

Sermon Summary

Rev. Dr. William P. Sanders

Sermon: "My Catholic Friends are Lucky!"

Luke 1:26-38

Suggested books for your quest to understand Jesus' birth:

- *The Birth of the Messiah* by Raymond Brown (updated version, price under \$50.00 or original version, used, for under \$20.00)
- *The Martin Luther Christmas Book*, translated and arranged by Roland H. Bainton (price under \$20.00)
- *Kneeling in Bethlehem* by Ann Weems (price under \$20.00)

Some of the quotes from my sermon for your future research.

This is what Roland Bainton wrote about Luther's Christmas sermons: "In our world today, it seems that there some people have an easy time believing in God, believing in the Bible, believing in Jesus. For others, it seems to be impossible or almost impossible to believe.

It is very clear in Martin Luther's Christmas Sermons that he did not think it was easy to believe — it was not easy for Mary to believe, it was not easy for the shepherds to believe, and it is not easy for us. The most important thing in today's message is that we hear this challenge of faith. 'To you is born this day in the City of David, a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.' Is it true? Was Jesus born for you? Or, as Martin Luther said, 'And this is for us the hardest point, not so much to believe that Jesus is the son of the Virgin and God himself, but to believe that this Son of God is ours.'

Quoting from Martin Luther's Christmas Sermons.

"The name of the girl was Mary. In the village of Nazareth she appeared as a mere servant, tending the cattle and the house, and no more important than a servant among us who does her appointed chores. And yet this was the one whom God chose - a lowly girl from a small town.

'Dear Mary,' said the angel, 'the Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women.' These words so overwhelmed the poor child that she did not know where she was. Then the angel comforted her and said. 'Fear not, Mary, for you have found favor with God, and behold, you shall conceive in your womb and bring

forth a son and you shall call his name Jesus.' It took a mighty act of faith to believe that this baby should play such a role. ... She might have doubted, but she shut her eyes and trusted in God who could make all things happen, even though common sense were against it; and because she believed, God did to her as he had said. She was indeed troubled at first and asked, 'How can this be, since I am a virgin?' She was human and had a human understanding, and for that reason the angel reassured her, saying 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called the Son of God.'

"There are many of you in this congregation who think to yourselves: 'If only I had been there! How quick I would have been to help the Baby! I would have washed his linen. How happy I would have been to go with the shepherds to see the Lord lying in the manger! Yes, you would!

You say that because you know how great Christ is, but if you had been there at that time you would have done no better than the people of Bethlehem. Childish and silly thoughts are these! Why don't you do it now? You have Christ in your neighbor. You ought to

serve him, for what you do to your neighbor in need
you do to the Lord Christ himself."

From the book of poems by Ann Weems, *Knelling in Bethlehem*, the third book that I have suggested to you
this morning. One of her poems entitled: "Mary,
Nazareth Girl"

Mary, Nazareth girl:

What did you know of ethereal beings with messages
from God?

What did you know of men when you found yourself
with child?

What did you know of babies, you, barely out of
childhood yourself?

God-chosen girl:

What did you know of God that brought you to this
stable blessed among women?

Could it be that you had been ready waiting, listening
for the for the footsteps of an angel?

Could it be there are messages for us if we have the
faith to listen? (page 25)