

**Luke 1:26-38**

There are two words which show up all over the place in connection with the birth of Christ. In the Bible, two words are proclaimed four different times—and no, they're not, "Merry Christmas!" The two words are "Fear not!" Four times God's angel says these words. To Zacharias, when he is told that he will have a son in his old age, and that the boy, when he grows up to be a man, will prepare the way for the Messiah. To Joseph, when he is told that his fiancée, Mary, is pregnant with this Messiah, the Son of God. To the shepherds on a hillside near Bethlehem when the Christ is born. And here, in our text, to Mary, telling her that she will bear the Christ into the world.

That's a lot of "Fear not's," isn't it? And they all come with the coming of Christ. What is it about Christmas that causes God to tell the world, "Fear not!" What would we have to fear? Even if we don't live our lives in fear, as some in this world do, the fear of death faces each one of us. Not the fear of confronting the grave so much, but the fear of confronting God. Each one of us will meet God face to face, and we must give an answer to Him for the way in which we have lived.

Are you ready for that day? What if it was today? And what answer would you give? For living selfishly on a daily basis, what answer would you give? For disobeying your parents, you children, what answer would you give? For neglecting your duty as parents, what answer would you give? For turning a deaf ear to the preaching of God's Word, what answer would you give?

Repent! There is no answer from within yourself that God will accept. The answer lies within the womb of the Virgin Mary. Jesus is the answer to our fears because He comes, not to condemn us, but to forgive us. If God had wanted to condemn us He wouldn't have come through Mary's womb. God would not have needed to become Man if He only wanted to punish us for the way in which we have lived.

When God became Man within the womb of Mary, He Himself chose to face our fears. God Himself would be born of a Virgin, suffer under Pontius Pilate, be crucified, dead, and buried, and on the third day rise again. He who would be born of Mary would Himself be confronted by God for the way in which you and I have lived. And our punishment He would endure. Our death He would die. Our sins He would bear.

When God, through His angel, proclaims, "Fear not!" it's not because there is nothing to fear—but because Jesus came to face our fears. He came to be the Savior of every sinner. Friend, the Son of God entered the womb of the Virgin Mary so that He now is the way for you to enter into heaven. It's not a matter of how you live—it's the fact that Jesus lived His life for you. He died His death for you. He rose from the grave for you. And because He did all this for you, as a baptized child of God, desire to live your life for Him.

In a few minutes the children will share the story of Christmas with you. And maybe you're only here to enjoy their program. Maybe you're here because one or two of these children are dear to your heart. But no matter who you are or why you are here, the story of Christmas is for you. It's God's message to you that you need have no fear of Him, for He forgives you. That's why Jesus came. And that's why Jesus comes now in Word and

Sacrament—not to punish, but to pardon; to remove our fears; to give us life and salvation in His saving Name. Amen.