

“YOU’RE GOING TO HAVE A BABY”
Luke 1:46b-55, Romans 6:25-27, Luke 1:26-38
December 19 & 20, 2020

“During a pastoral call, a three-year-old boy climbed into the lap of the pastor and whispered confidentially, ‘I know a secret!’ The pastor asked, ‘Will you tell me your secret?’ ‘Yes,’ the little fellow giggled delightedly, ‘But you mustn’t tell my mamma.’ When the pastor promised not to tell anyone, the boy continued, ‘My mama’s going to the hospital to have a baby. But don’t tell her. Me and Daddy want her to be surprised!’

“What a surprise if Mamma didn’t know! I think most folks would be surprised if they were told, ‘You’re going to have a baby.’ Especially the men and children here today. We could quickly say, ‘Well, that leaves me out!’ And women over 50 would look at me and say, ‘You’ve got to be kidding!’” Having a baby isn’t something that is kept secret for long, but it does catch us by surprise sometimes. And Mary, the mother of Jesus, was also surprised when the angel told her that she was going to have a baby. However, the fact is that regardless of sex or age, every one of us is going to have a baby this Christmas, only a few days from today! If we understood the real meaning of Christmas, we would not be surprised to learn that “You are going to have a baby.”

So “what does Christmas mean to you? A Gallup poll indicates that 35% of those interviewed said they considered Christmas a religious festival. 26% thought of it as a holiday; 23% considered it an opportunity to be with family and friends; 5% looked at Christmas as a time for eating and drinking; 11% had no opinion. In other words, 65% of the people do not understand the true meaning of Christmas. As a religious festival, Christmas is more than Santa Claus, more than a celebration of a past event, more than exchanging gifts, more than a story about shepherd, angels, a manger, and wise men. **The true meaning of Christmas is that Christ is to be born or re-born in us on Christmas Day.**

“The Gospel lesson for this fourth weekend in Advent is a birth announcement. A messenger from God comes to each of us today with the Good News, ‘You’re going to have a baby!’ ”¹ Listen to

¹ (John R. Brokhoff, *Wrinkled Wrappings*, [Lima, OH: C.S.S. Publishing, 1975] pg. 39)

the announcement as it is found in Luke 1:26-38. (READ Luke 1:26-38).

There are several ways that we can respond to the announcement of having a baby. The first response is that **WE CAN BE TROUBLED** by the news. Like Mary, we are all somewhat taken off guard by this news that we're going to have a baby. Mary's own situation was interesting, in that she did not have a husband. She and Joseph were engaged to be married, but there had not been any union with each other up to that point. Mary was still a virgin. So the news that she was going to have a baby was troubling to her.

And it is troubling to many women today who find out that they are going to have a baby. It can be very shocking and unsettling to find out that a pregnancy has occurred. With over 395,000 births worldwide each year, there are many women who become troubled when they hear that they are going to have a baby. For some, it's another mouth to feed, another youngster in the house that they just can't afford. And for many others it is unexpected and unplanned, it doesn't fit into their vision or dream for their future, so they decide to end the pregnancy by going to an abortion clinic.

It is certainly an announcement that brings trouble to unwed teenage moms. There were over 750,000 teenage girls that got pregnant in 2019, the result of around 38% of teenage girls being sexually active. The news that she is pregnant brings great trouble and stress as the young mother tries to figure out how to tell her boyfriend the news. And it is even greater anxiety as they consider how he will take that news. And what about telling her parents? Many wait until they can no longer hide the fact that they are going to have a baby that the news is shared. So then the questions come fast and furious; do I keep the baby? Do I give it up for adoption? Do I get an abortion? Do I get married? This can be the worst news to a teenage girl. Having a baby is serious business for everyone!

