

No More Angels?

As I begin my 54th year (my birthday was January 13th), I am aware of a tendency to lock into familiar ways and to resist what is peculiar, untested by my experience.

Wisdom? Nah...More likely the hardening of the arteries, the closing of the womb, that menopausal tendency in both men and women to rebuff angels and resist the new life they announce.

I pray for the simple, elastic faith of Mary, Jesus' mother; I marvel at her response to angel Gabriel. His announcement that she will become the mother of God troubles her, but she believes it. All she wants to know is: 'How will this come about?' She trusts God, even though it means yielding to Him at the most personal and vulnerable manner conceivable (pun intended).

I relate more to Zechariah who was also visited by Gabriel. The old man's response to becoming a father so late in life? Prove it to me! 'How can I know this?' Time had clogged his heart valves, gave him a spiritual vasectomy. We know from scripture that religious disciplines and duties had kept Zechariah righteous. Such rituals may have also made him rigid, controlling, suspect of dreams and angels and heavenly babies leaping in wombs and saving the earth.

Religion did not necessarily incline him to new life; you could say that its rules gagged him, rendered him mute, unable to grant God a humble 'yes', let alone a song of praise for His sovereign control!

I take note, and consider who will define me more as I age—Mary or Zechariah? Both were afraid of an unfathomable future, but while the old man wanted proof, Mary surrendered, in fear and trembling, trusting that God was good, His will fruitful regardless of its cost.

God is patient and merciful to those like me whose hearts and wombs bear the normal scars of age—unhealed wounds, losses yet to grieve, disappointments that tempt one to unbelief.

It is a new year. Let us pray together on my 54th in the spirit of Isaiah 54, that our youth would be renewed, a marvel of elastic, expectant faith.

“Sing, O barren woman, you who never bore a child; burst into song, shout for joy, you who were never in labor; because more are the children of the desolate woman than of she who has a husband,’ says the Lord. ‘Enlarge the place of your tent, stretch your tent curtains wide, do not hold back; lengthen your cords, strengthen the stakes’...For your Maker is your husband—the Lord Almighty is His Name--the Holy One is Israel is your Redeemer; He is called the God of all the earth. ” (Is 54:1,2,5)