

*Merry Christmas from Sugar Hill Church*  
**Family Devotions for December 20, 2017**

**PEACE AND LIGHT**

Luke 1:26-38

Like a movie, there are many scenes surrounding the story of Jesus' birth, but the spotlight shines most brilliantly on a humble, whitewashed stucco home in Nazareth. Inside, a young lady named Mary busies herself at a loom. She is weaving fabrics for the new home she and her husband, Joseph, the village carpenter, will share after their marriage.

Suddenly she is aware of a presence and, glancing up, notices a stranger standing before her. Since visitors do not knock in first-century Palestine, but simply step inside and call the name of the person they wish to see, finding someone has entered the home would not be a surprise. But in this case, here is someone dressed in white, with clothes that seem to light up, whose first words astound her: "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you" (v. 28).

Mary is startled, she displays remarkable calm, mixed with an understandable amount of fear. Gabriel continues, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God" (v. 30). Then he says, "And now, you will have a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end" (vv. 31-33).

Mary, understanding the importance of Gabriel's message, responds, "How can this be?" (v. 34). She does not doubt what the angel is saying; she just wants more information.

Because Mary believes Gabriel, the angel immediately gives her a beautiful and mysterious answer: "the power of the Most high will overshadow you" (v. 35).

Maybe Mary takes a minute to think what Gabriel is telling her. How does Mary answer? "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word" (v. 38). Identifying herself with the lowest level of society, Mary responds as an obedient servant.

Mary is alone at this moment. nobody else knows what she knows, not even Joseph, who has yet to hear from Gabriel. At some point Mary must have felt very lonely and isolated. How would she explain all of this to others- especially Joseph? Yet in Mary's loneliness, Immanuel- "God with us"-will make his home. The entire Christmas story is about strengthening the weak, freeing the oppressed, befriending the lonely. God loves and raises these lowly ones up to do his work in the world.

The Christmas message is a call to embrace a God who identifies with the weak and oppressed, the empty and lonely, the outcast and vulnerable. We confess with Mary-in faith, hope, and love- that "the Mighty One has done great things for me" (v. 49).

God does much of his work with powerless people whose lives the world considers impossible. Yet the message is not mainly about justice, equality, or social status. Rather, it is a word about God bringing salvation to all those who have come to a dead end in life and recognize their helplessness. God has not forgotten his promise

to show them his mercy. Behold, Love has appeared, curled up quietly in the manger behind the Inn that had no room.

Make sure that there is room in your heart for Jesus this Christmas.

Let your prayer be: "Jesus, I want to make room for you in my life. I don't want to just make room for you, I want you to take total control of my life. In the powerful name of Jesus, AMEN."