

**Series: NOTEWORTHY. ORDINARY ACCOUNTS OF AN EXTRAORDINARY DAY**

SUNDAY DECEMBER 16, 2018

**POST-IT NOTES**

**Luke 1:11-20, 26-38, 2:8-14**

**Matthew 1:20-25, 2:13-15, 20**

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1. In 1968, a scientist from 3M named Dr. Spencer Silver was working on an adhesive which was supposed to be like Gorilla Glue—super strong. Instead, he accidentally created a weak adhesive. It was reusable and pressure sensitive—but it was a **solution** without a **problem**.

Art Fry, a colleague who had attended one of his seminars came up with the idea of using the adhesive to stick a book mark in his hymnal. He then began to develop his idea—using the scrap yellow paper from the lab next door. His first attempt--**Press N' Peel** bookmarks—flopped. But in 1979, 3M's new product, **Post-Its** took off.

-How many of you have ever used them? They're **great** for fridges, papers you pass to others, shopping lists you stick to your wallet—and casual notes you leave on windows, computer screens or bathroom mirrors! **This was by far the most creative used I've seen the Post-It Jaguar!** If I had a Jag, I don't think I'd be cool with people plastering it with those things.

- a. So, we're in this series about Jesus' birth called **Noteworthy**. All this thinking about notes brought up the concept of **Post-It Notes**. Post-It Notes are interruptions—or extra information to give direction in the daily stuff of life. You give someone a paper to read—they send it back with a Post-It note telling you what they thought of it—or thanking you for loaning it to them.

-You come home expecting supper—and there's a Post-It note on the fridge that says, **GET IT YOURSELF!** You go to get your car keys—and there's a Post-It note that says, "My car wouldn't start—so I took yours!" As you take the last roll of toilet paper out of package, there's a Post-It Note that says, "Don't forget to buy more!" And it has your signature on it.

-How many of you read books and put Post-It notes on all the pages you want to re-read—or with **your** notes or comments on it? How many of you really busy exhausted Moms put Post-It notes on your children's foreheads to remember what their names are? Or on your Christmas gifts to remind you **who** they're for?

- b. As I thought about Christmas, I thought about the messages that came from the angels; way **way** out of the ordinary. If you were to put a fluorescent **Post-It** note on all the pages where angels show up in biblical history, you could tell by the clusters that God is up to something. The story of Jesus' entry into history is plastered with them—which makes sense, because history cracked into two big pieces.
- c. So, here's what I want to talk about; where is it in **your** life that you need to be reminded that God is right there with you—that you **don't** need to be afraid? Where

do you need to be reminded that the **Post-It** note that someone else has stuck on your life is not from an angel—it's **their junk?** Or where do you need to hear God's voice: **Stop—you're heading for trouble!**

2. So—let's start with angels, okay? In the narrative describing Jesus' birth, it simply says that an **angel of the Lord appeared**. Let's talk about angels for a minute. The word comes from the Greek word, **aggelos**, or **messenger**. Angels are **God's** messengers; if they aren't—you **don't** want to be talking to them! From what we understand, angels are with us even when we don't see us. When they **appear**, they simply make themselves visible to us—either to encourage us or give us a message.
  - a. First, let's nuke some misconceptions. First, angels are not humans that have died, like Clarence in **It's A Wonderful Life**. The Bible calls them **ministering spirits**—beings in a category all their own. They never die—and are from a totally different dimension. They exist for the purpose of helping God accomplish His purposes in this universe. They're not **our** servants; they are **God's** servants.
  - b. Jesus said that they see God's face continually, and because of that, their only motive is to please the One they love--not do their own thing. Because of that, they are actively involved in our lives; protecting us, encouraging us, helping us fulfill God's plans for this world. They can be trusted because what they do is **never** about themselves; their motives are pure.
  - c. Something else--they are incredibly powerful and the sight of them **always** creates fear. A single angel once took out 185,000 hardened soldiers intent on murdering everyone in Jerusalem. That's why the first words out of an angel's mouth are always, **Don't be afraid!** And on a final note, there are billions of angels. John in Revelation says there are 10,000 X 10,000--the highest number the Greek language.
 

