

## Could You Be So Faithful?

Welcome: (brief comment of 150<sup>th</sup>)

Good morning Church Family. One hundred and fifty years ago this Sunday, approximately 25 people gathered to worship right here in this wonderful building. We are here today on video, but sadly not in person. Yet we know that God is here in this sanctuary as well as with you at home. We thank our forefathers for their perseverance and dedication to God during the rough times of the past 150 years. We are so blessed by you and leadership in maintaining God's love in this little village of Vicksburg.

You will all be receiving a booklet from our 150<sup>th</sup> committee this coming week. I hope you enjoy reading all the stories of our history. A huge thanks to Nancy Fulton and to Bonnie Holmes for their dedication and preservation of our history over the years. May God continue to bless this building with service to the community and world.

Scripture Lessons: Mark 1:1-8 John the Baptist Prepares the Way

The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God...It is written in Isaiah the prophet: I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way. A voice of one calling in the desert, "Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him."

So John came baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance, for the forgiveness of sins. The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. John wore clothing made of camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. This was his message: "After me will come one more powerful than I, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

Message: "Could you be so faithful?" Zechariah's news  
Mary's Message  
Joseph's Instructions

Scripture Lesson: Luke 1:11-12 Zechariah and Gabriel

When the angel Gabriel came to Zechariah, he was a childless priest, who as the scriptures politely point out, was well along in years. He was the chosen one to enter the sanctuary of the Lord to pray and burn incense. This was a privileged duty. We can only speculate what his prayer requests were. Some would say they were for a child, others would say they were for the salvation of God's people, and others could say they may very well have been for the coming Messiah. Little did Zechariah know that his many prayers were all about to be fulfilled.

When Gabriel appeared to Zechariah, he told him not to fear, that his prayers were to be answered. His elderly wife Elizabeth would bear him a son, and he was to be called John. We know him as John the Baptist. Jesus called him the greatest among men. Zechariah became speechless when the angel told him of his son's destiny. "Your son will point the people to the great rescue that God has been promising your Fathers, the One you have been praying for. He is coming!"

Just how would you have felt in Zechariah's place? Would you have doubts? Would you have the courage to move on? Parenting is an overwhelming task at a young age. But Elizabeth and Zechariah took on the task willingly and with faith that God would be there for them. I thank God every day for the guidance He gave to Chuck and me. Parenting is a difficult task at any age. Parenting even adult children is a task not to be taken lightly.

#### Luke 1:31-33 Mary and Gabriel

Then Gabriel appeared to Mary, a young girl between 12-14. She was betrothed to Joseph. We do not know what she was doing at the time the angel came, but I can only imagine the fear and wonder of this message and how it could be so. To be chosen by God to bear the child, the Savior who would save the world. This would be more than the average woman could even comprehend. Was she afraid? Yes, I am sure she was. Was she obedient to her Lord? Yes, such love and faith in your Lord is to be admired and envied. I was a very young mother, and I remember my fears of being a good mother. I can only imagine what must have gone through her mind. The Prince of Peace, the Son of God, the Messiah, the one you and generations before you have waited for. He is coming, Mary! You are to be His mother. The Rescuer is finally coming! How would you have reacted? Could you have been so faithful? I can only imagine.

#### Matthew 1:18-29 Joseph and Gabriel

Then there is Joseph, dear sweet Joseph. We know very little about him. I imagine that he was a very quiet but loving, patient man, much like many of you. When Gabriel told him this news, he was in wonder as to what to do. Again the angel says, do not be afraid. He chose to face the public disgrace and support Mary. He would be the earthly "stand-in parent" to the Son of God. Could you have the courage, patience and faith to face the future with that responsibility? We know he was a carpenter and taught Jesus this skilled trade, yet always quietly in the background, but always willing to be the earthly teaching father of the Son of God. It may seem impossible, but with God's help, nothing is impossible. What God asks us to do is also amazing at times. But we are told to go out and build His kingdom, to bring Him glory, to share His great love with others, to help bring peace.

The message that Gabriel gave to all three was: DO NOT BE AFRAID, FOR I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS. He also gives this message to us.

#### Parting Words

So today starts the second week of Advent. Peace I bring to you, the good news of the coming of Christ. I encourage you to keep both hope and peace in your heart. This will certainly be a very different celebration this Christmas season, but keep your spirits up, read these wonderful stories in your Bible. Light your advent candle. Pray with others and share the good news of the coming birth of our Lord and Savior.

~ Vera Walker