

“A Visit from Gabriel”
2nd Sunday of Advent – Peace
Honoring Mother Mary as Co-Creator with God
Communion Sunday
Virtual Liturgy
December 6, 2020
Advent Theme:
“Still Connected as We Prepare Ye The Way of The Lord”
Rev. Floren“Tino” C. Cordova, Pastor
Iao United Church of Christ

Romans 16:25-27

Luke 1:26-38

**Poem “Mary The Mother of Jesus” adapted from All
Poetry.com**

*“With tears and fears
I hear the angel's every word;
and it appears I am with child
chosen to deliver the Messiah from on high.*

*I adore my Lord, and know God's by my side
yet I sight and wonder;
will society be kind, or will they be blind
by knowledge unknown.*

*Being with child, fears and cares flood my heart;
will Joseph understand, and still take my hand,
or will he turn away,
and never be my man as planned?*

*God knows my fears
God knows Joseph cares;
and will share God's love for me and the child I will bear.*

God assures me, my fears and tears will flee.

*This first Christmas morn in a manger
my child is born;*

I knew He is no stranger

*He is the Messiah the promised one
who won my heart, right from the start!*

*In the stable I cuddle my baby
holding Him tight with all my might*

for I knew; on this Holy Night

He is sent with love

from heaven above, to save His people.

*Mary a mother so blessed, tested by faith
chosen by God to bear God's Son.*

*From heaven above all nestled in hay
our Savior come on this first Christmas day.”*

Change comes – Amen Church? When we least expect it, Gabriel comes to us with some news and change happens. You see beloved church – this was an intimate moment between Mary and Gabriel. And rightly so that Mary questions Gabriel – “how can this be, since I am a virgin?” A visit from an angel, a brush of wind from the Holy Spirit – change happens. Sometimes we create our own change. Sometimes God opens a door for us that leads to change. The problem with change is how long do we wait for

change to happen? How many meetings, how many committees do we need to create before we step through that open door?

As we all journey through this time of pandemic, it is fitting to hear what children think about angels. At age 5 Gregory says – “I only know the names of two angels – Hark and Harold.”

At age 9, Olivia believes we have it all wrong. “Angels don’t wear halos anymore. I forget why, but scientists are working on it.” Yes Olivia, scientists have been working hard to come up with a vaccine for covid19 and that is something to be hopeful for this year.

At age 9, Matthew believes “It’s not easy to become an angel! First, you die. Then you go to heaven, and then there is still the flight training to go through. And then you got to agree to wear those angel clothes.” So, for Matthew, there is some training and some agreements that need to occur about wearing angel clothing. Maybe in our time, part of this clothing might include a fast mask and maybe doing some social distancing.

A year such as this, many have lost loved ones because of either this covid19 virus or other illnesses. Many of us can probably relate to Katelynn, age 9 who says – “My angel is my

grandma who died last year. She got a big head start on helping me while she was still down here on earth.”

You see beloved community – from the mouths of children such as Katelynn, they remind us that in our midst – we have angels that have given us a head start. We have angels like Gabriel who guide us, console us, comfort us, tell us to trust in God and “be not afraid.” As we are led by example – so too should we also lead by the same example on getting a head start in being an angel to someone in need. Here today, especially during this time of a pandemic. Guiding, consoling our children so that they can see and feel how angels of God are sent with messages of hope, and of love.

Today, Gabriel reminds us that God sends advocates – God sends messages even to people we least expect. A typical young woman – betrothed to a local carpenter – a carpenter from the house – from the “House Church” of David. One would assume that as was the custom of that time – neither Mary nor Joseph had any say in the matter or in the arrangements. How many cows or donkeys were promised for Mary is unknown. Nazareth was a small village so it is likely that Mary and Joseph knew each other which would be different than many arranged marriages.

The engagement, the betrothal typically lasted a year before the bonds of marriage ceremony was performed. If for instance, Joseph would die within this year, Mary would have been considered a widow – but this was not the case. Within the year of betrothal – change happens – the unforeseen happens – God’s plan continued to unfold as foretold from the Old Testament and prophecies of the prophets like Isaiah. The word of God spoken into existence in John. God’s promise comes to Mary through the voice of an angel. We have seen many images – watched many movies on how Gabriel came to Mary. In this passage in Luke, it is unclear as to the time of the day. We just know it is the sixth month. In any case – imagine how startled Mary might have been and how justified she was in questioning the word and will of God. You spring something like this on me Gabriel and I am going to ask questions – and not just that Gabriel, I want proof! What is Gabriel’s response? “Okay Mary – how about this – Elizabeth, your cousin, who is said to be barren is six months pregnant.” Nothing is impossible with God – Amen and praise be to God! “Do not be afraid” – in her humanness and in ours – yes she probably was afraid, and yes, we probably would be too. Here is the key beloved Iao Church – because of her acceptance, because of her

“yes” – she not only found favor with God – her “yes” made her a co-creator with God. When all was said and done – Gabriel’s comfort and assurances to Mary created a new song in her heart. She was so ecstatic that God would choose her, a peasant woman, to bring forth the Messiah the savior of the world. She was so excited that her voice could not stop singing as we read in Luke 1:46-55 – “My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for God looked with favor on the lowliness of God’s servant.”

Beloved Iao Church, beloved brothers and sisters in our virtual world – we all know, we all have sung our own song in one form or another – Amen? If we really reflect on those special moments in our lives, through the words and actions of someone we have encountered – Gabriel brought to us greetings from God. God maybe sends the Gabriel’s in our lives with “greetings” God sends the Gabriel’s in our lives to call us “favored.” We as a church or each one of us can conceive new ideas that inspire others. Iao Church has the ability and capability to conceive what the world needs today in this time of pandemic – love, healing, hope, peace, joy – inspiration at a time in which we need to be wise and creative in “being” the church.

Let us close with this beloved Iao Church. Mary invites us to sing our own song for our time. “Our soul magnifies the Lord and our spirits rejoice in God our savior, for God has looked with favor on the lowliness of God’s Iao Church.” What song are we called to sing for our time beloved church? What message has Gabriel brought to us in this time of pandemic? I believe we are called not to fear this covid19 virus, not to live in fear – but to respect it. The message we receive from Gabriel comes through our scientists – as the hands of Mary can be seen working through the hands of the first responders – the doctors, nurses and many others. Just as Gabriel came to Mary – Gabriel comes to us today. As we remember and read about this intimate encounter – Mary invites us to sing our own song.

Amen, Amene, Ashe, A-ho, and Alleluia.