-So, when you consider their power, their numbers, the fact that they see God's face all the time—and have been actively participating in human history since the beginning—and **still are, that** ought to shoot some adrenaline into your soul!
3. The first Christmas encounter with an angel is not all that flattering—especially considering the fact that the guy's an experienced religious professional. Zechariah—an elderly priest—has been chosen by lot—a roll of the dice--to burn incense in the inner Holy Place of the temple. It symbolized the prayers of the people who stood in the courtyard while he represented them before God. He got a surprise. You could all it—a **post-it note!**

**While Zechariah was in the sanctuary, an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the incense altar. Zechariah was shaken and overwhelmed with fear when he saw him. But the angel said, "Don't be afraid, Zechariah! God has heard your prayer. Your wife, Elizabeth, will give you a son, and you are to name him John. You will have great joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great in the eyes of the Lord. He must never touch wine or other alcoholic drinks. He will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even before his birth. And he will turn many Israelites to the Lord their God. He will be a man with the spirit and power of Elijah. He will prepare the people for the coming of the Lord. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to**

**their children, and he will cause those who are rebellious to accept the wisdom of the godly.” (Luke 1:11-17 NLT)**

-Now, let me read the last two verses of the O.T—written 450 years before the silence was broken by the angel in this passage. See if you notice anything:

**“Look, I am sending you the prophet Elijah before the great and dreadful day of the Lord arrives. His preaching will turn the hearts of fathers to their children, and the hearts of children to their fathers. Otherwise I will come and strike the land with a curse.” (Malachi 4:5-6 NLT)**

- a. Now, Zechariah would have *immediately* known what was going on. God was on the move, and *his* son was the prophet who would come in with power of Elijah! This, friends, was a *phenomenal* answer to **400 years of prayer**. In one act, God was answering the prayers of the people *and* Zechariah and Elizabeth’s longstanding prayer for a son.

-There’s nothing about this message that *isn’t* filled with hope and joy. A son who would bring joy and gladness to them and everyone—*and* be *great* in God’s sight—filled with the Spirit from birth!

- b. How many of you Mom’s and Dad’s would be okay if an angel visited you—and said something like *that* about the future of your child? This old guy should’ve been dancing and playing his banjo! And *yet...?*

***Zechariah said to the angel, “How can I be sure this will happen? I’m an old man now, and my wife is also well along in years.” (Luke 1:18 NLT)***

-What a party pooper! “Gee, I don’t know. Like I’m creakin’ around *now*—I can’t imagine chasin’ a toddler. We can’t afford both Pamper *and* Depends. And if you think *I* look old, you oughta see my *wife...!* I gotta have some insurance here. I don’t think we can take any more disappointments!”

- c. See if you can figure out how *Gabriel* feels!

**Then the angel said, “I am Gabriel! I stand in the very presence of God. It was he who sent me to bring you this good news! But now, since you didn’t believe what I said, you will be silent and unable to speak until the child is born. For my words will certainly be fulfilled at the proper time.” (Luke 1:19-20 NLT)**

-Now, there’s huge significant to this name, Gabriel. First, the name means, **God is my hero!** You *could* interpret Gabriel’s indignance as, “You’re talkin’ smack about my *Hero! There are NO limits to His power!* I *know* Him! He *always* does what He says, no matter how improbable it seems!”

-There’s a history lesson in this! How old were Abraham and Sarah when Isaac came along? Abe was 100, Sarah was 90.

Not only that, it was **Gabriel** who'd visited Daniel 490 years before this to tell him exactly when the Anointed One would come.

- d. We're not told why **Zechariah**—a godly, upright man was so skeptical. Do you mind if I speculate a little? First, to be childless in any culture is really, **really** hard, but in that world—it was **devastating**. Not only did you not have anyone to help you when you got old—it meant that your lineage would die off. When someone didn't have kids, people murmured to friends, "I wonder what **they** did to upset God?"
- e. Elizabeth's response, though, is **filled** with faith! Her husband had been given a **Time Out** by God--**no talking for 9 months!** But Elizabeth?

