Christmas Conversations  
**Overcoming the Fear Factor!**  
Between Gabriel and Mary  
Luke 1:26-38  
Pastor Sandi Evans Rogers  
November 30, 2014

As we enter into Advent - Today,  
Begin a new sermons series on conversations,  
*Conversations* we find in the Christmas Story

I thought it might be appropriate to begin then with a conversation…

I’ve invited my friend ___Mikenna Rogowsky___
  
to join me for a few minutes

I’ve known Mikenna for almost 6 years now…

We share some great memories
  girlfriend’s event - hose antlers on my head…
  Ultimate summer bash – great water fight

This past year we have served on the YYAP Search team

“This morning I want us to talk a little bit of fear”

• How have you ever experienced fear? On any level?

• What are some of the things you that cause you to fear?

• What does fear feel like…?

• What if you were home, in the kitchen, and you looked around and a man, you don’t know, was right there with you…
  o Greeted you:
    ▪ “Greetings! Mikenna. You are favored, and the Lord is with you! [Among all women on the earth, you have been blessed.]”

    ….what feelings might stir in you?
    ...do those feeling match the words you hear?
• How easily would it be for you to have a conversation with this guy?

Thank you Mikenna

Mary was somewhere between 12-16 years old...when Gabriel came in to her home and had a very similar conversation...

My friend Mikenna is _15_ years old...
I hope our conversation with Mikenna will help us connect with Mary but I may be getting ahead of myself...

Let's Pray

Ken Blanchard, author...consultant
• When college professor
• Syllabus and Final Exam @ same time ---
• Teach to the Exam – helping his students find the answers

????

How do we overcome fear? How do we live through our anxiety?
Through Mary we learn:
• Trust
• True Surrender

Let's go back to our text and Mary:

Not much happening in her small town - traditionally we understand-

**NAZARETH:**
• Insignificant town
• Maybe 100 folks, probably less
• Poor
• Less than stellar reputation
• “Can anything good come from Nazareth?”

Mary was having a day...nothing out of the ordinary; ...
...at least not yet.

She was at home...
Don’t know exactly what she was doing,
I suspect preparing for the day – a girl her age:
- Cleaning
- Cooking

And **coming in**, he said to her,
“Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.”

WOW…can you imagine…?? **coming in** Gabriel walked right in — & surprised Mary!!

According to the literal reading of the Greek text, the angel greeted her with the words:

“**Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord [is] with you.**”

Gabriel greeted Mary with a very common Aramaic word for "**hello**" or possibly "**rejoice**."

The Greek word translated "**greetings**" is the Greek imperative **chaire** which was a common expression of greetings among the Greeks. It could also be translated "**Hello**" or "**Hail**" or "**Good morning.**"

Gabriel calls Mary "**favored one**"

**ke-charitō-mē-nē**, the **perfect passive participle** of **chari-too**, "one who has been and **still is the object of divine benevolence**"

**Chari-too**, "to bestow grace/favor" is the verb form of the noun **charis**, "grace, favor."

Using the passive form ensures that Gabriel is addressing Mary as the **recipient** of God’s grace or favor, rather than the giver of it.

Gabriel says to Mary, "**The Lord is with you.**" This is an OT greeting (Judges 6:12; Ruth 2:4; 2 Samuel 7:3) which is meant to be a **statement of fact**, speaking to more than God’s physical presence, being with you; but
carrying the deeper meaning that the "The Lord is on your side to help you."

Let’s go back...glean some cultural understanding...

When Gabriel appeared to her, and spoke his greeting,
it is pretty unlikely that Mary would immediately recognize him as an angel.

Nothing in this passage mentions any physical appearance or signs.

And since Nazareth was a small town, she most likely knew every man in the village.
If not personally - - - by sight

In Mary’s culture it would have also been quite rare for any man to greet a woman in such a way, especially a stranger.

Mary’s reaction is completely understandable.
Just like Mikenna shared...startling fear...
Mary was fearful with the strange man who appeared to her while she is alone.

I can only imagine what was running through her mind...
in the midst of her fear;
she would wonder at his words of blessing to her.
They didn’t seem to match.

29 But she was very perplexed at this statement, and kept pondering what kind of salutation this was.

She was:
• perplexed
• disturbed
• confused
• startled
• deeply perturbed
• greatly troubled
• Fearful!!!

But while this alarm system that Mary felt is normal, reasonable, and healthy, there is also a dangerous, and even sinful, kind of fear that can grip and control us.

People often live in fear of death,
    fear of a spouse leaving,
    fear of sickness, self or family
    fear of bullying,
    fear of not being able to pay the bills.
    fear of not measuring up...
    becoming all we desire & dream of

When fear lives in us, when it roots in & takes hold - - [as opposed to being a momentary reaction to something new], we can become paralyzed & find ourselves in a difficult place.

When we respond to situations out of fear rather than out of faith that indicates our relationship as disciples.

We must resist living into our fears; for fear can become a breeding ground for unbelief..... we must not let fear control us.

When we study our passage, We see...how, as God’s presence in this moment... Gabriel knew all of this...and knew it quickly... He QUICKLY came back to Mary to assure her:

[30 The angel said to her,]
“Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God.