These things troubled Mary, too. But her relief would come when her parents asked, "Who is the Father," she could answer, "God is." So when the angel told her that she was going to have a baby, Mary became troubled with these thoughts, too. But not just the announcement of having a baby, Mary was also troubled by the greeting, "*Peace be with you! The Lord is with you and has greatly blessed*

you!” (Luke 1:28). She had never seen an angel before, so it was very disturbing to her. She found herself wondering what it all meant. And what did he mean by “*The Lord is with you...?*”

We, too can be troubled by this same message, especially if in fact we are having a baby in the next few days. If Christ Jesus is to be born in us this Christmas, we, too, may find ourselves asking the same questions – “What is this all about? What does it mean? Who am I to find favor with God to have Jesus born in my life?” Certainly we are not worthy to have Jesus come to us. We are sinners, not fit to have Christ be born in us. As the song, “O Little Town of Bethlehem” states clearly, we are in need of Jesus to “cast out our sin, and then enter in” so that He might be born in us, today. We, too, are troubled as we contemplate the message to each one of us that tells us that “You’re going to have a baby.”

There is a second way that we can respond to this news. **WE CAN BECOME AFRAID** of what this message means for us. In our Gospel lesson, we hear the angel tell Mary, “*Don’t be afraid. God has been gracious to you*” (Luke 1:30). It is a typical response of any human to become afraid at the presence of God’s messenger. And it is a logical response for Mary to the announcement that she was going to become pregnant. There were consequences that she would have to face when the news made everyone aware of her pregnancy. She was unmarried. There would be gossip about her integrity – about both her and Joseph. People would change the way that they related to her when they passed her on the street, or saw her in the market. There’s no telling what kind of stories would be told about her and Joseph. There was plenty to become afraid of.

Like anyone, Mary was greatly concerned about how Joseph would take the news. He could certainly break off the engagement and expose her to the authorities and accuse her of adultery. In that day, women caught in adultery were often killed by stoning – people throwing stones at them until they died from their injuries. It was a real source of fear for Mary because she was putting her life on the line if she agreed to do this. People would not understand that it was God bringing the promised Messiah into the world miraculously. They would only think that she was being untrue to her engagement vows.

Certainly our society today does not hold such punishment against unwed mothers. Sadly, it has

become so common today that we don't criticize it too much. But unwed mothers do take this news with a great deal of fear and anxiety. Will they have to drop out of school? Will they lose their jobs? Will their parents disown them? Certainly their reputation will become shattered, if not rewritten. Will they lose their self-respect? How will they be able to continue on in the future? These and many other concerns are helping today's teens reconsider becoming sexually active before marriage.

The Virgin Mother Mary had a healthy fear when she was told by the angel that she was going to have a baby. God was choosing her to become the mother of the Son of God. Somehow she had found favor with God in the way that she was living. God knew her better than she knew herself, so He knew how strong she would be in order to face this tremendously difficult responsibility. Yet, there was much to fear, because God loved her enough to petition her to be the human mother to the Messiah.

Each one of us can have that fear in us, too. When God comes to us and invites us to do a difficult task, He doesn't assign us the tasks without being ready to support us so that we might accomplish it. God loves us enough to use us even as we are to bring Him glory, even in the face of potential ridicule and shame. We have reason to fear God, but when we are striving to be live right within His standards, our fear is to be in reverence and awe at what God can do through us. As each of us is informed that we're going to have a baby - Christ Jesus living in us - it is a responsibility beyond compare to allow Him to use us so that our very life brings glory and honor to Him.

A third way that we respond to this news, "You're going to have a baby," is **WE BECOME CURIOUS** as to how it will all take place. Having regained her composure at the presence of the angel, having wondered about why God had called her to do this great thing, Mary now becomes curious as the angel tells her that she will become pregnant with a son and that she was to name Him, Jesus. She naturally wonders out loud, "*How can this be, since I am a virgin?*" (Luke 1:34). The natural process for a child to become born is to have a woman AND a man being involved. So how can a woman become pregnant without a man being involved?