**How kind the Lord is! ...He has taken away my disgrace of having no children! (Luke 1:25 NLT)**

- 4. I want to take a few minutes to talk about **Post It Notes** again, if you don't mind. What's interesting is that God's **Post It** note was different than the one Zechariah had put on his life. His note said, "**I'm too old! It's too late.**"
  - a. Here's what I've realized; People tend to think this way in pretty much **any** stage of life. There have been some times recently when I've looked in the mirror and thought, "You look so, so...**old!**" Then I realized--Lori was standing behind me!
    - See, you can feel this way if you're 75...**or** 35! The comparison trap is just that—a **trap!** There will always be someone who seems younger, cooler, more successful, further ahead, or has a trimmer body and nicer hair. **There are not winners** in this game, only **losers!**
  - b. How many of you think that maybe God looked at Zechariah and said, **Well, he's a little past his prime...but he'll have to do!** When God chooses a man who's 500 years old to build a ship—or a man who's 100 to start a nation—or a man who's 80 to take on an impossible leadership task, why would 60...or 70 be a stretch?
    - He's my thought; **we** see our limitations through the eyes of a culture that worships youth. If you put a **Post It** note on yourself based on culture that has no center line down it's highway—you're **crazy!** What **God** has to say matters most—and to the best of my knowledge, he's **never** told anyone to retire!
    - Here's what I want you to think about; **what label have you put on yourself?** That you're **too dumb**, or **too damaged**, or that you'll never make a difference? **Relationally Toxic? Too single? Damaged goods? Hopeless? Awkward? Addict? Unloved? Ugly? Messed up?** Here's what I know about **Post-It Notes**; by definition—they have **low adhesive!** They're not tattoos. They come off!
- 5. Then Gabriel—same angel—travels about 70 miles northeast of Jerusalem. This time, it's not a temple or even a large city; it's a Nazareth. It's small town Israel. Back woods. Podunk. Population: 400. Gabriel's assignment was a private meeting with a young woman—likely about 13 or 14 named Mary.

-We're not sure exactly *what* Mary was doing when the angel showed up—but she too was startled. Actually, *confused* more than anything.

**In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a village in Galilee, to a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David. Gabriel appeared to her and said, "Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you!" Confused and disturbed, Mary tried to think what the angel could mean. "Don't be afraid, Mary," the angel told her, "for you have found favor with God! You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. And he will reign over Israel forever; his Kingdom will never end!" (Luke 1:26-33 NLT)**

-Let's stop here for a moment. This is a *boatload* of information! Imagine being **14**, and engaged to be married.

Then this *angel* shows up, puts sticks a big **Post It** note on your future; **Everything you thought would happen has been changed—and you have a mission—starting.....NOW!**

- a. Now, Mary *knew* what this angel was talking about. God had chosen *her* to carry the Messiah. The language was something every Jewish person was familiar with. It was about the **Anointed One**—He would pick up where David left off—be *very* great—and rule over Israel forever.

-What was different was Him being called the **Son of the Most High**. What does that mean? And how do you handle something like this at the age of 14? Being a parent at that age is scary anyone—but the **Messiah's Mom?**

-What **Post-It Note** would you put over an experience like this when *you* were 14? Or 18? Or 22? The words that cross my mind are, **Inadequate! Unprepared! Unworthy! UN-MARRIED!**

-And it seems that this is where Mary lands. See, she's still part of a home; her Mom and Dad are *very* much in control. Small conservative towns like hers had other **Post It** notes they put on young, single pregnant girls—and they *weren't* **HIGHLY FAVORED**. So—Mary has a question:

**Mary asked the angel, "But how can this happen? I am a virgin." The angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the baby to be born will be holy, and he will be called the Son of God. What's more, your relative Elizabeth has become pregnant in her old age! People used to say she was barren, but she has conceived a son and is now in her sixth month. For the word of God will never fail." Mary responded, "I am the Lord's servant. May everything you have said about me come true." And then the angel left her. (Luke 1:34-38 NLT)**

- b. The answer to Mary's question, **But how can this happen?** is quite simple. God will do it. What's interesting here is that the Trinity is foreshadowed:

-The *Spirit* will come upon you...

-The *Power of the Most High (Father)* will overshadow you...

