

## 1 Sermon, December 16, 2012

Texts: Luke 1:26-34a

Title: "Giving Up on Perfect"

How many of you can relate to imperfection?

Our Christmas Program today was intentionally imperfect, but it would have been imperfect anyway.

That's part of the charm of Children's Christmas Programs.

In fact, the closer a Christmas Program is to the original story, the more imperfect it will be. Mary was nine months pregnant – weary from traveling, in a place where they had no relatives, or Mary and Joseph would have stayed with them. So they were alone, and forced to sleep where animals usually slept. It probably didn't smell to good.

Mary had to give birth in a difficult place. But the real difficulty was that she had none of her women relatives close to hand. That would have been hardest of all. Joseph must have been a nervous wreck.

In today's scripture reading, the angel Gabriel appears to Mary and tells her what will happen, and she asks, "How can this be?"

"How Can This Be?" – it's a question we've asked time and time again.

How can this be when we have worked so hard?

How can this be when I didn't do anything wrong?

How can this be – this is a *church!*

How can this be – this person isn't like that.

When we say, "How can this be?" We are acknowledging the truth of the situation, but admit we're baffled. We can't figure it out.

Life isn't perfect – it doesn't measure up to our expectations of what it should be.

But don't leave God out of it.

In the midst of the imperfection, God says, like the angel said to Mary, "Greetings, favored one."

Hello, my beloved.

Hi there, special person.

## 2 Sermon, December 16, 2012

In the midst of the imperfection, God sends his love.  
That's the message of the Christmas Program.  
That's the message of the Christmas Story.

In the midst of anger and pain God sends love. In the midst of hard work that seems never-ending, God sends love. In the midst of loneliness, God sends love. In the midst of too many people, God sends love. In the midst of worry and fear, God sends love.

Thanks be to God.

"In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." Mary said to the angel, "How can this be?" Luke 1:26-34a, NRSV.