

Matthew 1:23

"The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us").

Luke 1:26-38 The Birth of Jesus Foretold

²⁶ In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, ²⁷ to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

²⁹ Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. ³⁰ But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. ³¹ You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

³⁴ "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

³⁵ The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. ³⁶ Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. ³⁷ For no word from God will ever fail."

³⁸ "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." Then the angel left her.

Merry Christmas! During this Christmas, may the Lord Almighty shine upon this nation, our church, and our families. Jesus Christ was born when this world was going through a difficult period. I pray that He will come to all of us again, as we are going through a tough and challenging year.

Let us start with sharing an image of Mary visited by angel - as we read through today's scripture, we can see that Mary is troubled and the Lord tells her three important messages through the angel. Let us learn more about these three messages.

1. Peace Be With You

- **Luke 1:28**

²⁸ The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

The Lord sends an angel to Mary and says the Lord is with you - which always means, peace be with you. The Lord is comforting Mary that all is okay even though the news of bearing a child as a virgin may be shocking.

- **Isaiah 9:6**

⁶ For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

- **Luke 2:14**

¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

- **John 20:19**

¹⁹ On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!"

- **2 Thessalonians 3:16**

¹⁶ Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you.

All of the verses mentioned above shows how peace may be with all of us even in the midst of chaos and difficult challenges we may be faced with.

- **Story of Horatio Spafford**

Horatio Gates Spafford (October 20, 1828, Troy, New York – October 16, 1888, Jerusalem) was a prominent American lawyer and Presbyterian church elder.

His life was filled with tragic stories. First, his son died of illness when he was four years old. Later, Spafford invested in real estate north of Chicago in the spring of 1871. In October 1871, the Great Fire of Chicago reduced the city to ashes, destroying most of his investment. Two years after the devastation of the Great Chicago Fire the family planned a trip to Europe. Late business demands kept Spafford from joining his wife and four daughters on a family vacation in England where his friend D. L. Moody would be preaching. On November 22, 1873, while crossing the Atlantic on the steamship *Ville du Havre*, the ship was struck by an iron sailing vessel killing 226 people, including all of Spafford's daughters. His wife, Anna, survived the tragedy. Upon arriving in England, she sent a telegram to Spafford that read "Saved alone." As Spafford sailed to England to join his wife, he asked the Lord..."why?" and the Lord kept saying "PEACE" to Spafford. As he heard the message from the Lord he started to write the lyrics to favor hymn...
"It Is Well with My Soul."

*When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,
 When sorrows like sea billows roll;
 Whatever my lot, Thou has taught me to say,
 It is well, it is well, with my soul.*

2. Do Not Be Afraid

- **Luke 1:30**

³⁰ *But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God."*

Aside from being shocked by the news, Mary must have been worried and afraid of what might happen to her and her families. The news would put both Mary, Joseph, and both sides of families into great shame. This is when the angel tells her not to be afraid since the Lord is with her. Just as the Lord was with Mary, He is with us and His Son is also with us. They are telling us not to be afraid through today's scripture.

- **Isaiah 41:10**

¹⁰ *So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God.
 I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*

There is an app called You Version from Bible.com. According to their search, the number one searched / read bible verse was Isaiah 41:10 for this year. People worldwide have been living in fear due to a chaotic year. I pray that today's scripture will bring peace and remove any fear in our hearts and minds.

- **Story of a Single Mom and Daughter**

A four-year-old daughter and single mother was going to bed. Daughter was scared of darkness. As the light was turned off, they saw the moonlight in the window. Daughter asked, "Mom, is the moon a lamp of God? Does God go to sleep with the light off?" The mother answered, "No, God never sleeps." She continued and said, "God is awake, so we don't need to stay awake because we are afraid."

3. Be Strong

- The angel continues by telling Mary that God can do anything and He is the most powerful Lord...so stay strong.

Luke 1: 35-36

³⁵ *The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God."*

³⁶ *Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month.*

- In Daniel chapter 10, all of the three key messages from today's scripture is shown in verse 19.

Daniel 10:19

¹⁹ *"Do not be afraid, you who are highly esteemed," he said. "Peace! Be strong now; be strong." When he spoke to me, I was strengthened and said, "Speak, my lord, since you have given me strength."*

- **Image of Broken Glass**

As we see this image of broken glass, we wonder how such broken piece can be repaired? Mary could have thought her life has been shattered into broken glass pieces. She could have wondered and feared about what will happen to her and Joseph? However, her strong faith gave her the strength to accept and believe in the Lord.

Luke 1: 38

³⁸ *"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." Then the angel left her.*

- **Story of Silent Night and Holy Night**

"Stille Nacht" was first performed on Christmas Eve 1818 at St Nicholas parish church in Oberndorf, a village in the Austrian Empire on the Salzach river in present-day Austria. A young priest, Father Joseph Mohr, had come to Oberndorf the year before. In the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars, he had written the poem "Stille Nacht" in 1816 at Mariapfarr, the hometown of his father in the Salzburg Lungau region, where Joseph had worked as an assistant priest. The melody was composed by Franz Xaver Gruber, schoolmaster and organist in the nearby village of Arnsdorf, now part of Lamprechtshausen.

On Christmas Eve 1818, Mohr brought the words to Gruber and asked him to compose a melody and guitar accompaniment for that night's mass, after river flooding had damaged the church organ. If the organ was not broken, this famous carol may not have been born. God provides His Grace in the midst of chaotic moment.

I pray that today's sermon will *restore peace, remove fear, and provide strength* to all of us.

In Summary:

Just as the Lord was with Mary, He is with us and telling us following message -

1. Peace Be With You
2. Do Not Be Afraid
3. Be Strong

Prayer:

*My Jesus, as Thou wilt!
Oh, may Thy will be mine!
Into Thy hand of love
I would my all resign;
Through sorrow, or through joy,
Conduct me as Thine own,
And help me still to say,
My Lord, Thy will be done!*

*My Jesus, as Thou wilt!
Though seen through many a
tear, Let not my star of hope
Grow dim or disappear;
Since Thou on earth hast wept,
And sorrowed oft alone,
If I must weep with Thee,
My Lord, Thy will be done!*

*My Jesus, as Thou wilt!
All shall be well for me;
Each changing future scene
I gladly trust with Thee.
Straight to Thy rest above
I travel calmly on,
And sing, in life or death,
My Lord, Thy will be done!*