

Hey Priscilla, I see the look in your eye. Yes, my pregnancy is really showing now. I am so thankful that you are my friend. It is only a good friend who might believe all that has happened to me. Yet, after I tell you all that has transpired, even you might not believe that this is your friend Mary, but it is. I am glad you are sitting for what I have to tell you.

Where do I begin? An angel visited me. I felt like Jeremiah when God appointed him to speak God’s word to the people. Remember that? Jeremiah responded to God, saying, “Ah Lord God...I am only a boy.” When the angel appeared to me I wanted to say I am only a teenager but I was stunned and just listened. The angel told me that I was favored and told me that I would conceive in my womb and bear a son, and I should call him Jesus.

Wow, I was excited. I wondered if Joseph and I would have children soon after we married or if it would take time. The angel was telling me that we would bear a child soon. But then I listened to the angel more and he was saying something else, something I could not understand. He told me I was pregnant now through a blessing from God and that the child I would give birth to will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and his kingdom would have no end. Then the angel departed.

I wondered if what I experienced was real or just a hallucination. If it was real, then maybe what the angel said was a metaphor. I pondered it, thought about, prayed about and then a month passed. Maybe it was real. Then another month passed and I knew it was real.

How could I explain my pregnancy to Joseph? We are betrothed, engaged to be married next summer. He is a good man, a godly man and a blessing in my life but how is he going to believe what I can barely believe. He is so good. He is a carpenter and then some. My family was to give him a dowry for our betrothal but what he gave my family was of greater worth than the small dowry they were able to give him. He knew my family never had the means to have a proper stove and after our betrothal he came over to our house and build a stove. On the dirt floor of our cooking space he brought in large blocks and stacked them three high on one side, mudded them together, then stacked them three high on the other side and mudded them together. He did the same at the back and the front of this rectangle of blocks that was forming into a stove. In the middle of all these blocks he started filling the center with dirt. The children round about found pans and helped Joseph fill the center with dirt. He was so good with those children. I know he will be a good father. Once the center was filled with dirt about 2/3’s of the way he brought in small red bricks that would serve as the foundation for the wood and just above that a wonderful cooking area. Then he devised a stove pipe to carry to smoke out the top of our cooking area. No more smoke in the house. What a wonderful man; carpenter, stove builder and man of God. I am so blessed. Yet, how was I going to explain my pregnancy to him.

Before I could get the words out of my mouth Joseph told me he had the wildest dream. In it an angel visited him and told him that his betrothed was blessed by the movement of God with a child who was to be the Savior of the people. He asked me if that could be true. I told him that it was true. I was so relieved and he was so excited. But we both knew that no one else in Nazareth would understand so I decided to lay low and visit my Aunt Liz and Uncle Zech.

I always enjoyed visiting them. Since they didn’t have children they kind of adopted me as their summer time daughter. I would go out down south by the capital city and help Aunt Liz with their chickens and goats when

Uncle Zeck worked in the Temple. She was a great cook and she showed me all her secrets, we had just a great time. I was wondering how she was doing since she and Uncle Zeck were getting kind of old.

But I was so excited to tell them about my pregnancy and angelic visit because I knew if anyone would believe me it would be them. They had a sense of God in them like no other people I have ever known.

But hold on, what I am going to tell you now is going to be harder to believe than what I have already told you. When I called out to Aunt Liz to see if she was home she came out with a huge smile on her face and a belly that was six months more pregnant than mine. Aunt Liz and Uncle Zeck are well beyond child bearing years. Then she told me that she too was visited by an angel and that she was with child. In fact, she said the child in her womb jump when I called out to her.

Wow, wow, wow. We hugged, we danced, we cried. She told me her story and I told her my story. We wondered how or if our children might be connected. I told her that I was to name my baby Jesus and she said they were given the name John for their child. If Jesus was to be the Savior, who might John grow up to be? We wondered and we praised God. We praised God that God has chosen to work through us, the lowly, humble, oppressed and poor. God is an awesome God. I guess if God could take the 11th of 12 boys and do wonders in Egypt like he did with Joseph then God might work through Aunt Liz and me. I guess if God could take a fugitive like Moses to start the Exodus then God can work through us.

Oh, I could go on and on. Thanks for listening to me. Let me hear what you think.

What, you do believe that God is working through me and Joseph, through Aunt Liz and Uncle Zeck? You are such a good friend. Thanks for not making fun of me or laughing at me but truly believing in my words.

I am sorry Priscilla, I have been doing all the talking, let me hear what has been happening in your life. If God has chosen to work through me then I know God must be working through you also. Let me hear

Wow, Priscilla I knew that you were betrothed to Aquila but I did not know that he received an apprenticeship to become a tent maker in Pontus. The fact that he wants you to learn how to make tents also is incredible. You have a marriage and a business all in one. How blessed you are. I wonder how our paths may cross again. Priscilla I am so happy for you and Aquila.

Well, it is nearing time for me to have my baby. Joseph told me that we need to travel to Bethlehem because of the census that the Romans have required. His ancestor is King David, who was born in Bethlehem, so that is our destination. In some ways that is the last thing I want to do. It will be a 90 mile donkey ride, not easy being 8 months pregnant. But then again I won't have to have people here in Nazareth looking at me with their judgmental eyes since I am pregnant but not yet married. I hope the travel is easy. I can only imagine that the birth of my baby, if it does happen in Bethlehem, will be magical.

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That is a bit of Mary's story. God worked through her in a very special manner. She gave birth to Jesus and nurtured him as a child and prepared him to become the man he became. I believe God desires to work through each of us in wonderful and profound ways as well. The stove builders I met in Guatemala at the beginning of this month understood their trade as a gift from God. They are pleased to have a steady stream of income. They are delighted to occasionally work with some United Methodists from America that created and sustain the program. They are happy to develop their skills to build the best stoves possible for the homes they work in. As stove builders they know that they are transforming the day to day life of the humble Guatemalans who receive a stove. I know God is working through the stove builders I met in Guatemala. God

worked through Elizabeth and Zechariah, Mary and Joseph who we read of in the opening chapters of the gospel of Luke. God worked through Priscilla and Aquila who we read of in the 18th chapter of Acts.

I now ask you to think of the wonderful ways God has worked through you over the years. We praise God for that. In addition, think how God might work in new ways in your life this Advent season and as we move into the New Year. The possibilities are exciting.