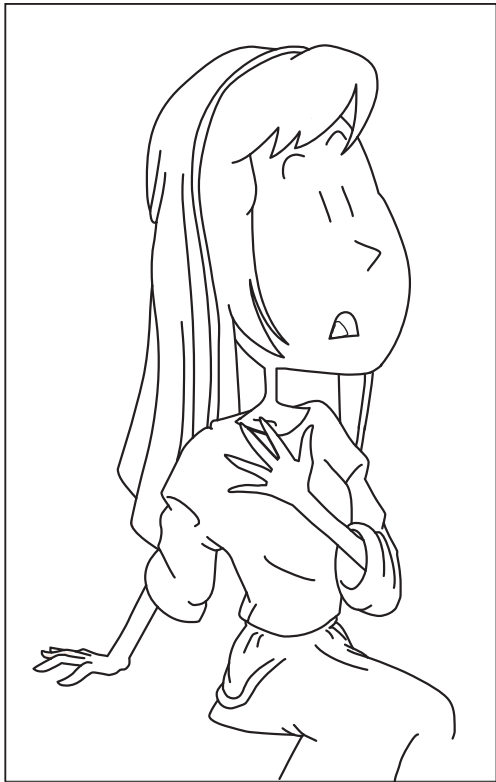


An angel visits Mary



Colour me!



Luke 1:26-38

God's promise to Zechariah came true and his wife Elizabeth became pregnant. They would have a son who would be later known as "John the Baptist". In the meantime...

One month later God sent the angel Gabriel to the town of Nazareth in Galilee with a message for a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to Joseph from the family of King David. The angel greeted Mary and said, "You are truly blessed! The Lord is with you."

Mary was confused by the angel's words and wondered what they meant. Then the angel told Mary, "Don't be afraid! God is pleased with you, and you will have a son. His name will be Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of God Most High. The Lord God will make him king, as his ancestor David was. He will rule the people of Israel for ever, and his kingdom will never end."

Mary asked the angel, "How can this happen? I am not married!"

The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come down to you, and God's power will come over you. So your child will be called the holy Son of God. Your relative Elizabeth is also going to have a son, even though she is old. No one thought she could ever have a baby, but in three months she will have a son. Nothing is impossible for God!"

Mary said, "I am the Lord's servant! Let it happen as you have said."

And the angel left her.

Commentary

What a surprising way for God to step into the world! Everyone longed for God to appear and put things right, but no one expected that it would involve a very ordinary young woman from an insignificant village in the poor north of a powerless country in the Middle East. God, who is called 'the most high' by the angel, chooses to send Jesus as a vulnerable, tiny baby to be brought up by a peasant family. No wonder Mary is overwhelmed. Even the angel seems awed by what God is about to do as he addresses Mary as 'truly blessed'.

Unlike Zechariah six months before, Mary doesn't doubt the angel; she is simply intrigued to know how she could have a son without a father. The answer is that this will be a miraculous birth in which God's Holy Spirit is at work. Mary's 'yes' is all that God needs, and it is on this that the rescue of the whole world depends. Heaven must have held its breath, waiting to hear what Mary would say to the angel; but this is how God always works, waiting for us to open our hearts to his plans for us and others. This is what can change everything.

Questions

- ▶ Do you think the angel was as surprised as Mary by the fact that God had chosen her?
- ▶ Why do you think the angel had to say to Mary, "Don't be afraid"?
- ▶ What would this baby do, according to Gabriel's words?
- ▶ How was Mary reassured by Gabriel?
- ▶ Mary's 'yes' to God was so important. How might we say 'yes' to God today?



Visual aid

Find a photo from the internet of a family living in a small one-room house in a very poor part of the world. Use it to remind you of the sort of place where Mary would have lived.



Activity idea

Talk about some famous movies where superheroes or international organizations 'save the world', and wonder together about how many other ways God might have chosen to put the world right. What does this teach us about what God is like?



Prayer idea

God's solution to the mess that human beings had made of our world wasn't a clever business plan, a super strong army or a smart piece of technology, but a God-shaped baby called Jesus. Cut out some headlines from a newspaper about the ways in which our world is not the best it can be, and then place a picture of a baby (or perhaps a small baby doll) in the middle as you pray about those things. Let the baby be a focus to remind you of God's surprising way of responding to the problems around us.

Key verse

Nothing is impossible for God (Luke 1:37).

Old Testament story link

Isaiah 9:6-7: Isaiah predicts the coming of a special baby to save the world.



Colour me!