Here; in the present imperative, with the negative This becomes a commandment to stop an action already begun...
It was as if Gabriel were saying: "Stop being afraid, Mary."

Being God’s Presence to Mary,
Gabriel...knew, really knew, Mary’s heart and soul
He recognized and understood her fear.

He called her by name, a sign on intimacy
and spoke right to her heart.

Why? Why should Mary let go of her fear?...??

Gabriel goes on...because “…you have found favor with God,”

And we see, that Mary accepted the angel’s "fear not" @ face value. WOW!!

As Gabriel continues…to explain what’s next...
I am not sure what Mary heard next; - really sounded like “favor”:

“And behold,
you will conceive in your womb and bear a son,
and you shall name Him Jesus.

32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; And the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; 33 and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end.”

WOW! What a lot to take in!

- Pregnant...really?
- A son – with a name already chosen
- He was to be divine
- He was to have power and authority
- He was going to be royal

As she allowed herself to reflect...
to let all that was happening,
all that she was hearing…to settle in…to ponder
It began to dawn upon Mary what the cost would be.

To be **honored/favored** of God - -
would mean a **HUGE** change in her life,
would mean to be misunderstood by man.
Her **community**, her **family**, her...her **Joseph**
To be the mother of the **Messiah** - -
meant to be a mother without being a wife.

How could she/How would she - - explain her condition?

This is great “**favor**”...?
this is **honor**...
this “**favor**”...would involve the greatest sacrifice
this godly daughter would ever make.

And in all; this How would she learn to be mother of the Son of God?

Sit with all that for a moment... **PONDER**
How might **YOU** seek to sort it all out?

What questions might you have?
I’ve reflected on this...

- **Really**...we are poor, insignificant – he will be royal? How?
- I don’t understand...
- **Why me?** Of all the “woman” in the world?
- What will this look like in the days/years ahead?
- **This is beyond comprehension!**

But Mary...no matter what she was **thinking**
no matter what she was **feeling**

she only asked one question:
“**How can this be, since I am a virgin?**"
Not a question of **DOUBT**…

But a question of **CURIOSITY**?

Simply and honest - **HOW**!

"The angel answered and said to her, `The **Holy Spirit** will come upon you, and the power of the **Most High** will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the **Son of God**.'"

Gabriel's explanation was certainly not meant to satisfy *inquiring minds*

Especially not our *inquiring "post-modern" minds.*

This was never intended to be a scientific explanation of the **incarnation**.

Instead the intention was to declare that the **incarnation** would be a **miracle**, made possible by the action of the **Holy Spirit** and the power of **Yahweh**.

It is part of the **MYSTERY** of our God!!! **MYSTERY** we are to **embrace**

Mary’s response proved to be one of remarkable faith.

No virgin had ever conceived through the direct working of God’s mighty power,

she must have known, that on her own,

she would never be able to convince her community, her family, Joseph

that she has maintained her virginity.
There was no way to explain!

The last words that Gabriel shares...encourages her

> For nothing will be impossible with God.”

Nothing....

Absolutely NOTHING....! And you can TRUST in Him

Dictionary: belief that someone or something is reliable

It is with full TRUST in the Most High – believing that He is fully reliable -

**TRusting** in his provision and care for her and

the son to be born from her:

> “Behold, the bond slave of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word.”

She humbly declared her willingness to be God’s servant,

**Surrendering** & letting **everything** take place

according to ALL that Gabriel has told her.

She willingly accepted God's promise and plan for her life,

including ALL the **inconveniences** and **risks** attached to it.

Not her fear...

Her **trust** grew and her fear dissipated.

Through her **pondering**, came pure **surrender**, and at that point...the angel departed. (Luke 1:38)

God's grace for us has the power to transform...

our fears

our confusion
our anxiety
our questions.

When we **trust & surrender**...
Mary also discovered - she was approved by Abba,

Liz Curtis Higgs:

“**God didn't choose Mary because she was unique..**
  **Mary was unique because god choose her**”

Mary found **favor** not because of anything she did...
but **because** of **His gracious choice**.

God lavished His **favor**/ His **grace** on his precious,
  tender hearted,
  **faithful**,
  and **humble daughter**

Just as He offers **each one of us**...!

You see we are all like Mary,
  we are all sinners...
  AND we are all Abba’s children

And we too have been chosen,
  we too have found the favor of our Abba
  to receive his **Grace** - - -

  Jesus was born so that he might **live** - - and **die** for us.

  He was born to be the Messiah...to save His people

  **God’s children,**

  **You and me.**
To offer us Salvation
His amazing grace.

Final Exam:
How do we overcome fear? How do we live through our anxiety?
Through Mary we learn:
• Honestly Trust
• Pure Surrender

The question today is….will we trust Him…? in the midst of our fears in the midst of our anxiety in the midst of our lives in the midst of all we are experiencing will we surrender?

How will YOU respond?

My Prayer is that we may each trust enough to say:

“Behold,
I am the servant of the Lord;
may it be done to me according to Your word.”

AMEN