

Advent 4 – Sunday 20th December 2020

Dear Lord, Transform these words into your words and help the Holy Spirit to carry the message for each of us within into our hearts. Amen.

I wonder if you have ever thought of yourself as a God bearer? Those who carry the light and hope of Christ with you wherever you go?

I'm going Zoom in on some verses from our Gospel reading to, hopefully, shed some light on the way we follow in Mary's footsteps as mini-God bearers in the world today. Just as Mary brought Jesus into the world all those years ago. We too have a part to play bringing Jesus into the eyes of people in the world today. I wonder if you'd realised that we do this like Mary from a position of favour.

Luke 1 v28 Greetings favoured ones of West Wycombe! The Lord is with you. Greetings favoured ones of West Wycombe! The Lord is with you. Maybe you could turn in your seats and say this alongside me but to each other. Greetings favoured ones of West Wycombe! The Lord is with you.

How do you feel? Even when those words are spoken over you. Do you feel favoured? I'm not sure I always feel favoured. Even less so in the midst of a global pandemic I guess feeling favoured in the eyes of God can be a challenge. Maybe even more so for you as you wonder and pray your way through a long running vacancy? We share something in common, Mickfield doesn't often feel like the home of the favoured, either! Together though we are in good company... I guess Mary as young teenage girl might not have known what to make of being described as favoured either!

However, Mary's response teaches something vitally important to all Christians today. To choose to respond to God's favour, not with fear but with a bold Yes and Amen.

Yes there's little doubt that Mary had mixed emotions about this call of God on her life. We are told in v29 that she was perplexed and wondered. In v30 Gabriel "do not be afraid." A very odd assurance for Gabriel to give if Mary wasn't fearful.

We too might sometime feel fearful when we are reminded of our part in sharing the love and hope of God. A call we jointly bear that comes from Jesus words in: **Matthew 28:18-20:** Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." This is the message that we all share. This is the hope that we all have to offer. But we don't do it without help.

That pattern of help and commitment to bringing Jesus into the foreground we see in our other readings too. Nathan reminded David that God would be with him 2 Samuel 7 v3 "Whatever you have in mind, go ahead and do it, for the Lord is with you." & Paul in our reading from Romans too was ready to proclaim the hope and joy of God wherever he went. He was confident of the vital importance of Jesus as the central part of this message.

So, what is our help and our equipping as mini-God bearers today? It's the same equipping that Mary had and that the verses in Matthew spoke of: It's the Holy Spirit within us. V35 The Holy Spirit will come upon you, v37 for nothing is impossible with God. – Now I'm not suggesting that you are all going to fall pregnant with the son of God!

Rather, we become pregnant with words and actions that God would have us say or do to illustrate that Jesus is vital and alive in the world today, just as we are reminded of his incarnation this Christmas. So, I am asking you to share the hope of God in the world today; To those you work beside, to those in your family that might chat with online this Christmas. We are all invited to respond just as Mary did. Making the choice to respond to the favour of God not with fear but with a bold Yes and Amen.

What were Mary's yes and Amen words? V38 Hear am I, the servant of the Lord; Let it be with me according to your word. I wonder would you be bold with me today and repeat with me that v38 speaking them to God as a prayer. As we do this together we offer ourselves to God, and follow the pattern of Mary letting our lives be those of service and response to the favour of God. I'll pray it again and maybe you'd repeat it prayerfully with me: Hear am I, the servant of the Lord; Let it be with me according to your word. **Amen.**

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