-The *Baby ...will be called the Son of God*

-I don't think Mary understood this any more than we do. She would be a *pregnant virgin*—whose only answer to 400 nosy people would be, "I don't know, God did it! **Talk to Him!**"

Some of the most courageous words in the Bible come from Mary: **May everything you have said about me come true...!** And then? **The angel LEFT!**

-Have you ever wondered how Mary felt when the angel *left*? If it had been me, I would said, "Hey! I could use a little *help!*" I don't even want to *think* about the **Post It** notes that Mary's friends and family put on her—this one who was *avored by God!*

- c. Mary's situation was a set up for being misunderstood. Has anyone here ever been misunderstood? In our world, it happens a *lot*. We do it too! The thought is, **I'd Like You More...if you were More like Me!** Think about it. You can be a brilliant dancer or musician—but if on a scale of 1-10, your math brain is a -5, your math teacher may put a **Post It** note on your forehead that says: **DUMB!**

-I mean, there's *always* a post-it note waiting, isn't there? For slim people, it's *skinny*. For those with a little muscle and meat on their bones, it's *heavy*. For people who love academics, it's *nerd*.

-Here's what I want to say—and this is *really* important; **these are POST-IT NOTES!** Rip them off; don't let them get into your heart or your soul. They're just labels that uncreative people put on those they don't understand—or are too lazy to understand!

6. There's another place in this story that needs an explanatory **Post-It Note**. It's not for us—cause Luke recorded the back-story. It's for Joseph. See, he's clueless. When the angel Gabriel left Mary—she was all alone with an amazing secret—that made her look bad. How does a teenage girl tell her **Dad** this stuff? No Dad in 1<sup>st</sup> century Palestine would say to his 14 year old pregnant daughter, "There, there, Honey! This is no big deal; we'll work this out together!"

-So Mary goes up to visit her relative, Elizabeth—who is miraculously pregnant—and **totally understands what's happened to Mary!** This is clearly and amazing time for Mary—but when John's born and Uncle Zech starts to talk again, she has to go home. And she **knows** the questions will start. And they do. Even when you wear a big robe that covers everything—you can't hide pregnancy forever!

- a. The inevitable happens; Joseph doesn't believe Mary's story for a *minute!* But he is a good man and decides that instead of making a public announcement that clears his reputation, he'll quietly call off the marriage thing.

-As his mind is tumbling around in this cement mixer of pain, fear, anger, theories and revenge fantasies, he has this vision:

**As he considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. “Joseph, son of David,” the angel said, “do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife.**

**For the child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit. And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”**

**...When Joseph woke up, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded and took Mary as his wife. But he did not have sexual relations with her until her son was born. And Joseph named him Jesus.  
(Matthew 1:20-21, 24-25 NLT)**

- b. I’m guessing that Joseph’s blood pressure dropped from 225/175 to 120/60 in seconds! Ever had that happen? Where you’ve been stirred up, angry, afraid, frustrated, hurt—and then God pours it on...**Peace, peace, WONDERFUL peace—coming down from the Father above.**

-And suddenly all the **Post-It Notes** Joseph had mistakenly stuck on Mary’s forehead...**Unfaithful, Betrayer, How could you...?**—and more—fell to the ground. And what was left was this young, beautiful bride-to-be with a pure heart, a pure mind—chosen by God out of **all the girls in Israel**—and so **very** alone and vulnerable!

-And to prevent any further finger-pointing and snickering and suggestive remarks—he **re-chooses** Mary as his bride and accepts all it meant to raise a child who would change the world. The **Son of the Most High!**

- c. What I admire about both Mary and Joseph in this story is their absolute willingness to **just do it** without all the phony excuses, “Okay God—let me **pray** about it for a few years!” And Joseph **knew** it wouldn’t be easy; that the blame would potentially tarnish his name.

-We **think** about that, don’t we? We know something is right, and yet it’s like we’re scared to death of the low adhesive **Post It** notes everyone keeps with them—just in case they need to label someone!

- d. Here’s what’s cool. When Joseph took on the responsibility for Mary—it was in traveling to Bethlehem for **his** family census to pay **his** taxes that Mary gave birth to Jesus there—fulfilling a prophecy made hundreds of years before--that his son, Son of David, Jesus--**Yeshua**—or Joshua, Savior, Son of the Most High—would be born in Bethlehem—**at just the right time.**

-Of course, that put the family right in the crosshairs of a crazy, obscenely jealous and paranoid old king. Herod. More on him next week.

