

# Coming Home: God Makes This World a Home

Presented By Pastor Scott Walters on 12/22/19  
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One problem with having heard the Christmas story each year is that we know how it turns out. There is no way to recapture the initial shock of the news: that God, by way of Mary, is making the world a home.

Today, Mary now has center stage. She is still a maiden, chosen by God to bear a message before she ever bears a child.

Her cousin, Elizabeth, is the first one to hear what Mary has to say, maybe because Elizabeth is the first one willing to listen. You see, she too is pregnant, Luke says – about six months further along than Mary, and much older – old enough that her pregnancy is as much a miracle as Mary's. So she and Mary have a lot in common. The obvious difference is that, for Elizabeth, there is a biological father hanging around – Zechariah – a priest who has not been able to say a word in months.

We almost never hear his story in church, which is too bad, since he and Mary have something in common too. According to Luke, they have both been visited by the angel Gabriel, who went to Zechariah to tell him about their baby-to-be, before he told Mary about hers.

Unfortunately, Gabriel's announcement to Zechariah didn't go as well as Mary's did. When the angel told Zechariah that Elizabeth would bear a son whose name would be John, Zechariah said, "How will I know that this is so? For I am an old man, and my wife is getting on in years. Can you give me a sign?"

For this kind of sassiness, the angel zipped Zechariah's lips, making him mute until the day he heard his son cry out for the first time.

So when Mary goes to visit cousin Elizabeth, all Zechariah can do is wave. Poor Zechariah. It is all women's voices in the house that day. Elizabeth thunders out, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb."

Why is Elizabeth so loud? Because she is so glad her young cousin has the good sense to believe that what is happening to her is not an accident, not an illusion, not a freak of nature, but a wedding gift from God.

After Elizabeth thunders, it's Mary's turn. You would think that about now, the two would compare notes on their appetites and their backaches. Elizabeth could have warned Mary what was yet to come.

"My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior." Elizabeth and quiet Zechariah are the first to hear her song, but it is not just for them. It is also for her, Mary, and for the God who has made *this world* a home.

It is for Gabriel, who first gave her the good news, and for all who will benefit from it – for the proud and the powerful who will be relieved of their swelled heads, for the hungry who will be filled with good things, for the rich who will be sent away empty so that they have room in them for what money can't buy.

Her song is for Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – for Sarah, Rebekah, Leah, and Rachel – for every son and daughter of Israel who thought God had forgotten the promise to be with them forever, to love them forever, to give them life anew.

It was all happening inside of Mary, and she was so sure of it that she was singing in the past tense, like the promise had already come true.

In this divine dance we are all dancing – this divine dance called, LIFE, God may lead but it is entirely up to us whether we will follow. Just because God sends an angel to invite one girl onto the

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dance floor is no guarantee she will say yes. Just because God sends a prophet to tell us how life on earth can be more like life in heaven doesn't mean any of us will quit our day jobs to make it so. God acts. Then it is our turn. God responds to our action....or our inaction. Then it is our turn again.

The only thing that is absolutely sure is that we have a partner who is with us and for us. Mary's trust in that fact is really all she has. She has no notarized statement—no affidavit from the Holy Spirit that says, "The child is really mine. Now leave the poor girl alone."

All that she has is her trust that the God who has chosen her will be part of whatever happens next – and that, apparently, is enough to make her burst into song. She does not wait to see how things will turn out first. She sings ahead of time and all the angels with her.

If there are any big changes going on with you right now – if something is underway you cannot predict the end of, and your stomach is rolling with your own version of morning sickness – then you might try following Mary's lead. Who knows? Maybe the Holy Spirit has come upon you. Maybe that shadow hanging over you is the power of the Most High.

While it would certainly be nice to have some details about how it will all turn out, that is not really necessary, is it? You know how God has acted in the past, and you know the joy there is when people say, "Yes, thanks. I'd love to dance." Given all of that, I don't know why you would wait to get excited until you know for sure how it all turned out.

May your souls magnify the Lord, and your spirits rejoice in God your Savior. For God has looked with favor on you. For the Mighty One has done great things for you, and has made the world a home.