

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16, Luke 1:26-38

In normal years we receive a lot of invitations at Christmas.

When we are invited to a meal we have to decide whether to accept or not.

We have a choice -

Yes I will go that party or I will take part in that event. or

No, I have another priority?

Mary had an invitation delivered by an angel.

The Greek word [Angelos] means messenger. It can be used of any messenger but in this case it is clearly Gabriel a messenger from God's throne room [1:19, 26]. We don't really know what an angel looks like, they may appear in different forms.

We are influenced by pictures from the world of religious art, which show powerful & beautiful creatures with wings. Whatever angels are like, they must be impressive because they almost always have to calm down whoever they are speaking to,

"Do not be afraid!"

When the angel came to Mary she was certainly, confused & disturbed by the angel's greeting.

The message was a totally unique invitation to be the mother of Jesus Christ. It is presented in the form of a statement of God's plan:

This is how God will bless you.

You will have a baby son, who you will call Jesus

He will be great and will be called the Son of God Most High

He will be the promised and long awaited descendant of King David who will establish an everlasting Kingdom.

But implicit in the invitation is that Mary had a choice to co-operate or to refuse.

Just like us she could say "Yes" or "No."

She is a sensible, down to earth girl and asks a very necessary question, [v33f]

"How can this be since I am a virgin?"

She knew about babies and conception.

She was looking forward to be married. To have children was one of God's blessings on marriage. But Mary obviously understood Gabriel to mean that the conception would be immediate. V34

We often talk of the virgin birth of Jesus. What Gabriel describes is the virgin conception of Jesus. Y' is going to intervene in a special way. Just as the Spirit of God hovered over the waters bringing forth life in creation so the HS will overshadow Mary and she will conceive this special child.

Gabriel encouraged Mary's faith by telling her that her barren old aunt had conceived and was now in her 6th month & that nothing is impossible with God.

What an overwhelming experience for a young girl. How did Mary respond? & for ourselves?

How are we to assess which voices to listen to?

How are we to know which paths to tread and which to avoid?

Mary would have been helped by her knowledge of the scriptures. We don't see it clearly in the passage we

are reflecting on this morning, but it is very clear from the words, which Mary spoke when Elizabeth greeted her. Read Luke 1:47-55

It is a beautiful poem full of faith and OT allusions. Mary knew the Scriptures

When Mary heard the message of the angel she was able to understand it and see how it fitted into Y's plan. The child to sit on the throne of King David would be the God sent Saviour, the promised Messiah.

In our getting ready for Christmas let us prepare ourselves, as well as our presents and our pantries.

The promises that Mary knew and believed, are still true for each one of us:

- God's steadfast love for each of us,
- Promises of His good plans for our lives
- Promises of forgiveness and God's presence with us day by day.

The invitation which **we** receive is to welcome the Lord Jesus into our hearts and lives this Christmas.

How can we welcome Him?

We don't welcome him as a baby who needs caring for as Mary did. We celebrate His birth!

For us to truly welcome Him today we welcome him as our leader, our teacher, our Saviour and our King.

Mary was a faithful Jewish girl who was willing to believe in a great God and to co-operate with Him. That is what Y' is looking for in us.

Are we believing in His goodness? Are we willing to be guided by Him in our daily life?

The Lord our God may not speak to us through an angel, or in a dream. The important thing is not the way He speaks to us. The important thing is how do we respond to His invitation. Will we welcome him, yes or no? Mary is a good example of a true disciple.

Whatever Mary felt, she knew that the best way to live is to fit in with God's plan. She heard Y's invitation and exercised her choice by saying "Yes!" "I am the Lord's servant," she said, "May it be to me as you have said."

I love the JB Philips translation, of Mary's words,

"I belong to the Lord, body & soul, let it happen as you say."

That is how I want to respond to God's invitation today and each day in the New Year.

Prayer

Lord God,

Help me to know and to love you more and more each day.

Help me as I respond to your invitation to welcome you this Christmas time and to play the part in your work that you are calling me to. **Amen**