DAY 6

LUKE 1:26–38

In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, 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 conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him 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 Jacob's descendants 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 on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called 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 unable to conceive is in her sixth month. For no word from God will ever fail."

"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." Then the angel left her.

With the angelic proclamation "Greetings, you who are highly favored!" we have our first introduction to Mary in Luke's Gospel. Because of this lofty declaration, we often think of Mary as the model of obedience, the picture of a perfect follower of God.

Now to be sure, being selected to bear the Son of God is indeed a high honor, but the extraordinary thing about Mary was that she was so ordinary. Living in a small village, not in the religious center of Jerusalem, she was a girl in a culture that valued age and men. She later calls herself poor and lowly.

God chooses Mary because she has nothing. When she asks, "How will this be?," it is a practical question. She's old enough to know how this works and knows that there's a step missing in the process. Mary discovers what all Christians must learn. When God calls us, we are not capable of accomplishing the task on our own. Only God can provide what we need. Through miraculous intervention, Mary goes from unwed virgin to the mother of the Christ child.

By embracing her calling, Mary becomes a partner with God in bringing the Kingdom here on earth. Without God's intervention, Mary could not become pregnant. Without Mary as a human mother, Jesus could not be born as one of us. This is God's design, for us to work together to give life to the Kingdom here on earth.

God's call transforms us from people who are incapable on our own to those for whom, with God's help, nothing is impossible. We, like Mary, have been chosen by God, not because of anything we have or have done, but because God wants to have a relationship with us. We are indeed highly favored.

REFLECT

How have you felt incapable or inadequate to do what God has called you to do? Have you ever witnessed God's miraculous provision when you chose to follow His calling? How might the concept of partnering with God help us fulfill the Advent Conspiracy tenents to Give More and Love All?

PRAY

God, who calls and provides, may I recognize the gifts you have given me and remember how truly favored I am. Help me to listen closely for your calling and to be quick to obey, even when I don't fully understand the whys and the hows. During this season of Advent, help me to use the unique gifts you have given me to breathe life into your Kingdom on earth, both now and all year long. Amen.