

Micah 5:2-5a

2 “But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days.

3 Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has brought forth; then the rest of his kindred shall return to the people of Israel.

4 And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they shall live secure, for now **he shall be great** to the ends of the earth; 5 and he shall be the one of peace.”

Luke 1:26-38

26 In the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, 27 to a maiden engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The maiden’s name was Mary. 28 And he came to her and said, “Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.” 29 But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. 30 The angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31 And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. 32 He 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. 33 He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.” 34 Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?” 35 The 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.

36 And 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. 37 For nothing will be impossible with God.” 38 Then 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.

A Child is Called; A Child is Born West Asheville PC

The story of Jesus’ birth is a story filled with miracles, and mystery, and questions. Think about it: a young girl is visited by an angel of God to tell her she will bear a child, without her boyfriend Joseph’s help, and that child will be named ‘He who saves,’ and that child will be known as the **Son of God**. If this were a Hallmark Christmas movie we would probably stop watching half way thru the movie because **it is just too far fetched**.

Then there is the whole idea that God’s own son would arrive in the world with all the messiness of a normal birth. It is just too far fetched!!!

There are few bible stories that we know as well as we know this one. It is a story that most of us could tell from memory. Maybe not word for word, but we could tell it accurately. Even though I know it so well, I am still stunned by the miracles, the mysteries, and I still have questions about the whole thing.

God decides it is time to appear on earth in the flesh, to walk among the people God has created, to suffer as we suffer. **It is amazing.** And who does God choose as his partner in this miracle? A young girl, probably 14 or 15 years old, who is engaged to a carpenter named Joseph, and her name is Mary.
Odd if not amazing!!!

When we think of being called, most of us think of elders called to lead the church, or of men and women who are called into ministry. We know the stories of biblical characters such as Moses, Jeremiah, Samuel, or Zephaniah and how they were called by God to serve God's purposes. And that is ok with us, but Mary is a child. What was God thinking calling a child to serve in this way? And make no mistake, this is a call story in every sense of the word.

If I set aside the miracles and mysteries of this story and focus on God's call to Mary to be a part of God's redemption of the world, it says some very powerful things to me, especially as I compare her to others who were called by God to be God's agents in the world.

Moses was a doubting servant of God. On hearing God's call, Moses quickly offered excuses about why he was not a good choice. When God called Jeremiah, he reminded God that he was just a child, but agreed he would be God's voice in Israel.

Samuel was a boy in the temple when he was called, and while he didn't recognize God's call at first, when Eli

explained that the voice Samuel was hearing was God, Samuel quickly accepted God's call to be a judge in Israel.

Mary shares my amazement when the angel appears, mostly because she is a virgin and doesn't know how she is going to have any child, but when she is assured by the angel that all things are possible for God, she quickly replies, '**Here I am, use me.**'

One of my favorite hymns is simply "**Here I Am, Lord.**" While it doesn't mention this text about Mary specifically, it focuses on **FAITH** unlimited.

We were singing this hymn the day I 'heard' my CALL from God. I was not as ready to say yes as Mary was. It took me a couple of years to simply say "**YES, I will go**". I wanted to focus on the obstacles to me saying yes. I used my family as one excuse for NOT saying, "YES." Money was another important concern for me. I HAD to provide for my family. One son in college. A home mortgage. Car payments. How could God expect me to say yes?

Only when I said, "I will go," that God made the miracles come. **YES**, I experienced miracles. Ask me about them sometime. I love to tell the story.

Miracles, mysteries and questions. I experience all of these as I read this story again and again, but I also experience something else. Reading this story reminds me that God is able to use anyone for God's plan, even me, and that is a word all of us need to hear. Who knows? God's next call might be for you, and you can be assured by the truth of this story that **God will provide.**

Mary wasn't too young, and you aren't too old. If God calls, you are able. God doesn't just call those equipped for ministry; God equips those that God calls, even if it means miracles, even if it leaves mysteries unexplained.

Thanks be to a God, the One True God, that works thru us and our world to complete God's plan for all of humanity. And thanks be to God that a child was born in Bethlehem named 'He Saves.'

Amen.