

Advent (all-age)

the grumpy angel

AIMS

To explore the story of the angel visiting Mary (Luke 1:26-38) in a way that can be used with participants of all ages. One is a story-telling method and in the second the same material is presented in the form of a sketch for three characters.

INTRODUCTION

Let me tell you a story...

It was raining hard, it was cold and windy and most sensible people were tucked up warmly in their homes. Mary was just putting the kettle on, humming a tune as she dried up the cups.

But one unfortunate soul was out battling with the elements and not enjoying it one bit. He was enveloped in a long black mac and hiding behind a battered black broly. He was not happy. As he trudged along getting wetter and colder he muttered to himself angrily. "Why do I get all the rotten jobs? Why can't the boss do his own dirty work? Why is it always raining when its my turn?" He carried on in this vein until he arrived at Mary's front door. He checked the address and name on his clipboard and then vented his anger on the door-knocker – the whole street knew Mary had a visitor!

Mary opened the door with a beaming smile – it would be nice to have some company on such a dull afternoon, she thought. The caller didn't return the smile, instead he announced in a moody voice "I've got a message from God for you, but you probably don't want to hear it." Mary appeared not to notice the strange speech, but cried out in sympathy as she saw how wet and bedraggled the caller was. Before he could utter another word, she insisted he come in to get dry and have a cup of tea. The bemused visitor found himself being relieved of his wet coat and broly and seated in a chair by the fire. Soon he was holding a hot cup of tea and Mary was sitting opposite him, ready to listen as if she had all the time in the world. She asked, "Now, what was it you were saying – something about a message from God wasn't it?" The visitor replied grumpily, "Yes, and I bet you'll tell me to get lost or say you don't believe me when I've told you." "Try me!" said Mary brightly. Her visitor looked a bit surprised at this attitude and said, all in a rush, "You're going to have God's baby." He then braced himself for the expected response. It didn't come! Admittedly, Mary was a little surprised and asked how God was going to achieve such a strange plan, but she was quite open to suggestions.

The visitor took out his clipboard and turned over a few sheets until he came to his message. He began to read in a dead, expressionless voice what is now recorded in Luke's Gospel ch 1 v35 –37. "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month. For nothing is impossible with God."

He looked up defiantly and said, "Now you argue with me and say you won't do it and who do I think I am disturbing your peace like this. That's what usually happens anyway." He finished in a rather melancholy fashion.

Mary was filled with pity for him "Oh, you poor thing, do people really treat you like that? I think it's lovely news. And if its God's idea I know it'll be OK. Have a biscuit! By the way, what's your name?" Her visitor was surprised and pleased by both Mary's response and her interest. He took a biscuit and told her that most people didn't care who he was, they just wanted to get rid of him as soon as possible. Mary was shocked, she felt very sorry for the poor dejected-looking man sitting in front of her. She decided to do what she could to cheer him up. They chatted for a long while, Mary encouraging her guest to tell her about

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his job. Gradually, as he offloaded his resentment, he was able to remember some of the more pleasant assignments and friendly people he had met. He began to relax and cheer up, saying: "Well, I'm glad you liked your message anyway. I was really worried this time. After Zechariah's sceptical wet blanket was thrown at me on my last job, I felt ready to hand in my notice. I've had enough of being doubted and rejected." He became heated again: I am the Angel of the Lord! The Archangel Gabriel! Don't I have any status any more?" Mary was rather amused but tried not to show it. She said, "I believed you. You have a certain something about you, you know." She then added with a slight smile "Perhaps you need to work a little on your attitude, but its obvious you're special. But what I don't understand is, why do you do this work if you hate it so much?"

The angel hesitated and then replied: "You know, it's not so bad all the time. I think I've just gone through a difficult patch ..." He then continued thoughtfully, "I suppose I do it because it's God's job for me."

Mary looked straight at him and said seriously, but with an encouraging smile, "well, if God is asking you to do it, then I reckon you should just keep on doing it."

SKETCH VERSION

You will need

Characters: Mary, Angel, Narrator

Sound effects: Rain, splashing of feet in puddles

NARRATOR: It is raining hard. It is cold and windy and somewhere in Nazareth an angel is on his way to visit Mary.

