

## **The Day God Calls YOU!**

Pastor Jamie

I must tell you that it was a day like any other; I had gotten up and walked to the well to get water for the day and then had begun the baking. I had tripped over something on the floor as I was carrying the flour over to my workspace. Flour had flown up into my face, causing me to sneeze. I managed to not drop the flour, but ended up with it in my hair and on my nose. It was not the most promising beginning to the day!

I was kneading my bread dough, enjoying the elasticity of the dough and the smell of the yeast as it was already working to make the dough rise. There is something very meditative about this action of folding dough over and using the heels of your hands to work in a little more flour. Push the dough...add a bit more flour...pull the top back over...push the dough...turn it a quarter turn and fold it in on itself again...Mesmerizing.

The morning sun was caught in the dusting of flour and I was humming a quiet tune in rhythm with my kneading. I had just added the last of the flour and was putting the dough to rest, covered, in the sun when I heard someone call my name.

“Mary!” the voice called out. I almost jumped out of my skin, thinking that I was alone. “Greetings and peace to you from God our creator. You have found favor with our God; don’t be afraid!”

Well, with a greeting like that I can tell you that I was indeed frightened! How did a stranger come to be calling me by name, telling me that I am blessed by God? While I was trying to catch my breath and wipe the flour off my nose and hands, the Messenger continued.

“God favors you and is granting you the opportunity to have a son. He will inherit the throne of his ancestor David and reign over the Kingdom throughout eternity.”

There was a great deal in this message for me to think about and understand, but I got no farther than “You will become pregnant and have son.” I know enough of life and the ways of men and women to know that this was just not possible! Nor would it be a desirable thing in my life at the moment; while I was happily engaged to a fine young man, we had not yet participated in the marriage rites.

“I don’t think that is possible,” I told the Messenger, “for I have not been with a man. Perhaps your message is for a matron named Mary and you have delivered your message to the wrong woman. After all, Mary is a common enough name. and while I would like to think that I have indeed found favor with God, I think you must be mistaken!:

But the messenger continued to assure me that I was the Mary for whom this message was sent. “God will care for this,” the Messenger said. “With God all things are possible!” he added, for good measure, and then waited for my reply.

I thought about the message. I was blessed by God. God thought I would be a good mother, someone who could raise up a child who would be great. Who wouldn’t want to have that kind of an honor?

“Okay then,” I said. “Let it be as you have said. I am here and ready for an amazing adventure!”

The Messenger left, and once again I was standing in the flour-covered kitchen, looking at bread that had risen with the heat of the day. A bit bemused, I took the dough, punched it down, shaping loaves and setting them to rise again. It was once again a day like any other—but I was different. I had opened myself to the will of God and an adventure that I could only begin to imagine. Who knew how life would unfold with that simple “yes” that I had just offered to God?

This time of year, we tell this story over and over again. We are sometimes amazed that Mary

has the courage to say “yes” to God, knowing that her pregnancy could lead to great danger—and even death. Sometimes we gloss over the part of the story where Mary actually agrees to participate in this undertaking, thinking that it happens just because God wants it to be so. But we tend to look at Mary. What we often miss out in repeating this story is that each of us is also called by God to something extraordinary.

Not all of us are called to do Mary’s job; in fact, that is the very nature of God’s calling. God calls in the particularity of each of our lives. Our call can be just as dramatic as Mary’s call—although we may not think of it that way.

Mary’s story continues to teach us because it is a story about opening ourselves to God’s call for our lives. Mary makes it seem so easy, but all of us know that discerning God’s will is seldom directly spoken; in fact, we beg for our own Messenger to come and tell us something as definitively phrased as Mary’s call to give birth to a son who would transform the world.

“Send me a sign!” we cry out. “I want a miracle,” we beg; “Just tell me what to do and I will do it.” Discerning our particular call is seldom as easy as Mary’s story leads us to believe. We want to do the right thing; we want to follow God’s will but we are just not sure what we are being called to do.

Mary received her call on an ordinary day and her call was as simple and miraculous as having a baby. Our calls are often the same—a still small voice in the night; a nudge by a teacher or a friend; finding the thing we do best in the world is needed by others; all of these things might very well be our very own Messenger proclaiming that we have found God’s favor.

This Advent season I invite you to listen to the story of Mary in a new way; listen to her think through the Messenger’s call and embrace the unknown in the adventure before her. Listen to hear God’s call in your life as you hear this story of birth told once again. And when you hear the call, say “yes” and be prepared to experience the adventure of your life!

Thanks be to God for the Messengers and the ability to say “yes!” Amen.

