

Luke 1: 26-38

The angel Gabriel spoke to Mary, a virgin, and told her that God would come upon her. She would become pregnant with a boy, whose name was to be Jesus. He would be the son of God.

I cannot improve upon the story. No example will illustrate it. It tells of something unlike anything else that ever happened. If you don't believe it, Christianity is more or less a lie. If you do, Jesus is God and Savior.

God breaks open the bounds of the possible. Can such a thing happen – an angel announcing a non-sexual conception? The Bible is not interested in that question.

So Gabriel appears to Mary and greets her with words of gracious announcement: “Hail, O favored one, the Lord is with you.” God has chosen her to be the mother of Jesus, who is God. That the Lord is with her is a statement of fact that prepares Mary for a service that is the most remarkable God-getting-involved-with-us event since the creation itself. History is about to turn on what Gabriel announces to Mary.

Mary was confused and afraid. The angel calms her: “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.”

Now the announcement that surely could never have been anticipated: “Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.” The God-given name of the child means ‘the LORD saves.’ And the angel gives the divinely conceived child the most remarkable title: “He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High.” His identity is established. He is not to be a holy man who aspires to godliness. He is not to be a great religious leader. Rather he is one in being with God.

He is God with us, God for us, the very sign and actuality of God's truth and purpose. The birth of Jesus *as God* means that God is revealed concretely and specifically in and as the child whose conception is here told. The child of this conception is the hinge on which all other truth will turn, the beginning and the end. He will sit on "the throne of his father David;" "and of his kingdom there will be no end."

Biology meets its boundary in the face of biology's creator. "How can this be?" Mary asks. Adam is reborn. "The Holy Spirit will come upon you" – the angel's words echo the story of creation when the Holy Spirit moved upon the formless void. This is now no longer the old creation continuing, but a new creation. Nature's God acts upon creation in sovereign freedom to do a new thing.

Old creation, creation apart from Christ, cannot understand what has happened. The law of the old order has been opened up beyond what was and is possible for nature. God who created reproductive biology is not himself subject to reproductive biology.

If creation is the first act of God on his own terms, the second creation, the conception and birth of Jesus, his son, is the second. A new creation and therefore a new future is announced and made actual. The story means what it says: God entered into the world and took our birth in order to be our way home to God.

Let us pray

Our Father in heaven, as you sent the Holy Spirit to come upon Mary, that she would conceive and give birth to Jesus, we pray that we too may be bearers of your Spirit. Let

us, with Mary, be willing and faithful servants of the Lord. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.