



# Sunday Reflection

## Season of Advent

in the Charges of St Margarets, Renfrew  
& St Johns, Johnstone



For Sunday 20 December 2020

# Advent 4

As we join together in worship, let us remember the gifts we have been given by God. Let us remind ourselves that God is loving and generous and always wants the best from us and for us.

## Reflection for this week's Gospel

**"Then Mary said, 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.'"**

*Luke 1:38*

### **An Illustration to set the scene**

In December 2000 a village church in Hertfordshire down in England was featured on the BBC Everyman programme. Four years before, the vicar had been baptising a young woman who was about to get married but had never been christened. Suddenly a man in white appeared at the font. The figure did not have wings, but the vicar and the thirty-strong congregation, including the churchwarden and the organist, were in no doubt that it was an angel. The vicar later reported that not a word was spoken. It was the most wonderful feeling, he said. People began to touch their arms because it felt like having warm liquid poured over their skin. The children came forward with their mouths wide open. Then, suddenly, the figure was gone.

Stories like this are not uncommon. They are told by very different people in very different circumstances. Not all of them, however, have the endorsement of a real vicar and all the congregation.

## **Looking at the teaching of the Gospel**

Did Mary feel as though warm liquid was being poured over her skin when the angel Gabriel appeared? It's important to remember that she was just a Galilean girl in her early teens and had very little experience of men, or angels. But God had chosen well. Mary listened intently but wonderingly to the angel telling her (not asking her) what would take place. You will conceive. It will be a son. You will call him Jesus who will be the Messiah. And Mary was not afraid to ask the tough question, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" She was engaged to be married and she knew the facts of life.

What she really made of the angel's answer she kept to herself. What she really thought about being overshadowed by the Holy Spirit we will never know. What she thought of the disgrace and stoning she might face when the news of her pregnancy got out, we can only imagine. She was content with being God's servant. Let it be with me, she said, according to your word.

The annunciation reminds us that God, by various means, tends to give prior notice of future intentions. God speaks before action is taken. God promises before the gift is given. God warns before the judgement is carried out. The announcements may not always be in clear and precise language, and mankind's history is, in part, the failure to understand God's messages.

It is because of these promises, these announcements, that Christians through the ages are given hope, the sure hope of glory yet to be. It is because of what God has announced, through the prophets and through Jesus Christ, that we can live in hope. Hope that God's kingdom will come. Hope that one day all will be well. The certain hope of a glory that is yet to be revealed. Yet to be revealed, not yet revealed.

## **How can we reflect on the application to our lives?**

The annunciation to Mary was one of a series of announcements to people in the Bible, but we must not assume that those announcements have stopped. Sometimes God needs to identify people for a task, or to perform a function, and needs to tell them about it, or nudge them in a particular direction. The message is unlikely to say "you will be"; more likely it will say "you could be" or "you should be". Perhaps we are being called and either we don't want to hear the call, or we don't recognise God's voice, or we do recognise God's voice but underreact to it. This does not necessarily mean having a vocation to be a priest or a missionary. It may mean being identified, being singled out, for a purpose. Mary was singled out. Paul was singled out. David the shepherd boy, least of all the brothers, was singled out. If God needs to achieve a particular purpose by singling someone out, it is not a prerequisite for that person to be part of the "great and the good". Nor does the purpose need to be dramatic or spectacular, as was God's purpose for Mary. God has much ordinary business to be carried out as well.

**"Then Mary said, 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.'" *Luke 1:38***

Please share your response to this reflection to [Rector@SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk](mailto:Rector@SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk) – did anything speak to you? Did you feel challenged, angered, consoled by something in the words? How did God's spirit move you as you read it? Have you shared the words with someone else? Is this a worthwhile thing to make available to folk whilst we cannot meet for corporate worship to share in word and sacrament? What are your thoughts?

**[www.SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk](http://www.SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk)**