

Matthew 1:19-21 Then **Joseph** her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. 20 But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, **do not be afraid** to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. 21 And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." NKJV

Luke 1:11-14 Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing on the right side of the altar of incense. 12 And when **Zacharias** saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.

13 But the angel said to him, "**Do not be afraid**, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. 14 And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. NKJV

Luke 1:30-31 Then the angel said to her, "**Do not be afraid, Mary**, for you have found favor with God. 31 And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. NKJV

Luke 2:8-11 Now there were in the same country **shepherds** living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. 10 Then the angel said to them, "**Do not be afraid**, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. 11 For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. NKJV

Introduction:

- A very wealthy man bought a huge ranch in Arizona and he invited some of his closest associates in to see it. After touring some of the 1500 acres of mountains and rivers and grasslands, he took everybody to the house. The house was as spectacular as the scenery, and out back was the largest swimming pool you have ever seen. However, this gigantic swimming pool was filled with alligators. The rich owner explained this way: "I value courage more than anything else. Courage is what made me a billionaire. In fact, I think that courage is such a powerful virtue that if anybody is courageous enough to jump in that pool, swim through those alligators and make it to the other side, I'll give them anything they want, anything--my house, my land, my money." Of course, everybody laughed at the absurd challenge and proceeded to follow the owner into the house for lunch... when they suddenly heard a splash. Turning around they saw this guy swimming for his life across the pool, thrashing at the water, as the alligators swarmed after him. After several death defying seconds, the man made it, unharmed to the other side. Our rich host was absolutely amazed, but he stuck to his promise. He said, "You are indeed, a man of courage and I will stick to my word. What do you want? You can have anything--my house, my land, my money--just tell me what you want and it is yours." The swimmer, breathing heavily, looked up at the host and said, "I just want to know one thing--who pushed me in that pool?"
- Fear has a way of stopping some people and others storm through their fears to obtain the prize still others stumble into it yet find a way.
- Life offers many opportunities and God calls us to them and to Him but fear will stop many folks. Let's look at the Christmas story and see how those of the Christmas story faced their fears.

1. The Promise--of God--each encounter came with a promise.

- a. Throughout the Christmas story are promises given and promises being fulfilled.
 1. The Bible is full of promises to God's people. We are his people too.

- i. God called to Zacharias and he was promised a son in old age.
 - ii. God called to Mary and she was chosen to bare the Christ child.
 - iii. God called to Joseph and he was promised a Son, Jesus a Savior.
 - iv. God called the Shepherds, were promised a joyful event a Savior, Christ the Lord.
 2. Like the heroes of the faith we have been given promises too, but like them we will have to overcome the same fears. Each encounter echoed the word 'impossible.' That is what the enemy wants us to believe too. "That's impossible!"
 - b. To me, the Christmas story is scary wonderful! Man encounters God. God calls to man and is scares him.
 1. We are made for God encounters. We were not meant to live this life without him.**
 2. Everyone encounters God at some level. It is an encounter with a supernatural being while in the natural world. Often it just does not make sense but it is wonderful. II. How is that, talking to someone you can't see, believing He can forgive you makes sense, yet when you finish praying you experience His Spirit bearing with yours that you are His child.
 - c. The Supernatural opens the door to the reality that there is something beyond this natural world.
 1. It happened to Zacharias, Joseph, Mary and the Shepherds.
 2. That is why God sent Jesus as a baby. How many have ever been scared by a baby? Right, no one. Babies are harmless yet this baby would be our Savior. This baby was truly a bundle of love.
 3. The supernatural always leads you somewhere. If it does not lead you to Christ it is a dead work.
 - d. The Supernatural stretches our faith—is bigger than we are.
- 2. The Problem -of Fear—each encounter came with fear. What does fear do to us?**
- a. Robs us—calls us to pull back in the face of opportunity. What if the Shepherds had pulled back. They would not have gone to Bethlehem to see the Savior and there would be no manger scenes today.
 - b. Paralyzes us—stops us from acting and causes us to live in the past experiences, failures and disappointments. What if Joseph had not acted and took Mary his wife. II Tracy Elliot Read in the face of a leopard.
 - c. Fear causes inaccurate hearing/poor listening—therefore we can't see his direction.
 1. Isn't it good that God still talks to us today and if He needs to He can still use angels.
 2. Maybe God sent the angels because the moment was so critical there wasn't room for error. God sent one of the top angels of heaven to spell it out.

3. God sent multiple messages to make sure we got it. To Zacharias, Joseph, Mary, Shepherds. How many teens experienced your parents sending multiple messages? They are just making sure you are hearing accurately.
- d. Fear inspires doubt—'what if', blinds us from the vision of our future and of the prize.
 1. Illustration of lion in ditch while dad and Joshua were hiding.
 2. Leviticus 26:36 'And as for those of you who are left, I will send faintness into their hearts in the lands of their enemies; the sound of a shaken leaf shall cause them to flee; they shall flee as though fleeing from a sword, and they shall fall when no one pursues. NKJV
- e. Fear Cause us to see the impossible. God never intended us to see things as impossible but possible. That is one of the reasons he sent his son—to show us that all things are possible.
- f. We are made for God encounters. We are not made to live life without Him. Fear will steal your God encounter.

3. The Prize—Destiny Fulfilled—each encounter came with a prize.

- a. God gives us a promise, and when we overcome our fears, we fulfill His will and reach our destiny.
- b. Zacharias as a priest lived his life quoting the Word/promises of God for barrenness to be taken from his home.
 1. An angel with a promise fulfilled in Zacharias' desire in old age and it scared him.
 2. The angel brought an answer to delayed promise.
 3. By the time Zacharias overcame his fear he was the father of forerunner.
- c. Joseph - A Savior—Jesus
 1. Being a righteous man became the father of the Son of God.
 2. He would be the one who lead them to safety under the leadership of God.
- d. Mary who would be the mother of Jesus by supernatural encounter, when she overcomes her fear received an honor above all women and became the mother of Jesus.
 1. -each were able to take part in his coming
- e. The Shepherds were the low 'lives' of their day. That gives all of us hope, eh? That God would come as a baby is so awesome and that he would invite shepherds and not dignitaries what a surprise.
- f. Everyone of us has a destiny. Fear will be the biggest hindrance to reaching it. But overcoming that fear is worth it.
 1. If God gives a promise. He has the power and the grace to get us there.