

Luke 1:26-38

Risking everything for God

Mary has an encounter with a heavenly visitor who brings unsettling news. The conversation that follows launches Mary into life-changing decisions, which she accepts willingly.



Bible notes



The visit of the angel to Mary is recorded in only two of the Gospels: Matthew and Luke. The story is well known and central to every nativity play. But what is happening? One possibility is that Luke chapters 1-2 (the announcement and birth of John the Baptist and of Jesus) and Luke 24 (the resurrection stories) were written to 'bookend' the main Gospel account. So, what might they have in common that leads to this conclusion? Well, both feature angelic messengers. In Luke 24, Jesus is not initially recognised on the road to Emmaus; his birth was in many ways anonymous too (the story of his public presence and ministry begins many years later). But, above all, they are both accounts of new life, of the renewing and resurrection of Israel and the people of God by God's action. In Luke 1:26-38, God acts in way that seems to be impossible to us. In Luke 1, it is not just the greatness of God, but the willingness of Elizabeth and especially Mary, to risk all for God by their faithfulness, fulfilling a potentially difficult and demanding role. We see a God who acts and faithful people who are willing to rise to what God asks of them. Sometimes, we just need to allow ourselves to say 'Yes' to God. their consciences, to consider how this works out in practice. God can use whoever, or whatever, is necessary to achieve his purposes. God can work through the emperor just as he worked through Cyrus in today's Isaiah passage. Being the people of God entails joining in with what God is doing.

LOOK



Explore these paintings of the Annunciation: <https://canvas.nma.art/2020/11/18/the-annunciation-in-art-a-story-about-inspiration/> and play the song 'Gabriel's Message' as you reflect on what it would have been like for Mary to respond to Gabriel's message. <https://open.spotify.com/track/4CRoubzmGrSVwliENRIUEn?si=28a839bceb5f47bf>

First impressions

- What do you think Mary's experience of meeting an angel was really like?
- What did Mary risk when she said 'Yes' to God?
- What are you prepared to risk for God or God's plans?



Write



Listen to 'Mary Did You Know', Pentatonix. <https://open.spotify.com/track/4z8sz6E4YyFuEkv5o7IjNi> As you reflect on the song, the reading, and the risks Mary was willing to take for God in accepting his plan, find a blank Christmas card and write a letter to God expressing your thoughts. What do you feel God is asking of you? What are you willing to risk? Put the card in an envelope, seal it and hide somewhere in your Christmas tree as a reminder of the conversation you've had with God today.

A prayer

Lord, let us feel your steadfast love,
and sing your praises this Christmas time.
Let us proclaim to our friends and family how great you are.
Let us see the power of the baby in the cradle.
Let us say 'Yes, let it be' this Christmas time. Amen.

Pray 

The fourth candle on your Advent wreath may signify **love**. Light all four candles and reflect on the love of God that sent his Son Jesus to be born as a baby to bring salvation. The fifth candle can be lit on Christmas Day.



Enjoy a game of Jenga™. As you build the tower, talk about the characters in the nativity story. As you begin to remove the bricks, talk about the risks involved for each person, and especially Mary. If/when the tower collapses, remember Mary's response to Gabriel: 'Let it be with me according to your word'. Are there areas in your life where you need to 'let it be'?