

DECEMBER 17, 2023

# "A Sweet Little Story?"

Scripture: Luke 1:26-38 RSV



# A SWEET LITTLE Story?



## ADVENT

Today is the 3rd Sunday of Advent as we anticipate and prepare for the coming of Christ. The prophet Micah tells us that out of Bethlehem will come one who will be ruler over Israel.

## AUTHOR

Luke, a doctor, a Greek, a Gentile Christian and the only known Gentile author in the New Testament. Luke was a close friend and companion of Paul and was a careful and thorough researcher who based his gospel on eyewitness accounts. Tradition says he talked with Mary about the events he recorded in the first 2 chapters in Luke.

## CONTEXT

Luke wrote his gospel, which is the most comprehensive of the Gospels, from Rome around A.D. 60 to a Gentile audience. His purpose was to present an accurate account of the life of Christ and to present Christ as the perfect human and Savior. Our scripture passage begins in the 6th month of Elizabeth's pregnancy when God sends the angel, Gabriel (same one who visited Zechariah), to Nazareth to a virgin named Mary.

## DISCUSSION QUESTION

1. Read Luke 1:26-38. Why do you think God chose Mary? Can you think of any other "ordinary" people God has used to further his kingdom?
2. Look at verses 32-33. What 5 things did Gabriel say about Mary's Son?

3. In verse 34, Mary asks Gabriel, "How can this be, since I have no husband." Why did Gabriel rebuke Zechariah when he questioned Gabriel but did not rebuke Mary? (Compare Luke 1:34 to Luke 1:18.)
4. Read Mary's final response to Gabriel in Luke 1:38. This was risky business. Unless Joseph agreed to marry her she would probably remain unmarried the rest of her life. If her father rejected her, she could be forced into begging or prostitution to earn a living. She could have faced ridicule from her friends and experienced social stigma or thought to be crazy if she mentioned becoming pregnant by the Holy Spirit. Could you offer your life in obedience to God the way Mary did?
5. It wasn't easy for Joseph either. Jewish marriage had 3 steps: 1) The 2 families agreed to the union. 2) A public announcement was made so the couple was engaged (betrothed, pledged) to be married and considered husband and wife though they did not live together or consummate their relationship. (At this point the relationship could only be broken through death or divorce) 3) The couple were married and began living together. Because Mary and Joseph were engaged and Mary had apparently been unfaithful, according to Jewish civil law, Joseph had a right to divorce her and the Jewish authorities could have had Mary stoned. (See Deuteronomy 22:23-24) A sweet story? Maybe not, but a love story for the ages due to their obedience to God and devotion to each other. Could we trust like Joseph?

## ENCOURAGEMENT

The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel which means "God with us." — Matthew 1:23