

Gabriel's Search Luke 1: 26-38

Adapted from Al Henager, Fordyce, Arkansas "Mary, Mary, *En Contrari*"

I have often wondered how many 'Mary's' Gabriel had to approach before he found one that was willing to do the job.

God says to Gabriel, "I need you to find a maiden among the Hebrews, who is willing to conceive a child. She must be pure, honest, steadfast, and above all *willing*. Here is a list of possibles."

Gabriel journeys to earth, to Judea.

"Hmm, Mary, Mary, Mary. These are all Mary's! Well, let's see. The first is Mary of Jerusalem of the House of Jacob the candle maker. Logical, the Holy City. Maybe I can get it done on the first try."

Gabriel finds the home of Jacob the candle maker, and what good luck! Mary is home, sewing in the window light.

"Such a lovely girl, got to be the one."

"Greetings favored one! The Lord is with you."

The daughter of Jacob takes one look at the vision and runs screaming out into the street.

Don't we all do that at times? God gives us a unique opportunity, some humble chance for greatness, some chance to minister or to share or to serve, an exciting opportunity & we run screaming in the other direction.

God's will can be frightening, an interruption that disrupts life. You have your life so squared away. Your routine, your traditions. Yet, when God comes, he rips into your comfort zone. Your world is turned upside down. It can be frightening.

Gabriel says, "Well, So much for that one. O.K. next is Mary of Bethlehem, daughter of Simon the Rabbi. Of course! That's it! Bethlehem. The prophecy said Bethlehem.

Should have started here in the first place!" But at the house of Simon the

Rabbi, Mary is not there. Mary's mother says she is at the synagogue. "I'm impressed. The middle of the week and at church already!"

And Gabriel goes to the synagogue. Mary is reading one of the scrolls. Gabriel thinks, "What a unique girl. Few girls in this time can read, never allowed to read the sacred scrolls. This must be the one. Beautiful. Intelligent. Faithful. Not bad, not bad at all."

So Gabriel speaks, "Greetings favored one! The Lord is with you."

Mary turns with a start, "Who are you? And what are you doing here? why are you so bright? What's all this about?"

Gabriel gets defensive, "I am the Angel Gabriel. I have been sent by God."

"An 'Angel'? Do you have some I.D.?"

Sent by God? Anybody could claim to be sent by God. Things like that just don't happen. These myths contain truth, but they are not to be taken literally."

Gabriel finally gets a word in, "Wait, wait, hold on just a minute. I have a message. You will be the mother of God's son."

"Now that's a new one. How could I? not married; don't want a man in my life right now."

"But wait, says Gabriel. "You don't need a man. You will conceive by the Holy Spirit."

"Immaculate conception? Impossible. Gotta have a man and a woman for procreation. That's a fact. And conceived by the Holy Ghost, quaint thought, but hardly one you can expect an enlightened person to swallow. I don't know who you are, but you are no angel to be telling tales like that. Now, you run along, I need to return to my studies."

And Gabriel can't wait to get out of there.

Sometimes we get so caught up in our enlightened world view that we miss the realities of the spiritual world. When God comes to us to enter us and call us to a new life with fantastic possibilities, we retreat to our comfortable world, and we ignore the Holy Spirit. We squelch the power of God's Spirit in our lives.

We want everything in scientific, intellectual terms. To enjoy the mystery of the moment, to bask in the wonder of not knowing, yet knowing we are in the will of God, we've lost that.

Gabriel despairs over finding the right girl to become to the mother of God's Son. "Next is Mary of Nazareth. Might just skip this one; can anything good come out of Nazareth? This town is so small, she's the only Mary who lives here."

Gabriel approaches Mary, thinking, "I don't want to frighten this one off." softly, gently, Gabriel says, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you."

Mary looks puzzled, pondering what this greeting means.

"Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. You will conceive in your womb & bear a son, & you will name him Jesus." Gabriel wonders when Mary will interrupt, but continues, "He will be great, & will be called the Son of the Most High, & the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David."

Gabriel thinks, "I have never got this far with one before." & says, "He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, & of his kingdom there will be no end." Gabriel stops to let all this sink in.

Mary replies, "I see. And how can this be, since I am a virgin?"

"A reasonable question. The Holy Spirit will come upon you, & the power of the Most High will overshadow you; the child

to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God.

Your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. Nothing will be impossible with God."

Gabriel muses, "I wonder how she will take this."

Mary responds, "Well, here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word."

"We have a deal then?"

Mary says, "if God wants to use me as a servant in any way, I am willing."

"Remarkable! Well, then we're done. Sorry to rush off, but the Father wants me to report back ASAP, & this assignment has taken longer than planned. Bye, now."

How different life would be if we were open to God's opportunities for us! How wonderful it would be

if we faced all of life with the anticipation of Christmas.

how many times have we had a great opportunity, but either ran screaming away or explained it away intellectually. Or we were too busy with other concerns.

Don't let that happen. Be open to God's will and to God's messengers.

In this new year God will send a messenger to each of us with remarkable opportunities. How will we respond? God is calling on us to try new things, to do things differently. To some it's frightening, scarier than an angel or stranger than the thought of conceiving of the Holy Spirit and bearing God's Son.

How will we respond?

Lord, keep surprising us, that we keep saying no to whatever makes it more difficult to say yes to you.

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