

Reflection 1

I can only imagine what may have been going through Mary's mind with the appearance of an angel to tell her that she would give birth to **God's** Son! Just a visit from an *angel* could have been a challenge to her faith since special revelation from God may not have been a common occurrence in her day. No wonder *she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be.* (cf. Luke 1:29)

She might have been thinking "Why me?" After all, there were countless women God could have chosen to be the mother of His Son. Women who were older and more experienced with raising children. Maybe a more well-to-do woman who could give Him everything He needed and really deserved as **God's** Son. And wouldn't it be better to pick someone who is already married to avoid so much scandal connected with being an "unwed mother?" Sure she was legally pledged to be married to Joe (cf. Luke 2:5) but that in itself would be a challenge all it's own! "What am I going to tell Joe?"

Even in the midst of being *greatly troubled* Mary responds with: *Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.* (cf. Luke 1:38) She responds in faith, trusting God's word of promise concerning God's plan

to save His people through her Son, Whom she would name Jesus, meaning “He saves.” The Holy Spirit gives faith through the Gospel to trust, even in the midst of being *greatly troubled*, having doubts and a message which doesn’t make logical sense.

It took a Holy Spirit wrought faith in order to receive the angel’s message because promises attached to this Child were extraordinary! He would *be great and . . . be called the Son of the Most High . . . holy . . . the Son of God?* He would *reign over the house of Jacob forever* as the King of Israel? His kingdom would last forever and ever? And all this as a result of a miraculous conception and virgin birth? (cf. Luke 1:31-33)

Roman 1:16 says *the gospel . . . is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes*. We are gathered here tonight because the Holy Spirit has worked the same faith in our hearts through the Gospel. God’s promises are fulfilled in Jesus, the Christ! So we respond with the words of Mary’s song, the Magnificat, through which she gave expression of her faith. Let’s sing it together as printed on page 933 in your hymnal.

RESPONSE: “My Soul Rejoices” (Mary’s Song—the Magnificat)

**# 933**

## Reflection 2

*No place for them?* “No room in the inn?” How could there not be any room? If the President of the United States were to show up in a foreign country they would make room. If a foreign dignitary was looking for a place to stay on one of the busiest traveling weekends of the year someone would make room. So then . . . why is it that when God was about to enter into the lives of His people there’s no room? Couldn’t someone in that little town have given up their bed for the evening . . . I mean, if not for the Son of God then at least for a pregnant woman who’s about to give birth?

Who knew? Who knew Mary was giving birth to the **Son of God** except Mary and Joseph? Only those to whom it had been revealed by the LORD’s special revelation! As the song goes: “How silently, how silently The wondrous gift is giv’n!” (LSB 361:3) Things were so busy with the census in Bethlehem that there really was no place for them to stay. This little town was probably bustling with so many people who had returned for this registration that houses were full and guest rooms were packed. While it probably was not very silent in Bethlehem the gift of Jesus was given in the silent ignorance of His divine identity.

But what if they had known? What if they knew who it was looking for a

place to stay? Would they have made room? Would they have willingly and graciously made room for the Son of God?

One of the most powerful lines of that hymn, “O Little Town of Bethlehem” can be found in the first verse: “The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.” (LSB 361:3) The birth of Christ carries with it the hope of humanity—freedom from slavery to sin in a life which is so messed up and sordid. The birth of Christ also carries with it the greatest fear of humanity: What will happen when God visits His sinful, broken creation? This broken world can’t make room for its Creator because the guilt of sin drives them away.

But . . . but . . . who could’ve known that God was in their midst? Who could’ve known Who was about to be born to this teenage virgin and her hard-working fiancé? Who could have known that on this night the hopes of mankind would be fulfilled by the birth of a child? That the light of the world which enlightens all people would appear on this night? That the King of kings would be born in this most unlikely of places? That God would humble Himself to this tiny little village? There was no room for this child because humanity was unprepared for how God would reveal Himself. John 1:11 says Jesus *came to His own, and His own people did not receive Him*. The guilt of sin drives people far away from the gift of grace.

In this moment we see our hope resting in the arms of a loving mother and father. Neither of them was prepared according to worldly standards to make room for the Son of God. However, through faith they simply trusted God's promise and the Holy Spirit made room for His presence.

The Holy Spirit prepares your heart and life to celebrate the birth of Christ with His gift of faith which you receive through His Word and Sacraments. He empowers you to face your sin and repent so that when you look at this Christ-child in a feeding trough you see God visiting His people to save them. Through the eyes of faith this apparent insignificant event becomes the fulfillment of all history. You too encounter the glory of God entering into this broken world. The Savior of the world has taken on your humanity, to bear your every sin, your every temptation and your every trial. You stand forgiven in the presence of God forever as you trust in Jesus as your Savior **from sin**. There is room for Jesus in the hearts and lives of all people through faith! Amen.