



Back in the 60's when a woman had a baby she was able to stay in the hospital for up to a week with the new baby. My parents had 2 girls, my sister Kathy and I when my brother was born. My dad was so excited to have a boy, that he decided to paint the new baby's bedroom blue while my mom was in the hospital. He wanted to surprise my mom. One morning my sister, Kathy and I decided we wanted to surprise our dad and help him finish painting the baby's room. We peeked in my dad's room and he was still sleeping so we went to work. We figured out how to open the paint, (my dad never did figure out how we got to the paint since we were almost 3 and 4 years old ) and then began to paint the room, literally. We painted not only the walls, but we included the doors, the closet door, the wood floors, the door knobs, we painted everything we could reach! We were so proud of ourselves. We got the bottom portion of the entire room and the floor painted. We were so excited, to show our dad. When he woke up and walked into the room to find my sister and I covered with blue paint and the room well you can only imagine, and we yelled Surprise! We helped you daddy! He was Surprised! He was very surprised!

Being surprised doesn't always have the outcome we think it will or even that we desire. In our text this morning Mary is given a great "surprise". Let's read Luke 1:26-38.

Mary is quite surprised by the appearance of the angel. Mary is quite surprised by the message that the angel shares with her about being the mother of Jesus. Mary is surprised that she has been the one chosen. That she has been chosen to bring Christ into the world. Mary Surprised, Yes.

Why is Mary surprised? She is probably thinking. Why have I been chosen? I have never done anything special.

I am just an ordinary person. Mary knows her place. She certainly wasn't from a powerful family or a family of great financial means. She had no money and no prestige at all. She lived in a home with her parents. She had chores to do, food to make, and family to help care for. Why would she be chosen?

The angel tells her she has been Chosen and not only that she is told God is with you. Mary must have thought. How can the Lord be with me? I am not from a particularly religious family . How could the Lord be with me? I am not one of the holy people. I hardly ever make it to Jerusalem or even to the synagogue where all the holy people dwell. Her upbringing may have taught her that the Lord was only with people in the religious institutions.

Yet she had been chosen to bear the son of God. Mary, a simple, ordinary, small town girl, called by God to bring Jesus into the world. What an amazing story. What a surprise.

Well I have surprise for you this Christmas. You and I have been called to bring Jesus into the world as well. The same Jesus that Mary gave birth to is alive and inside of each one of us. Jesus dwells within us. The Lord is with you. Underline that in your bibles. The Lord is with you and write in the margin. God is with me, right now. And you and I have been chosen by God to bring Jesus into the world. A world where there is much pain and suffering, a world where there is brokenness. A world that desperately needs to hear the Good News of Jesus. Yes, that is right, you and I have been chosen by God to share with the world Jesus. Some think that God is only in the religious institutions. Some believe that God is only with the Holy people. Surprise! They are right and we are a holy people! God broke the mold that had been set up by the religious institutions allowing people to think that only certain people were loved by God.

Well Jesus broke that mold and thank goodness for that! That means that you and I, people who see themselves as ordinary, people who don't have the prestige and honor by worldly definitions, are given access to the one and only God. God goes outside the institution and meets people where they live and work and play. God calls each one of us to go out and bear Christ in the world, no matter where we come from or who we reach out to, you and I have been called, just like Mary, to birth Jesus in a world that is hurting, a world that needs love, a world that needs forgiveness.

This next week there are going to be a lot of images and stories about wonderful families sitting around the

Christmas tree, singing Christmas carols, eating Christmas treats, hugging and loving each other. And that may happen for some. But I know there will be many who will be spending the next week dreading Christmas because they are hurting. There are families who are broken, relationships torn apart, those who have no one to sing Christmas songs to, those who don't have enough money for food, let alone for Christmas treats. Those who have been bullied, discriminated against because of how they dress, or worship or are in relationships or the color of their skin. And that is the world that we have been called to share Jesus with.

Think what it would be like to experience, to know, to share that God is with us. And God is with all the world. I wonder how many of us need to hear these words.

God's plan in Jesus is to let all know that we are completely loved and forgiven. As we recognize God's love for us in Jesus and all that comes with it, it's our joy to share that with everyone.

We have been called by God. God says to you and I "you are carrying Jesus, the Messiah, You are called to this holy responsibility. You have been empowered by my Holy Spirit to carry my son, Jesus with you wherever you go. You have been chosen".

And like Mary, we may feel some hesitation. We may not feel ready. But here is the good news. You and I have been chosen by God. God desperately loves each one of us. We do bear Jesus, wherever we go, whoever we meet.

Remember this week, wherever you may go, to school, to the stores, to parties, to work, that the Lord is with you wherever you go. So go and share the love of Jesus everywhere! For nothing is impossible with God! You may surprise yourself and someone else!