

# Christ Bearers

Presented by Pastor Scott Walters on 12-23-18  
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Today, Mary was just visited by the angel Gabriel. He gave her unbelievable news that she couldn't quite understand. Mary, this young, unmarried woman, would give birth to the Messiah. After the angel Gabriel came to Mary, Luke tells us that Mary went with haste to meet Elizabeth. As I picture it, Mary took off running to tell Elizabeth the good news – knowing that Elizabeth, her relative, would be so happy for her.

Imagine Mary overflowing with joy. And when she gets there, if we stick with what Luke says, she doesn't even have to tell Elizabeth because the Spirit has already revealed the good news to Elizabeth before Mary could utter a word. The tone of their visit is upbeat and full of celebration.

Even though they are both facing similar situations, Mary and Elizabeth are on completely opposite ends of a spectrum. Both do not expect or understand what is happening to them. Both are in awe of the messages that they have heard regarding their future children.

Both should not be pregnant right now, and only the intervention of God made their pregnancies possible. Mary is very young and not yet married; we can approximate her age at about 14-15 years old.

Elizabeth, on the other hand, is far beyond her expected childbearing years. Yet both are pregnant by supernatural means. Both have good news to share that is hard to believe. Both have had their lives turned inside out by God. Both have been swept up in what God is doing in the world and inside of them.

Once the angel comes to Mary, she begins to change. She is transformed by the news that she is told. This teenage peasant girl takes on a role larger than she's even aware of. She doesn't fully understand or comprehend it, but her role has changed. No longer is she just a young woman who could be punished and judged by the community for being pregnant and unmarried. Mary's place in the world broadens when the angel gives her the good news.

Even Elizabeth identifies Mary's new role when she says, "Why has this happened to me that the mother of my Lord comes to me?" Suddenly this young cousin, this relative of hers is not **just** her relative, but Mary is now the mother of the coming Lord and Savior.

One of the traditional titles for Mary for our Russian and Greek Orthodox friends is "theo-tokos" or Christo-tokos," which means God-bearer or Christ-bearer. It reflects Mary's unique place in the story of the life of Jesus Christ.

If Mary, this teenager can be the "Christ-bearer, then certainly ordinary people like you and me can be bearers of the Christ too. If God can be shown in naïve Mary and in experienced Elizabeth, then maybe God can break into our lives as well. If God can transform a young maiden girl into the bearer of Christ, into the mother of the Savior, then maybe God can show each of us ways in which we can witness to the Christ in our lives and in our world.

God can transform every day, ordinary engineers, teachers, computer programmers into people who carry Christ to the world. While Mary was the Christo-tokos -- the bearer of Christ to the world, you and I can be those who show who Christ is for others.

The Holy Spirit can transform us from people who feel that they don't have anything significant to share with anyone about how God is working in our lives, into honest witnesses who may not have all the answers, but do understand Christ to have been part of their daily lives.

I believe that can happen. Just as God's Spirit transforms an elderly woman into an expectant

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mother. Just as God's Spirit transforms a poor, untutored, unmarried girl into the mother of our Savior.

The Spirit of God can change us so that we can share with others. And I gather from today's scripture that no transformation is too great, or too difficult for God to accomplish.

Mary seems to be in such a difficult situation, doesn't she? An upcoming birth without a father; a peasant girl becoming the mother of God; God becoming a human being. How can these things be? But, according to our Faith, nothing is impossible with God. And at Christmas, the impossible becomes possible. And even we can witness to our faith in the Christ.

Mary and Elizabeth may seem far off to us. For some, they may not seem all that real on Christmas Eve and Christmas morning. I'm sure we don't want to think about being pregnant at 15 years of age or being pregnant in old age; or, for us guys, being pregnant at all!

But think about it! The birth of Jesus isn't just something that happened 2,000 years ago. Our very being here on this 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday Preparing for the Birth of Jesus, bears witness to the world about how Christ can find a birth place a new in a person's heart. We may feel like Elizabeth, unable to bear of the message about Christ. We may feel like Mary, overwhelmed by what this news could mean. But even then, God's signs of promise and hope break in.

When the angel told Mary what was to take place, Mary said, "Here I am, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word."

Hold onto that Advent hope and longing, even if for one me day. When God puts the desire in your heart to share the message, to show to others the Good News of Christ in the world, let us respond like Mary: "Let it be with us according to your word." Amen.