts” of who Jesus is

#### **Who does this text say that Jesus is, or if not Jesus, then who does this text say that God is? What does this text say about God?**

- God is present with us (even and especially in times of fear)
- God chooses us to bear witness to God in the world
- God can make anything possible
- Jesus is a human who grows in Mary’s womb...
- ...and yet, Jesus’ is God’s Son, with authority over all creation

#### **What have others said about this text?**

- [“The evangelist Luke does](#) not exalt Mary as a goddess, or as a mother, or even as a woman. He thinks she has a more important role, as the ideal Christian. In the Third Gospel, Mary becomes *the* model for Christian discipleship, the person who all people, men and women alike should emulate, especially if they wish to follow her son.” by Mark Allen Powell
- [“Still, to a girl named Mary an angel came...](#)Significant in Luke’s account is that Mary speaks. While the Matthean Mary is talked about, the Lukan Mary is talked to—and she talks back. In Luke women speak a mere fifteen times, and only Mary is given a full speech, that is, the Magnificat (1:46-55). Moreover, “Mary the mother of Jesus is often considered Luke’s model of obedient, contemplative discipleship.” She is celebrated for her submission, without regard for the social and physical strain that would come for a poor pregnant girl in ancient Palestine.” by Courtney V. Buggs

#### **What will I teach or proclaim?**

- God’s call comes with the reassurance to not be afraid

- God called Mary, God calls us
- God made it possible for Mary to say yes, God makes it possible for us to say yes
- God equips us to fulfill God's call
- We are encouraged to seek the advice of those whom God has called before us
- Communities can rejoice over God's call together
- God hears our concerns about our call, God wants us to ask "How can this be"
- Saying yes to God's call changes our lives
- God does not set us up for failure
- God is with and loves women who long for children; God is with and loves women who find themselves pregnant unexpectedly—The story of our salvation is full of women who weren't supposed to get pregnant, but did. And God is with and loves women who chose to say no.
- God listens to women and believes them.
- We are called to listen to the Mary's of our time and place
- God's plan can interrupt our plans
- We don't always get all the details when God calls us