The angel, Gabriel, then explained to Mary that this child would be very different than any other

child in the world. This child would not be conceived by an earthly father. The Holy Spirit is the One who made it possible for Jesus to be born in Mary. No man can take credit or be held responsible for impregnating Mary. Jesus would be “conceived by the Holy Spirit, and born of the Virgin Mary,” as we state in our creeds of faith. So Gabriel reminded Mary, and us, that “...*there is nothing impossible with God*” (Luke 1:37). So God does something completely outside of the natural way that a child is conceived and takes the initiative, and makes this very strange and wonderful thing happen so that Jesus would be unique – fully human and yet fully God. Jesus being born in human form like one of us is completely God’s creation. God used Mary to bring Jesus into the world, but He was the one who orchestrated Mary to conceive without a human male being involved. The Holy Spirit implanted God’s DNA into Mary so that the child she would bear would be holy, God’s own Son, Jesus.

And that’s where we get curious. We wonder like Mary, and Sarah, and Nicodemus, and many others throughout history, “*How can this be?*” It is a mystery of God in how He does it, but it becomes concerning to each one of us, how God will become born in each one of us this Christmas. The problem confronts us because we cannot understand it, but if Christmas is to mean anything at all, Christ has to be born in each of us.

So we can ask “How can this be?” for ourselves, and it is for us to understand that God will work in us just as He did in Mary. God’s Holy Spirit must be allowed to come into us to implant God’s DNA inside us so that Jesus can begin to grow in us and transform our lives completely in the process. As we open up our minds to allow the Holy Spirit to work in us, Jesus becomes a vital part of our life that changes our today and forever in tremendous ways.

“It seems as impossible for us to be born anew as it was for Mary to have a child without a husband. The angel reminds us, as he did Mary, that with God all things are possible. It does seem impossible that I, as old, and ugly and dirty as I am, can be a new person by having Christ born in me. To have Christ born in me is to have a new life, a new world, a new creation, a new spirit, and a new attitude. All of life is different. It is another world, like being born all over again as another person. If

Christ is born in us, we have the Spirit of Christ in us; a spirit of love, goodness, and mercy. This is what makes Christmas a time of goodwill and peace.”²

If people allowed God to move inside of them, it would transform their lives, making them brand new people through Jesus Christ. Allowing Jesus to move into us changes everything about us. Sure, we would have the outward appearance of the same person, but when Jesus moves into our lives, He renovates the old person, revamping the lifestyle, overhauling the attitude, repairing the brokenness in the life, restoring fractured relationships that have come from selfishness and greed. Letting Jesus come into us renews our life goals, and redecorates our whole persona to the point that those around us may not even recognize us. Of course; it’s all because Jesus has come to completely redo the life of each one of us so that we regain the image of God within our life!

When we let Jesus be born in us, the old things of our life must leave as the new things that Jesus brings to us begin to become established and entrenched within us. The old nature within us begins to recede as Jesus becomes rooted within. Our grouchiness gives way to appreciation. Our criticism turns into gratitude. Our skepticism turns into trust. Our greed turns into generosity. Our hatred turns into love. Our fear turns into boldness. Our selfishness turns into compassion. Our doubt turns into belief. Our quick tongue turns into willingness to listen. Our rebellion turns into compliance. Our hostility turns into hospitality. Our anger turns into love. Our old destructive habits turn into supportive, encouraging outreaches. The old things become new (2 Corinthians 5:17) in every aspect of our lives so that we can begin to make a positive difference in all those around us.

That’s the difference Jesus makes in our lives. Any parent knows the difference that a child makes in their life. Once the child is born into that household, there is a whole turn-around in schedules, and life becomes different. There is little time for the self because the little one demands so much attention and care. Sleep patterns change because the child is not used to sleeping through the night. There are diaper changes that take place, new cleaning routines that become ongoing, feeding schedules

² (Brokhoff, *Wrinkled Wrappings*, pg. 44)

that occur at irregular times and “quiet times” change depending upon the activity of the child. Life turns up-side-down. Having a baby born in our life changes our work schedules, it changes our thinking patterns, it changes our activities, and it changes every aspect of our life.

