

“Mary’s Long, Hard Road”
Rev. Dr. Scott Paczkowski

I had to chuckle as I was reading this passage, because the angel comes upon her and what does Mary do? She was much perplexed, and she pondered what was happening.

Well, you know that wasn’t quite right. Actually, it was “ahhhhhhhhhhhhh.” [Laughter.] And you know that is the truth. They just couldn’t write that in the Bible, because right after it says, “Do not be afraid, Mary.” And, I can just picture the angel Gabriel, because in other parts of the Bible the angel Gabriel was described as [having] these huge feathers and this beautiful solid sword, and everything else going on, but it was kind of like when I come in on a Thursday afternoon and I need to talk to Kris. She is playing the organ, and I come sneaking in, and go, “Kris,” (softly), so I don’t startle her, because I have seen her shoot half way up the organ. [Laughter.]

So, the angel Gabriel, who has been described in the book of Ezekiel; and the book of Daniel; and the book of Enoch from the Apocrypha; from even the Koran; the angel Gabriel is described as visiting upon the Prophets, and even Mohammed, with great power and might.

And yet, in this passage, the angel Gabriel shows up like me going after Kris to talk to her - very gently. There is no description of angelic wings or a sword anywhere in this description. Here it is very gentle. Trying not to make her afraid, even though she got quite perplexed, I’m guessing, and a little more than “pondering” was going on in that moment.

He said to her the most frightening thing imaginable: “You are going to be with child.” Now that would be pretty frightening today, especially wondering whether the boyfriend is going to stick around, or whether you are going to have to raise that child on your own or not. But, in that generation, you could be murdered for humiliating the person that you were betrothed to, in that patriarchal society. This was life and death. So, this was a little bit more than perplexing. It was, “Dear God, are you giving me a death sentence in this moment?” That is what made Mary’s faith so strong in this *blessed* moment. So, as you go on in this story the early church talked about Mary, and spoke of Mary as the Theotokos, in Greek, meaning “God-bearer.” If you think about it, no one in the history of the world was ever closer to God than Mary, because no one else has ever carried God in their very womb.

Now I know when Jill was pregnant, I was a little jealous at times and most of you men know what I’m talking about. We just kind of sat there and wondered what was going to happen nine months from now, or four months from now, or in two weeks, because, by golly, I can’t take it much more if she screams about how her feet hurt. [Laughter.]

But, “Wow!” the first time that I got to feel Hannah kicking inside of her, then that became real to me. And, I can’t imagine, and none of us guys are blessed with the opportunity to actually feel that kicking from within. How wonderful that must have made a mother feel to feel her child within her moving and kicking. That was Mary’s experience with the living God. No wonder no one has ever been closer.