

Kurigasawa Baptist Church, December 07, 2025
Second Advent Service Sermon

“The Annunciation to Mary” Luke 1:26-38
Pastor Kazumitsu Kimura

We have entered the second week of Advent. As December progresses, the cold gradually deepens, and we are about to enter the heart of winter. In this season, the Scripture passage given to us this morning is Luke 1:26 and following—a passage that is almost always read during the Christmas season. It records the event known as the “Annunciation.” It depicts the scene where the angel Gabriel appears to Mary, a young girl from the village of Nazareth, and announces that she will conceive the Savior. During Sunday school later today, all classes will study this same passage. Today, I would like us to listen to the Christmas message that resonates from these verses.

Read verse 26 at the beginning. “In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth.” It says “in the sixth month,” but what happened six months before? That is written in the preceding section of today’s passage, beginning in chapter 1, verse 5. It describes what happened when the priest Zechariah was performing his duties in the sanctuary. There, the angel of the Lord appeared to him and told him that his wife Elizabeth, who was called childless, would become pregnant. Elizabeth would bear a son. The angel declared, “You shall name him John.” This John is John the Baptist, called the forerunner of Jesus. Elizabeth, the wife of Zechariah, would become the mother of John the Baptist and prepare the way for the Savior Jesus. This event occurred in the sixth month.

According to the Gospel writer Luke, the births of John the Baptist and Jesus are depicted as parallel events. These two events appear to be written as having similar significance. However, we must note a significant difference between these two events. That is, the announcement to Zechariah occurred in the sanctuary of the temple in Jerusalem. Moreover, Zechariah was descended from a distinguished priestly lineage and held a position of great honor and respect—the priesthood. But Mary was not like that. Mary encountered the angel in a humble dwelling in Nazareth, a rural village in Galilee far from the city of Jerusalem—a remote, rural area, so to speak. Moreover, in Jesus’ time, this region was called “Galilee of the Gentiles” and was despised by people. Her family was certainly not of noble lineage. It is recorded that she had a fiancé, Joseph. In Judea, it was customary for parents to arrange marriages for their children when they were still young, often through matchmakers. They would choose partners carefully, ensuring there wasn’t too great a disparity in social standing or occupation between the families. Joseph was a carpenter. Mary’s father likely had a similar occupation. He may have been a farmer. In any case, Mary was a girl born into an ordinary commoner family. Yet God chose her, of all people, to be the mother of the Savior of the world, selecting her for this role. What does this signify? I believe it shows us what kind of place the Church of Christ, gathered here now, truly is. Through Mary’s selection, God declares that salvation does not come from holy places or holy professions. The old order has been severed. The village of Nazareth is never mentioned by name in the Old Testament. Galilee at that time was a region where Jews and Gentiles lived together, and it was thought that salvation could never come from such a remote place. “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” (John 1:46) That is what many Jews thought. But today’s passage delivers a powerful message that shatters such preconceptions. God chose a young girl living far from the temple in Jerusalem, in a borderland despised as Gentile Galilee, to be the mother of the Savior. The modern church also stands as such an entity. And it proclaims to people who, at first glance, seem far from God: “Here and now, salvation has come to you.”

Let us read verse 28. The angel tells her, “Hail, full of grace. The Lord is with you.” In the Latin Bible, the opening words are written as “Ave Maria,” “Hail Mary.” In the original Greek text, it reads,

“Rejoice, you who are favored.” “Rejoice,” the angel declares right from the start. But for Mary, what exactly was there to rejoice about? What was so “congratulatory” about this? She must have been utterly confused. We would be too. If someone suddenly told us, “Congratulations,” could we simply feel joy? More likely, we might even feel uneasy, wondering, “What is this person up to?” Mary felt the same way. As verse 29 records, “Mary was troubled by his words.” The original Greek verb translated as “perplexed,” “tallasso,” is written in the passive voice. It is a word used to express the anxiety and agitation one feels when confronted with an event that shakes one’s very existence to its core. In the Christmas story, it appears in Matthew 2. There is a scene where the Magi from the East present themselves before King Herod and declare, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him.” Upon hearing this, Herod was “tallasso” — Matthew records that he was seized by a fear that shook him to his core. As this passage shows, the situation was far from joyful. Here was a young woman, not yet formally married, suddenly pregnant with a boy. According to Jewish law, this was an outrageous violation, deserving punishment for adultery. Hearing this angelic announcement, which shattered the peaceful life of her precious engagement period, how deeply Mary must have been shaken. The Bible translates it as “perplexed,” but I find this translation too weak. I would almost want to change it to “her heart was deeply troubled” or “she was utterly confused and shaken.” Yet, isn’t this often how our God works? Why, God, did you choose me of all people? Aren’t there others more worthy? She was destined for an ordinary marriage, a quiet life as an ordinary person. But then, an encounter with God occurred that turned her life upside down.

When Mary heard the angel’s words, she answered him, “How can this be, since I do not know a man?” — Here we must listen to yet another Christmas message: the works of God go far beyond human understanding. Why did God choose Mary? Was it because she possessed exceptional virtue? Or because she was unusually devout in her faith? Was she an especially outstanding person? The answer is no. There is only one reason: the Lord was with her. God chose to carry out His work through Mary. Aside from that, there is no other plausible explanation.

Or think about what happened ten years ago. I never imagined that I would be sent to this church and live out my church life together with all of you. But now, under God’s mysterious guidance, I have been allowed to serve here, to worship with you, and to share in the blessings of faith together. God brought all these things to pass. The Bible, the Word of God, is not something we read like a scientific text in order to analyze and understand it. Rather, it is a message. It is a bouquet from God. When we receive a bouquet, do we start analyzing how many petals there are, how many sepals, to what family the flowers belong, or where they were grown? No. We perceive the message contained in the bouquet: gratitude to the giver, respect for their labor, or blessings for what they have accomplished. Many kinds of messages can be expressed through a bouquet.

The coming of the Lord Jesus Christ into this world is by no means someone else’s story. To celebrate Christmas is to follow Mary’s obedience. There may be times when an angel appears to you and speaks a word. At that moment, instead of saying, “Lord, please speak that word to someone else, not to me,” may we become people who can respond, “Let it be to me according to Your word.”

I pray for you.