

Use Your Spiritual Glasses
Luke 1;26-56
Encountering Jesus Today

By Dave Urbanski

Pastor Scott began this past Sunday's message with an all-important question: "If God visited you, how would your life be different?"

It's a thought-provoking query as we enter the expectant days before Christmas — when God *did* pay us a visit in a unique and world-changing way through the birth of Jesus.

But a good bit of time before Jesus' birth — likely about nine months prior — another visit from above took place. The angel Gabriel appeared to Mary, as Luke 1 describes, and told this teenager the good news that she, a virgin, would give birth to the Son of God. Certainly a life-altering moment ... and not necessarily easy to accept.

Can you imagine how she must have felt? Of course, fear at the sight of an angel is the first emotion. Then doubt creeps in. Maybe Mary wondered if she was dreaming the whole thing — to be sure, as Pastor Scott said, every Jewish female of age at the time knew the prophecy concerning how the messiah would come into the world and likely wondered, "Will I be the one?" The answer in Mary's case was a resounding YES!

Pastor Scott also outlined the beautiful process the angel takes Mary through, telling her that the Lord is with her and to not be afraid and that his grace is upon her. The awesome thing is that the same promise applies to all of us: The Lord is with each of us ... we no longer need to be afraid ... and his grace is upon each one of us, now and forever. Indeed, God is still visiting all of us! If we dare to dwell on this truth, how should our lives be different?

But Mary's interaction with the angel is far from over. And she questions the angel's declaration: "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" (v. 33) Pastor Scott emphasized to us that God is more than big enough for our questions, our doubts — and the angel gently explains to Mary that the Holy Spirit will come upon her and the power of God will overshadow her. What's more, the angel says her cousin Elizabeth — much older

and barren — is miraculously in her sixth month of pregnancy. "For nothing will be impossible with God," the angel told her. (v. 37)

Do you believe today, right now, that nothing is impossible with God? It's a big question. It's likely that all of us believe that in our minds ... but in our hearts, do we believe can do what we view as impossible? Are we afraid of asking him to do the "impossible" because we're afraid of disappointment if it doesn't come to pass? Are we playing it safe and small with our faith?

Mary's reaction to the angel is complete submission and obedience: "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." When was the last time you reacted to God's will in that way? Mary's decision and declaration stands for all time as one of the ultimate scriptural examples of actively aligning oneself to the Lord's desires. Let's aim for that!

If there were lingering doubts with Mary, they were obliterated after she visited Elizabeth, who certainly was with child — and who ALSO knew Mary would be giving birth to the Son of God without Mary telling her a thing! In fact, Elizabeth's yet-to-be-born-child "leaped for joy" in her womb at the sound of Mary's voice. (v. 44) A fitting response from the unborn infant who would grow up to become John the Baptist and prepare the way for Jesus' earthly ministry.

With that, Mary breaks out in what Pastor Scott described as a song (vv. 46-55) in which she proclaims that "my soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my savior." Mary certainly had great reason to react in that way ... but what about us? God may not have plans for us like he had plans for Mary ... but should we not rejoice in the directions God wants us to go? Should we not be glad that the Lord himself has something in mind for us ... and that we should be eager to get on with it?

Let us learn from Mary's obedient example as we ask ourselves a variation on the all-important question Pastor Scott asked all of us as Christmas approaches: "How should my life be different now that Jesus has visited me?"