

**Meditation**  
**Midweek Advent Service**  
**December 13, 2017**

**Luke 1:26-38**

Whenever I read or hear this well-known and familiar passage of Scripture, I picture in my mind a place in St. Paul, Minnesota, near to the campus of my alma mater, Concordia College-St. Paul, where my wife, June, and I both attended. As I drove around the Twin Cities in my college days, I would sometimes drive past an impressive church building located on a very prominent street, Summit Avenue in St. Paul. This was the wide and picturesque avenue where wealthy families built huge mansions 100 and more years ago. St. Luke's Catholic Church, located at the intersection of Summit and University Avenues, is a beautiful stone structure built in the Mediterranean style. At one of the exterior corners of this impressive building is a carved stone angel, mounted part-way up the wall, with the carved inscription held in the angel's hands: "And of his kingdom there will be no end." This is what is before us today in this Advent season. It is often called the Annunciation as the angel Gabriel announces to the Virgin Mary that she will be the mother of the promised Messiah. As Gabriel says to Mary: **"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 father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end"** (Luke 1:32-33). May the Lord's rich blessing be upon the preaching, the hearing, and the living of his Word for Jesus' sake.

In her book, *To Dance with God: Family Ritual and Community Celebration* (New York: Paulist Press, 1986), Gertrud Mueller Nelson writes the following:

*It is Advent and we are a people, pregnant. Pregnant and waiting. We long for the God/Man to be born, and this waiting is hard. Our whole life is spent, one way or another, in waiting. Information put us on hold and fills our waiting ear with thin, irritating music. Our order hasn't come in yet. The elevator must be stuck. Our spouse is late. Will the snow never melt, the rain never stop, the paint ever dry? Will anyone ever understand? Will I ever change? Life is a series of hopes, and waitings, and half-fulfillments... Waiting, because it will always be with us, can be made a work of art, and the season of Advent invites us to underscore and understand with a new patience that very feminine state of being, waiting. Our masculine world wants to blast away waiting from our lives. Instant gratification has become our constitutional right and delay an aberration. We equate waiting with wasting. So we build Concorde airplanes, drink instant coffee, roll out green plastic and call it turf, and reach for the phone before we reach for the pen. The more life asks us to wait, the more we anxiously hurry. The tempo of haste in which we live has less to do with being on time or the efficiency of a busy life – it has more to do with our being unable to wait. But waiting is impractical time, good for nothing but mysteriously necessary to all that is becoming. As in a pregnancy, nothing of value comes into being without a period of quiet incubation: not a healthy baby, not a loving relationship, not a reconciliation, a new understanding, a work of art, never a transformation. Rather, a shortened period of incubation brings forth what is not whole or strong or even alive. Brewing, baking, simmering, fermenting, ripening, germinating, gestating are the feminine processes of becoming and they are symbolic states of being which belong in a life of value, necessary to transformation (Ibid, pp. 61-62).*

Gabriel does not promise Mary that her pregnancy will somehow be different, briefer or easier than any other woman's pregnancy. Even though she will carry in her womb the Son of the Most High, her pregnancy will be the full nine months. That holy Child within her will willingly subject himself to all the laws of nature and biology, human anatomy and physiology. Here is the Immaculate Conception – not of Mary, but of Jesus! We believe, teach, and confess that Jesus Christ, true God and true man, was

conceived without sin in Mary's womb in order that He might live that life of perfect obedience to the Father's will in our behalf. And being without sin, He would become the sinless sacrifice for all of our sin and disobedience when He shed his blood upon the tree of the cross. The ancient promise given to Adam and Eve countless ages before in the Garden of Eden is now being fulfilled: **"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel"** (Genesis 3:15). In the fullness of time, at the God-appointed time, God sent forth his Son. All of this begins now with Gabriel's announcement to Mary.

What would you say to such an announcement? Would we be left speechless? Or stumble and stammer over what to say? Scripture records a question – a very legitimate question – that Mary had: **"How will this be, since I am a virgin?"** (Luke 2:34). Mary didn't say this could not happen, but she wondered how it could happen. Her question is addressed by Gabriel, who tells Mary: **"For nothing will be impossible with God"** (Luke 2:37). That is important for us to remember, especially when we are confronted with situations and circumstances in life that seem too difficult, too challenging, too great, not just for us, but perhaps even for God. Nothing is impossible for the Lord. And Mary's response of faith and trust is an encouragement to us in our own journey of faith today: **"Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word"** (Luke 2:38). When all is said and done, the Lord asks us only to believe. All of the particulars, all of the unknowns, all of the seeming impossibilities – we leave these to the Lord, trusting that nothing is impossible for him. And that is faith.

In this holy time of waiting and watching that is Advent, as we think on Gabriel's announcement to Mary and her response of faith, we rejoice in Jesus, Mary's Son yet Mary's Lord, and our Lord: **"And of his kingdom there will be no end."** Thanks be to God. Amen.