

## Light of the World - Chapter 2

### The Promise of Potential

Text: Luke 1:26-56

This chapter examines the encounter of Mary with the angel Gabriel (vv. 26-38), her visit to her cousin Elizabeth (vv.39-45), and her “song” in response to the news of her pregnancy and the significance of the child she was bearing, known as the Magnificat (vv.46-56).

Mary’s name has symbolic value. She reminds us of Miriam, the sister of Moses, who is remembered as a poet, prophet, and protector. While we remember Mary primarily as the mother of Jesus, she is also a poet, prophet, and protector.

We do not know the details of Mary’s background. “When we do not have the details and want to know more, we tell stories. Such stories and others about Mary resemble Midrash, Jewish storytelling that fills in the gaps...Good stories always give rise to more stories.”

The Bible, by telling and repeating stories, taps into human imagination and speaks to our deepest desires and longings as well as entertaining, instructing, inspiring, and astounding as it does in the story of the Annunciation.

Those who dismiss the Nativity stories as “mythological claptrap” have missed the main point. Luke’s story is not primarily about the conception of Jesus but rather “about divine care and human potential, about how we are all children of God and can therefore do God’s will, about the difficult choices we must make, about our memories and our goals.” Nothing is impossible for God (v. 37).

Elizabeth to Mary: God has blessed you above all women, and has blessed the child you carry (v. 42). This is the first use of the word blessed in Luke’s Gospel and it will be repeated again by Elizabeth, by Mary herself, by Simeon upon seeing the baby Jesus, and then frequently by Jesus. The story of the meeting between Mary and Elizabeth is one of both joy and blessing.

“Mary’s Magnificat, together with her words to Gabriel and Elizabeth’s words to her, explains why she should be blessed, even to Protestants. She was able to receive the angel’s words with both humility and grace. We see through her prayer, the Magnificat, that her focus is not on herself; it is on the mighty acts of God.”