

Christmas Eve Meditation  
Luke 1: 26 – 38  
Lake Forest, Illinois

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First Presbyterian Church  
December 24, 2007

In museums across the world there are many paintings of the events described in the NT as the Annunciation.

**Luke 1: 26-38** “In the sixth month, 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 be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name 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 the house of Jacob 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 upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called<sup>[a]</sup> 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 barren is in her sixth month. For nothing is impossible with God."

"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said." Then the angel left her.

Putting aside for a moment what that must have felt like, let's remember that all religious stories represent a deeper metaphysical truth. Angels are the thoughts of God, and Mary isn't the only one who has had angels come and talk to her. Angels are talking to all of us constantly, but most of the time we don't hear them and if we do we don't often listen.

Gabriel represents a particular kind of message from God, namely that He wants to impregnate us spiritually, miraculously turn us into new people, and extend His love onto the earth through us. The difference between us and Mary is that she had the humility and grace to say, "Yes."

You and I say, “Thanks, maybe sometime, but not now,” “get real,” “gimme a break” “no way,” and a host of other things that don’t exactly resonate with Mary’s willingness to be used by God.

All those paintings exist, as does all art, to take our minds to the place where we remember what’s true. That story is not just about her; it is about us as well.

Around all of us, at every moment, there is an angel heralding a new beginning, the birth of a new being from the pieces of our scattered selves. Every situation represents a choice: do we prefer to stay with our old worn out ego-based patterns of thought and behavior, or do we choose to live life in a higher, more loving way?

Will we tread the path of limitation and fear, though that path has grown painful and boring and old, or do we choose to give birth to a higher mode of expression?

The Christ within us is a newborn self, fathered by God and mothered by our humanity, here to express the divine potential that exists inside us all.

Mary could not have said “No” to God because it would have been contrary to her nature. And at our deepest core, it is contrary to our nature as well. We long to say “Yes” to Him, but we are so out of touch with who we really are, so not in conscious contact with our own souls, that we continually say “No.” And there, in that rejection of love, lies the tragedy of human existence.

One day we say, “Yes, God you can express your love through me.” And on another day, in another situation, we just can’t make the stretch – we say “no” to more forgiveness or more depth or more love. Yet Gabriel persists, and every time we say “no”, he simply waits around to ask us again.

“Don, I am bringing this situation around again to give you another chance. What do you say?” Slowly but surely, our hearts begin to open; we resist love less the longer we trod the spiritual path. And ultimately we will resist no longer. If we are deeply, truly honest with ourselves we know we are longing to be pregnant with God.

When we accept ourselves exactly as we are and where we are, we have more energy to give to life. We are not wasting our time trying to make things different. Any moment that we relax into the deeper ground of our being, giving up all struggle to be anywhere else, we are in exactly the right place at exactly the right time. There is a plan for our lives – God’s plan – and it oversees exactly where we are and where we need to be going.

When Gabriel spoke to Mary, she was fourteen year old girl, and now he speaks to each of us, no matter what our sex or how old we are. As long as we are willing to be part of God's plan, then God has a plan for us.

And that's when life begins to truly change: not when we have new things, but when we have a new spirit. The birth of God's love into the world is not just a "was," but an "is."

It's important not just because of what it did to the world, but because of what it does to us. As we love each other, God lives in us. He overshadows our mind and heart. He guides our thinking, our behavior, and our words. He removes us from our thoughts of fear, miraculously replacing them with thoughts of love. In that lies our holiness, and there is literally nothing our holiness cannot do.

When the three kings bowed down before the baby Jesus, they symbolically expressed the relative weakness of the powers of the world compared to the power of our true being when we are centered in the love of God. The radiance of the divine child is you and me transformed.

Our fears are dissolved and our armor melts. As we pray constantly for an ever more open heart, the action of God's Spirit redeems our past and frees our future to be unlike it. We are spiritually reborn as the illusions of the past fall away and we have the chance to begin again. Sometimes someone will say to us, "You seem like a completely new person. Sometimes we do seem like a new person. And sometimes we actually are one.

Advent reminds us that in any given moment the universe is primed to give us new life, to begin again, to create new opportunities, to miraculously heal situations, and to change darkness to light. In the birth of the Christ child, God's light shines eternally clear. Our job is to take a deep breath, slow down, surrender all thoughts of the past or future and let the Holy Infant shine forth in our awareness and in our daily lives.

As we hear the angel Gabriel speaking to us, giving us another chance; may we be open to receive God's message of love and like Mary say "Yes!" "Yes, God you can express your love through me." May you have the spirit of Christmas which is Peace; the gladness of Christmas which is Hope; and the heart of Christmas which is love.