



## ***St. Paul Evangelical Community Church (SPECC)***

**Worship Address :** Cerritos High School Auditorium  
12500 E. 183<sup>rd</sup> St., Cerritos, CA 90703  
(Enter at Bloomfield, across Heritage Park)

**Mailing Address :** 11428 E. Artesia Blvd. # 4 ; Artesia, CA 90701  
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**Website :** [www.sp-ecc.org](http://www.sp-ecc.org)

December 6, 2009

**Theme: How Odd of God to Choose...**

**Text: Luke 1:26-38**

Our text for today begins with Luke's account of how the angel, Gabriel, was sent to the village of Nazareth to speak with a virgin girl named Mary. The village of Nazareth was a small village with no more than 200 people at the time of Jesus' birth. John's Gospel tells us that it did not have a very good reputation. When Phillip tells Nathanael that he has found the Messiah—Jesus of Nazareth—Nathanael asks, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" No one would have chosen Nazareth as the place where the Messiah would live and grow up to be a man. Yet God did. How odd of God!

The fact that Mary was a virgin tells us that she was probably between 13 and 17 years old. No religious leader of her day would have chosen her for a great role of spiritual service. The status of women was not very high in Jesus' day. The status of unmarried women was even lower. A woman's only goal in life was to marry and bear children. There was no university education available to them and certainly no career other than bearing children. No one would have chosen Mary to be a servant of God. Yet God chose her for the greatest miracle that ever happened except for Jesus' resurrection. God chose Mary to give birth to His Son.

God's choice of Nazareth and Mary should cause us to stop for a moment's reflection. No one would have chosen Nazareth or a virgin girl to have a central place in God's plan of salvation—yet God did. We must ask ourselves this question: What is our sense of our spiritual identity? Do we believe that we have a place in God's plan? What do we think that God thinks about us? People suffer from two problems in this regard: (1) Many people have a deflated sense of God's purpose for their lives. They feel as though they have little or no place in God's plan. (2) Some have an inflated sense of their place in God's plan. They think that they are God's gift to humanity. In one sense we are God's gift to humanity. We are called to bring the good news about Jesus Christ to the world. But we must step up to that role with a deep sense of humility. God has placed us on planet earth to touch peoples' lives for Him. This is true of everyone who confesses Christ as Lord. However, we must remember that God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. We must become humble people.

Gabriel said to Mary, "Hail! You who are highly favored! The Lord is with you!" Luke tells us that Mary was greatly shaken when she heard these words. Why would anyone be troubled over a greeting like that? Perhaps it was because she knew that those who were chosen by God were often called to walk a path of hardship and suffering. Mary would have to walk such a path as she tried to explain to others how she became pregnant when she was engaged to Joseph before they had come together as husband and wife. Who



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would believe the story that she had become pregnant because of the work of the Holy Spirit? But even more than this, she would live to see her Son rejected by His people and handed over to the Roman government to be crucified as a common criminal. Her path would indeed be filled with great heartache.

Mary's final response to Gabriel's message that she would give birth to the Son of God is a model response for every believer. She is faced with the impossible—that she, a virgin girl, would come to conceive a Son by the power of the Holy Spirit. She would conceive by the Holy Spirit and give birth to the one who would be called the Son of God! I think it is almost impossible to imagine what our response would be to a message like that. But Mary's response is memorable: "Let it be to me according to your Word!" As we reflect upon her response to God's call, we must ask ourselves in a new way, "What is God calling us to do?" This can be a difficult question to answer. The story of Mary invites us to seek God's purpose for our lives and to respond to God as she responded. When, by God's grace, humble people respond in this way, God's choice is not so odd after all. May this be our response to God in 2010: "Let it be to me according to your Word!"