And that is what Jesus wants for us. The news, “You’re going to have a baby,” is that invitation to enter into a new life as Jesus grows in you. We cannot have a baby and keep all the old ways of life as if that baby never was born to us. So to have Jesus be born in each one of us demands changes in each one of our lives to conform us into the image of God through Jesus working in us.

But all of this begs the question of the next response available to us: **ARE YOU WILLING** to let God come into you to conceive Jesus inside of you? For many today, there will sadly be the decline in God’s invitation. Some will be so focused on the stuff of the world that they have no desire to make any change in the way that they celebrate the birth of Jesus. Others will be so busy that they miss out on the opportunity. And some will outright reject God’s invitation to have Jesus live in them. They will be the masters of their own lives and they will not allow anyone else dictate how they will live.

But for those of us who hear God’s messenger speak to us and tell us that “You’re going to have a baby,” if we can move beyond the concern and the trouble and the fear that comes over us, we can answer the same way that Mary did when the angel Gabriel took this message to her, “*I am the Lord’s servant, may it happen to me as you have said*” (Luke 1:39). She accepted the fact of motherhood gladly because she understood what God was asking her to do. She was going to be the mother of the Messiah, even though she was nowhere near qualified to do the job. God had chosen her to do this great, yet difficult, task. She submitted herself to become the servant of the Lord, allowing Him to use her as He saw fit, to bring about His purpose through her.

So as a servant to God Mary was to live her life in a way that brought honor and glory to Him. She was not to agree to be a servant and then live her life like she thought she should live. Being a servant is to come into compliance with the standards and guidelines and laws of God so that everything she did brought Him honor and brought Him glory. She lived to serve God so that she could please Him

in all that she did. She let everything she wanted go in order to follow the ways of God. She had found favor with God. God had picked her from among all the other young women of the nation and found her worthy to be His servant to do this great thing. Every woman dreamed of becoming the mother of God's Messiah, giving life to the One who would save her people from the punishment of sin. Though this was going to be a very difficult assignment, God had chosen Mary to become the mother of God's Son, Jesus. "If God was to send His Son to earth, He had to have the acceptance and cooperation of Mary. She cheerfully and obediently submitted to His will. Her body was to be God's instrument by which He would enter the world as a human being.

"God depends upon human willingness and cooperation to perform His will on earth. So, if Christ is to be born in us, we must let God use us. Like Mary, we need to offer our bodies as His instruments in carrying out His will. This calls for submission and dedication. A person to be God's agent in the world must be committed and consecrated. It calls for a surrendered life. Mary shows us that you can be a 'nobody' and still be mightily used by God. Dwight L. Moody once said, 'The world is still waiting to see what God can do with one totally surrendered life.'"³ We see Mary's willingness to completely submit to God's will, and the world honors her for it.

Christmas is about Jesus coming into the world as a baby, born in a stable and laid in a manger. But realistically it is much more, for unless Jesus is born in each of us, there is no true Christmas. All of the lights, decorations and presents do not make Christmas. It is the announcement, "You're going to have a baby," that is what Christmas is all about. Christ desires to come to you, to live in you and to become the Lord of your life. Maybe you've done that, so Christmas is a re-birth of Jesus in you. Still, Christ Jesus is waiting, wanting, longing to be born in you this Christmas, but He will not force His way into you. You must give Him permission to come and reside in you.

Will there be room in your heart for Jesus this Christmas? Will you respond to the invitation by letting Jesus be born in you? If you are willing to have the baby Jesus born in you, pray the words of Phillips Brooks with me: "*O Holy Child of Bethlehem, Descend to us, we pray; Cast out our sin, and enter in, Be born in us today;*" to the glory of God in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

³ (Brokhoff, *Wrinkled Wrappings*, pg. 45)