



THIS IS YOUR SPACE TO BELONG

20 DECEMBER 2020
REFLECTION POINTS

BIBLE READING LUKE 1:26-45 AND 46-56

“²⁶In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. ²⁸And he came to her and said, “Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you.” ²⁹But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰The angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. ³¹And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³²He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. ³³He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.” ³⁴Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?” ³⁵The angel said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. ³⁶And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. ³⁷For nothing will be impossible with God.” ³⁸Then Mary said, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.” Then the angel departed from her.

³⁹In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, ⁴⁰where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit ⁴²and exclaimed with a loud cry, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. ⁴³And why has

this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? ⁴⁴For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord.” ⁴⁶And Mary said, “My soul magnifies the Lord, ⁴⁷and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, ⁴⁸for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; ⁴⁹for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. ⁵⁰His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. ⁵¹He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. ⁵²He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; ⁵³he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. ⁵⁴He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, ⁵⁵according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever.” ⁵⁶And Mary remained with her about three months and then returned to her home.

REFLECTION POINTS

Don’t be afraid – 3 words that are bound to inspire fear when delivered by an angel!

The fears of Mary and other Jewish women 2000 years are somewhat different to our fears today, but some remain the same.

The phrase ‘don’t be afraid’ heralds the coming of something better, something beyond the current suffering. It is used in other places in the Bible, most recently for us in the Book of Daniel.

But don't be afraid doesn't mean don't take risks. Faith involves risk taking, they go hand in hand and cannot be separated. That's because faith is something that is intended to grow and form, not to stagnate. This involves moving beyond our comfort zone and taking risks.

Our risks may be different to other Christians, and certainly different to Mary, but that does not mean we don't take risks.

Joe Kay is minister in the US and his blog on science and religion made me think about this connection between faith and risk taking. He writes:

It's a magical experience watching fireflies rise from the ground at dusk and blink their way high into the trees, performing their light show against the night sky.

When I learned the science behind how the bugs make their light — a process called bioluminescence — it didn't make them any less magical to me. Rather, my new insights made me appreciate them more.

Learning about how things work should broaden our appreciation and inspire more awe about the deep sacredness of everything.

He is talking about science and religion and how they are two sides of the same thing:

Science and religion are complementary. Science seeks to understand how creation works. Religion tries to provide an experience of how the Creator works.

Both are limited by human understanding: We'll never fully grasp the universe or the One who made it. In their inexact ways, science and religion are meant to lead the way in bringing us new, helpful insights.

Science without religion? Religion without science? Neither way works. That's like thinking we can have creation without a Creator, God without love, or a firefly without bioluminescent light.

They always go together. We try to separate them at our peril.

We are limited only by our human understanding!

When have you stepped out in faith and taken a risk for your beliefs?

How can we take a risk together as a community rather than individuals?