MARY: *(contentedly humming a tune as she washes up.)*

ANGEL: *(stomping angrily along in the rain. A battered black broly almost hiding him from view. A long, wet, black mac envelops him. He is muttering to himself)*

Why do I get all the rotten jobs? I'm fed up with doing God's dirty work! Why is it always raining when it's MY turn? (etc. grumble, moan, fed up... Arrives at Mary's door, checks his notes and HAMMERS on the door angrily)

(SOUND EFFECTS: Rain still. Loud door knocking)

ANGEL: *(mutters) I bet she won't even be in. After all this!*

MARY: *(answers door with welcoming smile) Hello there!*

ANGEL: *(said moodily but clearly – audience must hear this speech) I've got a message from God for you but you probably don't want to hear it.*

MARY: *(Seems to ignore Angel's speech as she sees how wet he is. Exclaims) Oh! You poor thing, you're soaked through! Come in and get dry and have a cup of tea!*

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ANGEL: *(stomps in ungraciously)*

MARY: *(Takes Angel's mac and broolly. Brings him a towel and shows him to a chair)*

ANGEL: *(sits, still grumpy)*

MARY: *(Brings two cups of tea and sits down opposite angel at kitchen table as if she had all the time in the world) I'd just made myself a pot, so it's nice to have someone to share it with*

(There is a strong contrast between Mary's and the angel's demeanour. Mary has to appear not to be affected by his bad temper.)

Now, what was it you were saying – something about a message from God, wasn't it?

ANGEL: *(grumpily) Yes, and I bet you'll tell me to get lost or say you don't believe me when I've told you!*

MARY: *(brightly) Try me!*

ANGEL: *(looks a bit surprised. Still wary, he throws the message at her) You're going to have God's baby!*

MARY: *(surprised but interested) Well, that's a bit of a surprise. How's He going to manage it?*

ANGEL: *(Reading reluctantly in a dead-pan voice) The Holy Spirit will come on you, and God's power will rest upon you. For this reason the holy child will be called the Son of God. Remember your relative Elizabeth. It is said that she cannot have children, but she herself is now six months pregnant, even though she is very old. For there is nothing that God cannot do.*

(defiantly) Now you argue with me and say you won't do it and who do I think I am disturbing your peace like this?

(sadly) That's what usually happens, anyway.

MARY: Oh, you poor thing! Do people really treat you like that? I think its lovely news. If its God's idea I know it'll be OK. *(picks up biscuit barrel and offers it to angel) Have a biscuit. By the way, what's your name?*

ANGEL: *(surprised) Gabriel. (takes a biscuit) Thanks. Most people don't care who I am, they just want to get rid of me as soon as possible.*

MARY: *(shocked and sympathising) What a rotten job!*

MARY & ANGEL: *(mime chatting while Narrator speaks)*

NARRATOR: Mary and the Angel have quite a chat over their cups of tea.

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Gradually the Angel tells Mary all about his difficult assignments: the bad reception he sometimes gets, the appalling weather, the long distances involved and the unreasonable requests and messages God gives him to deliver. As he unloads his resentment, he begins to relax and even cheer up a little! Mary is able to help him remember some of the pleasant assignments and friendly people he's met and he begins to feel happier.

ANGEL: *(cheerfully)* Well, I'm glad you liked your message. I was really worried this time after Zechariah's wet blanket response.

(suddenly angry) I've had enough of being doubted. I am The Angel of the Lord! Don't I have any status any more?

MARY: *(hiding a laugh)* I believed you! You do have a certain something about you - you certainly stand out from the crowd you know. Perhaps you need to work on your attitude a little (!) but its obvious you're special ... Why do you do this work if you hate it so much?

ANGEL: *(thoughtfully)* Well, you know, its not so bad all the time. I think I've just gone through a difficult patch ... I suppose I do it because its God's job for me.

MARY: Well, if God is asking you to do it, then I reckon you should just keep on doing it!

Hymn or song

You may want to conclude this sketch by singing a version of the Magnificat, or Mary's Song (Luke 1:46-55), like Tell out my soul, the greatness of the Lord (Rejoice and Sing 740)

Prayer

Loving God, thank you for good days and for bad days.

Thank you for everyday and the things you have planned for us to do.

Help us to be like Mary, and to say 'Yes' to you.

Amen

EVALUATION

Please try to answer these questions for yourself and for others who will use this material:

1. What was the most helpful thing?
2. What was the least helpful thing?
3. What would you like to try now?

THE NEXT STEP

If you want more Advent ideas please revisit the website.

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