

Speaking of Jesus: Advent Reflections on Hope
St. David's By the Sea, Cocoa Beach, FL
Session 1: Conversations with an Angel

Gabriel

- **A glimpse into the Scripturally revealed nature of angels**
 - Outside human time
 - Angels (like demons) had one central choice, and all other actions remain along that trajectory (Isaiah 14)
 - Not omniscient
 - Beings who watch the grand sweep of redemption history with “longing” (I Peter 1:12)
 - Fellow servants of God with us (Rev. 22:8)
 - We join with them as they sing “holy, holy holy” around throne of God.
 - Spirits who minister to us
 - “Ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation.” (Hebrews 1:14)
 - They are personal beings—Scriptures reveal the names and functions of two angels:
 - Michael, the warrior archangel, (Daniel, Jude and Revelation)
 - Gabriel, the interpreting angel sent by God to interpret God’s purposes and comfort God’s people (Daniel 8:15-17)
- *What difference would it make that these characteristics are true of Gabriel?*

Zechariah

- Priest called upon on an “ordinary” day to offer incense in the temple of the Lord.
 - Petitions of God’s people outside billow up like the incense before the Lord in his temple.
 - Zechariah had ceased to petition the Lord for the most personal ache in his life: he and his wife, Elizabeth, were childless.

- Gabriel appears
 - “Don’t be afraid”

 - “Your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son...”
 - John
 - Joy and gladness at his birth → Great before the Lord
 - Nazirite vows (Samson in Judges 13)
 - Filled with Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb
 - Forerunner in the spirit and power of Elijah (Malachi 4)

 - Zechariah: How shall I know this?
 - “Blameless in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord”
 - What is “this”?
 - Hope of the Messiah coming?
 - Hope that there will be a forerunner to the Messiah” (Eschatological hope—Hope of things to come.)
 - “I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years.”
 - I quit praying that prayer a long time ago—dead dream—tangible hope has died.

 - Gabriel: Silent because you did not believe
 - Events will occur as Gabriel has said
 - Is silence a punishment or mercy?

Mary

- 6 months later, another visit with Gabriel
 - Not to temple in Jerusalem, but to a little town in the backwater of Galilee.
 - To Bethlehem, “the city of bread”
 - Alone

- Mary’s favor with God
 - Charitōō “to divine show grace, to bless”
 - Lk 1:28, Eph. 1:6
 - God did not choose a beautiful maid. He took a maid and made her beautiful.
 - “Do not be afraid, for you have found favor with God.”

 - Son of the most high
 - “God is full of grace in an active sense, as he who fills with grace; Mary, and after her every other person, is full of grace in a passive sense, as she who is *filled* with grace. In between them is the mediator, Jesus Christ, who is ‘full of grace’ in both the active and passive sense: as God and head of the Church, he gives grace and as man, he is filled with Father’s grace, and he increases in grace (Lk 2:52)” (Raniero Contalamessa, *Mary, Mirror of the Church*, 17).

 - Son of David (2 Samuel 7:12)—throw off alien dominion, purge the city, subdue the Gentiles and establish righteousness
 - Deliverance for Israel after the pattern of the historical David (TDNT, 1224)

 - Reign forever, a kingdom with no end (Daniel 2:44)

- In contrast to Zechariah, Mary has never prayed this prayer
 - All is forward looking for Mary
 - “How will this be?”

- Gabriel's explanation
 - All will be done for you—the Holy Spirit will overshadow you (Is. 7:14)
 - Gives her a human mentor who will understand what God is doing.

- Gives Mary an opportunity to respond without much of a prompt.
 - Her response is decisive in reversing the curse.
 - (Treading on the serpent's head)
 - Early church → 2nd Eve
 - Fiat: "It is so, may it be so."

Gabriel as God's messenger/interpreter/comforter

- He announces the redemption of unmet personal hopes
 - "It will be well with me."
- He announces the open-ended life of complete surrender.
 - "Nothing is impossible with God."

Where does your heart need encouragement this Advent?

*What does the divine gift of hope look like when your dreams have died?
 What does divine hope look like when the future is completely unsettled?*