

Focus on Luke 1:26–38

WHAT is important to know?

— From “Exegetical Perspective,” Lewis R. Donelson

Then Gabriel gets to the heart of his message. Mary will conceive and bear a son. The series of messianic images in 1:32–33 concerning the destiny of this son forms the christological heart of the passage. Each image in these verses is fundamental to Luke’s story of Jesus. Jesus is portrayed as the Davidic messiah, who as the son of David sits on David’s throne and whose rule, astonishingly, will never end. There is no hint here, as there is in Matthew, of the coming crucifixion and the historical irony of these promises. Jesus is also named here as “the Son of the Most High.”

WHERE is God in these words?

— From “Theological Perspective,” Cynthia L. Rigby

Gabriel reminds Mary that to be incapable of conceiving in and of ourselves is not the end of the story, that “nothing [is] impossible with God.” The best discussions of Mary’s response recognize the pitfalls inherent in rendering Mary either a passive participant, who has no choice but to submit to God’s will, or an autonomous individual, who can choose differently than to bear God to the world. The doctrine of Christian vocation offers clarity. Mary’s obedience is neither optional nor forced. Mary acts freely when she offers herself as a servant of the Lord. To embrace her identity as the Mother of God is the only choice that is true to her calling, because it is consistent with who she actually is.

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

— From “Pastoral Perspective,”
Ashley Cook Cleere

The angel Gabriel overturns Mary’s dubiousness by explaining that the Holy Spirit will overshadow her. The angel then underscores God’s incomprehensible capacity to accomplish wondrous aims by telling Mary that her relative Elizabeth had conceived a child at an advanced age, and explains, “For nothing will be impossible with God.” This refrain conveys support, comfort, and courage for those confronting overwhelming expectations. Her response to the annunciation is exemplary: “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.” Mary comprehends that her life, and not only hers, but the whole world’s, is about to be rearranged.

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

— From “Homiletical Perspective,”
Kimberly Bracken Long

It is tempting to imagine that the human predicament, whether we define that as the state of our warring world or the state of our broken lives, can never be healed or overturned. Yet Luke tells us that not only is redemption possible; it has already happened. Because of the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Christ, the holy continues to break into our lives, to bring us closer to the completion of creation and the already-and-not-yet reign of God.