

*Speaking words of wisdom, Let it Be.*

This refrain from James Paul McCartney's 1969 ballad, *Let it Be*, seems to encapsulate Mary's response to the angel Gabriel in today's gospel from Luke. A young girl encounters the Holy in the form of an angel, and has the presence of mind to listen, to question, to consider, and then to utter words of acceptance, of willingness, words of wisdom. *Let it be.*

How is it that one so young, so unexpected, is favored by God to play such a central and significant part in the revelation and in breaking of the Word made flesh? One might expect otherwise of God; certainly Israel anticipated something quite different. And yet, God breaks in. And God chooses. God chose and favored Mary, a Jewish peasant girl betrothed to a carpenter. And God also chooses each of us to be active bearers of God's good news to the world.

Scripture doesn't tell us much about Mary, but if we look closely we see how she models for us ways that we can navigate the unexpected and challenging moments of our lives, especially those times when we sense God nudging, tugging or beckoning us into something for which we feel unprepared.

Upon hearing Gabriel's declaration, and not just a little bit confused, Mary takes pause to process his words, to try to make sense of them. And as the angel circles back for round two, she listens. Digesting every word, as incredulous as they are, she considers them and then questions: "But how? How can this be?" Acutely aware of her own life situation, to be told that she will conceive and bear a son had to be shocking. Implausible. In her worldly view, it doesn't make sense.

Most of us have experienced disruptions in our lives, moments when suddenly everything changes. Sometimes they are welcomed, like a surprise (and desired) marriage proposal, or landing a new job. Other times, though, these unexpected disruptions like a negative health diagnosis or the death of a loved one are unwelcomed and can send us reeling as we try to navigate the change.

But what about those moments when our lives are disrupted by things we didn't seek, nor want, but which beckon us, grabbing our attention? How are we to respond? We know that sometimes difficulty and change can bring new life and meaning we never could have imagined, but being a person willing to say *Let it Be*, can feel risky. Perhaps, the invitation is first to listen, and then to respond.

Hearing Gabriel's further explanation and the miraculous news of her barren cousin, Elizabeth's, pregnancy, we sense that Mary has become aware of something significant: that she is not alone. Not only is God with her, but God has given her Elizabeth to be her companion on the journey. Clinging to Gabriel's final words, "nothing will be impossible with God", Mary offers life and her body to God's service, speaking these words of Wisdom. *Let it be.*

God's inbreaking into Mary's life forever changed its trajectory, pointing her toward something unexpected and unimagined, a grander purpose as she nurtures within the child whose being will turn the world upside down, and one day, pierce her own soul.

When Paul McCartney wrote *Let it Be*, he wasn't writing about the Virgin Mary, nor religion or faith. The ballad and its powerful message arose from a dream he had about his Mother, Mary, who died when he was just 14. The dream came during a time of tension with the Beatles, and in it he heard a message of reassurance and comfort, his mother's words of wisdom. *Let it be.*

As we conclude this Advent season, and ready ourselves to welcome the Christ child this evening, I encourage you to find a moment between now and then to pause, to still yourself and to draw near to God in prayer. Listen, question, and ponder in your heart what part God may be calling you to play in God's continuing story of salvation. As you listen, draw inspiration from Mary's example of radical faithfulness, and find strength in Gabriel's encouraging message :

Don't be afraid; God's got you; You're not alone, And nothing is impossible with God.

In closing, I leave you with the blessing of these words from James Paul McCartney.

### **Let it Be.**

When I find myself in times of trouble, Mother Mary comes to me  
Speaking words of wisdom, let it be.  
And in my hour of darkness she is standing right in front of me,  
Speaking words of wisdom, let it be.  
And when the broken hearted people living in the world agree,  
There will be an answer, let it be.  
For though they may be parted, there is still a chance that they will see,  
There will be an answer, let it be.

Let it be. Let it be. Let it be. Let it be.  
Whisper words of wisdom,  
Let it be.

Luke 1:26-38  
The Rev. Laurel Coote

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Let it Be.