A few weeks ago, a friend of mine posted a status on her *Facebook* page announcing that she is expecting her first child comes next summer. Well, as you would imagine, she received hundreds of “likes” and many congratulatory comments from all of her friends on her *Facebook* page.

Nowadays it seems more and more announcements (whether official or unofficial) are being made first through social media such as *Facebook* or *Twitter* than through the traditional media such as the TV, radio, newspaper, or how about sending someone a postcard, a letter or even meeting up face-to-face to let someone know of a news? Modern technology has certainly impacted how we receive the news and how we communicate or keep in touch with one another. Everything is now much faster and can reach a much broader audience or viewers than ever before.

In our text today, Mary was also hit with an announcement when she was surprisingly visited by an angel. An angel was really the “messenger” from God. The angel Gabriel made a personal appearance to Mary announcing that she was about to be conceived with a child. I’m sure for Mary, this came totally out of the blue. She wasn’t ready for this at all. *“You mean, what’s gonna happen to me? You’ve gotta be kidding me? How in the world could this be?”*

This “surprise” announcement apparently wasn’t made just to Mary, but to everyone in this world as well because this child was to be born as the King, the Messiah, the Savior for all humanity. The announcement of the Savior’s birth carried much greater impact and deeper consequences than *Facebook, Twitter* or the Internet*.* This angelic proclamation was the BIG announcement that many have been waiting for, for thousands of years.

Last week, we sang the song that Mary sang *Magnificat*, upon her hearing of the word from the angel. This must had been a frightening moment for this unwedded teenage girl, to find out that she was pregnant with a child. How in this world can this happen? Mary could’ve been ostracized by the community, disowned by her family including her engaged fiancée, or perhaps even be stoned to death for committing an act of adultery.

But when the angel appeared before Mary, she took everything into strides and did not panic. She cherished everything in her heart, as the angel revealed God’s plan of salvation for humanity upon her and that she has found favor in God’s sight. But what did she do to deserve such honored recognition, and to be the bearer of God’s Son. She was just an ordinary teenage girl, not coming from any particular wealthy family nor was her fiancée husband. Nevertheless, Mary deserved a great deal of credit for her bravery, courage and maturity in handling all of this. Through this mysterious happening, she was able to overcome her fear with her faith, *“for nothing is impossible with God.”*

Upon her encounter with the angel, Mary was described by the Gospel writer as someone with mixed emotions. She was **“favored or blessed by God,** but yet **perplexed and afraid.”** She was “**thoughtful but yet disbelieved.”** But who could really blame her? Many of us would’ve felt the same way also if we were in a similar situation as Mary’s.

God chose Mary not because of her credential but because of her potential and her availability to be used by God. She was faithful and obedient to whatever God asked of her to do. She was willing to take the plunge into this great risk of the unknown with a giant leap of faith. She didn’t want any of the elite title of being chosen as the “favored” or the “blessed” mother of the Messiah child either.

Normally when we say someone is “favored”, it is often assumed that the favor is earned by one’s good behavior or one’s good deeds or giving. This kind of “favor” was reciprocal that you do certain things for someone and you get something back in return. But in this case, Mary’s proclamation of being a “favored” one was NOT reciprocal at all. In fact, it was quite the opposite.

God deemed Mary a “favored” one even though she has NOTHING to offer back, except of herself. She was as innocent as a dove (or in this case as a virgin). She was untainted by the worldly influences and pleasures. In the *Magnificat* song, she would only identify herself as simply “lowly and poor” (1:47-55). This was a momentous occasion in the history of God’s plan for humanity, although it may not seemed much at the time. God’s dramatic reversal of justice in this coming kingdom was about to begin a new chapter, with this Divine visit by the angel to this lowly undeserving “servant” girl. Mary cherished all of that and understood that her life, as well as the whole world’s, was about to be re-arranged and flipped upside down.[[1]](#footnote-1) A new era had begun and this was all an expression of God’s love for humanity. ***For God so LOVED the world, that He GAVE his only begotten Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life****.*

This was God’s act of “Loving” and “Giving” to the world, even though we do not deserve such love and such gift. God didn’t have to do all of this, but God chose us and loved us as His own.

It seems as though a lot of what we read in our passage today doesn’t make much common sense at all? An angel appeared out of no-where; an elderly woman was 6 months pregnant; and a virgin was conceived by the Holy Spirit and about to give birth?….Well, it appears as though a lot of things that are happening in our world today don’t seem to make much sense either. The world is not at peace and the night was not “silent”. Nevertheless, God’s presence and God’s love still exist even under these unexpected and unconventional circumstances.

God challenges us to see things beyond what we can perceive through our own eyes. We need to see things beyond what they appear on surface. In order the find, understand and appreciate LOVE, we must dig deeper into the core and peel off layers of grievances, pains and heartaches as we see. Each day young and innocent lives all around us are being lost because of personal vengeance and self-motivated interest. They get caught up in the belligerent warfare that led to too much bloodshed and tears. The economic and social disparities continue to further decay in our human-to-human relationship. Hatred and violence are still rampant across the land. We don’t need to look far to hear or to see all of these. They’re happening even right here in our own backyard. It would be irresponsible for us to choose to ignore them, if we say that they don’t affect us at all….well they do!!

Nevertheless, in spite of all of these social upheavals and civil unrests, our sovereign God declares that **God is still in control**. God remains the One who rules and supersedes all things.  **What the world needs is more evidence of God’s love and peace at work among us and less hatred and war.**

We trust that in spite of the desperate and hopeless situations, God’s miracles are still happening every day. Lives are still being transformed by the goodness of the people’s hearts and their faithfulness as a result of God’s grace and mercy. God is still with us today. Emmanuel!

On this last Sunday of the Advent season, it’s very easy for us to look beyond the manger….of what led up to this point. Nothing happened by coincidence. Events that led up to the birth of our Savior were carefully choreographed because of God’s love and promise for humanity. Over the next few days, as we make our final preparations towards yet another Christmas, may we once again pause to reflect upon the goodness and the love of God in our lives. **Christmas matters, Christ matters!**

May Mary’s response to God’s calling be echoed throughout our lives, as we listen to God’s invitations to dream dreams and stretch our imagination beyond the shining star and the manger.

God has called us to be His incarnated Word and be the witnesses to the world that is still full of darkness. God chooses to encounter those who are faithful and obedient through the changing lives of God’s people every day. God embraces us to reflect upon God’s goodness and love through our Messiah Christ-child.

***“Here am I, the servant of the Lord; Let it be with me according to your Word.”[[2]](#footnote-2)*** Let it be! Let it be! In the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, Amen.

1. Cleere, Ashley Cook *Feasting on the Word, Year B, Volume 1, p.96* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Luke 1:38* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)