



Luke 1.26-38

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, 'Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you.' But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear 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 for ever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.' Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I am a virgin?' The angel said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.' Then Mary said, 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.' Then the angel departed from her.

Thought:

If you think back over your life, I expect you can identify a moment – perhaps more than one moment – which changed everything. A moment when you made a decision which set you on a quite new and unexpected course. There are times in life when you just have to say yes, to embark on a new adventure – you probably don't really know where it's going to lead you; all you know is that things will never be the same again.

Such a moment came to Mary in the passage from the first chapter of Luke's Gospel which we're thinking about today. When the message came to her from the angel she wasn't being asked to do anything. She just had to be available ("Here I am"): open to God's surprising eruption into her life. She just had to believe that God truly loved her ("you have found favour with God"); she just had to allow God to work through her. All she had to do was to say "yes" (or as the Mary in our nativity play a few years ago responded to the angel's extraordinary invitation: "OK"). Mary just has to say "OK": but that yes, that OK, changed her whole life and also unlocked the whole of God's plan for our salvation.

Just say “yes”. So easy, and yet often so difficult. I would probably have said “yes, but”, and raised all sorts of problems and objections (as Moses did when God asked him to lead his people out of slavery in Egypt). Look here, Lord, there must be some mistake: I’m not up to it, it’s really not my sort of thing, can’t you find someone else?

Or I might try and put things off: “yes, but not yet”. There just are some very important things I need to get on with in the next few months; there isn’t really a slot in my diary. So can we come back to this a bit later?

Or I might try to do a deal with God: “yes, if”. But God doesn’t do deals. He calls, and the answer has to be plain yes or no.

What then was the key to Mary’s positive response? I think it was trust. She was startled (“don’t be afraid”, said the angel), she was “perplexed”, she “pondered”, but she said yes even though she really had no idea what she was getting herself into. She trusted that God really did love her, that he knew what he was about, that he would not let her down, that he would support her in all the challenges that lay ahead. She trusted in the leading and the strengthening of his Holy Spirit who would continue to “overshadow” her.

So, thank God, Mary had the courage to say “yes”. And because of her yes, “all generations have called her blessed.”

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