

Babies, ancient promises, & communion portions. Little things really do mean a lot.

In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent. No small thing, to send heaven's messenger to a village in Galilee, but not to a leading family; not to someone in a position of power. To a young woman betrothed to Joseph, who was descended (however distantly) from David - Israel's historical king of kings.

So Gabriel visits this bride-to-be. A woman whose marriage would have been arranged - father to father - as a means of solidifying family ties or business connections. Mary was just a means to an end for the men who controlled her life. Gabriel's visit changes that.

Now - we can have a scholarly conversation about the nature of angelic visitation...later. This event is recorded in only one gospel in our sacred canon. It is a story told with a purpose, and is foundational to how we understand the son who grew out of this heavenly promise. We hear this conversation between Mary and Gabriel with ears tuned to a song resonant with ancient faith.

God chooses strangely. A woman - a curious woman not afraid to think deeply (and think for herself...) She hears the prepared speech, and then asks a question of her own; "How can this be...?"

Yes, there's more to Mary's speech. She declares her innocence - "...since I am a virgin?" Much is made of Mary's purity - it's what sanctifies her to the church (in time) but in truth, this is a saucy response.

You simply aren't supposed to question a messenger from Heaven - it's not done. But then again, God doesn't often choose women as recipients of the sacred word...until now.

It's a little thing, but it signals a big change. Last week we encountered Mary's radical response to the news of the change she would bring to birth in Jesus. Here is where it starts. Mary is not overawed by the responsibility - she acknowledges the message - presents herself "a servant of the Lord..." ready to see the word made flesh; a little thing, with huge implications.

The relationship between humankind and the Divine has been redefined. A woman has accepted (gladly, it seems to me) the responsibility that God has offered her. Though she is too often portrayed as the gentle maiden, meek and mild, Mary has a spine of steel.

Together these little things – details hidden in plain sight; information that has been hampered by our social, moral, and historical miscalculations – these little things come together to signal big changes.

God with us – proposing the impossible – in partnership with someone who was not supposed to be participating as an agent of change. God's intention towards creation includes the unlikely, the formerly unwanted, the powerless and the

Little things...

Psalm 89 - selected verses: Luke 1:26-38

poor. These 'little things' will lead a revolution of grace, and the world should never be the same.