The Magi, important visitors from the East—tipped Herod off that a new king had been born. And it's in the flush of all this that Joseph gets a visit from another angel.

-But instead of bringing peace, this visit brings a terrifying warning; that this crazy king, Herod—only 7 miles away—had sent soldiers to kill every baby in the area—including Jesus--the one he's risked **everything** for.

**After the wise men were gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up! Flee to Egypt with the child and his mother," the angel said. "Stay there until I tell you to return, because Herod is going to search for the child to kill him." That night Joseph left for Egypt with the child and Mary, his mother, and they stayed there until Herod's death. (Matthew 2:13-15 NLT)**

-When it was time to return to Israel, an angel again—lets Joseph know that they can go back. They **wanted** to go back to Bethlehem or Jerusalem given who Jesus was. But instead—they had to go back to the rumor mill—Nazareth. **Rats!**

- e. Sometimes God places **Post-It Notes** of peace over our fear. He lets us know, "You don't have to freak out, run away, or descend into fear and anxiety; I'm **with you—and I'm not goin' anywhere!**

-It could be this morning that you're all wound up and troubled—stressed out, afraid, worn out. And if you'll slow down, listen, take a deep, cleansing breath—you'll feel God's peace rolling down from the Father above—and sweeping over your spirit. The Post-It Note says, "I'm right here! Peace! Don't be afraid—I'm with you!" **Wear it—and take it into your heart!**

-But there are other times—and this is the tough one—where we get lazy, complacent, distracted—and, to just be honest—**we're not watching the road.** And sometimes God says, "Hey, **YOU! Over here! You're in danger—and you need to change your course** or you'll get hurt.

-So, I need to ask--**Are you listening!** Listening to Someone who knows the future—**your** future. Someone who could save you and everything you love. Google is a great tool—but Google doesn't care about you! And **God does!**

7. There's one more thing I need to talk to you about: It's the post-it note that someone else has placed on your forehead, or on your situation, or over your life. I mean, for Zechariah, it was an age thing. **You're too old! The best has passed you by. Just settle in and... BE OLD!**

-In our culture, labels are **rampant.** Sometimes we put this label on ourselves—and we just let go of our health, our dreams, our drive, and our desire to make a difference. If you want to **survive till you die**—you can do that. But **why?**

-The evidence is pretty clear that without a dream, a clear purpose, or a reason to get up and make a difference—people decline and die. **Don't let our culture put a post-it note over your worth!**

- a. Think about Mary. I can think of a **bunch** of Post-It notes people would've put on her. **Too young; Too poor; too unsophisticated and almost certainly uneducated—and from some backwoods community. Unqualified!** Think about the labels **after** people found out she was pregnant and unmarried! And yet after searching through history—God chose **her!** She is by far the **best-known woman in history!**

-We don't even know what she looked like. Most movies portray her as pretty, dark eyes, olive skin, and slim with long, fragrant silky hair. We **actually** have no idea—and I don't think her looks had **anything** to do with God's choice! But in the **selfie-dom** of 2018 they sure do?

Here's my point; in our world people are **very** quick to label people for life—**totally based on appearance**. No one would want their entire obituary to be written up like that; **She was a beautiful specimen of humanity—long silky hair, smooth skin and white teeth—and great clothes on a great body!!**

- b. So. What **post-it note** has someone had the nerve to put on you? On at least two occasions, I've had people I respected tell me I didn't have the ability to lead. That's tough when you **have** to do it—and God **calls** you to do it! I had to peel the **Post-It Note** that said, **Not a Leader!** off my forehead. And I realized that it wasn't a tattoo—and that **God** didn't put it there!

-By **definition** post-it notes are not **tattoos!** Do other people's thoughts and impressions have any value? Of course—we all need to be self-aware. But **post-it notes** are more of a snap-judgment—or, sometimes, dumb statements made in anger or frustration or jealousy—or even hatred.

-Here's the deal; if you sit around and wait for the person who labeled you to come back and peel the **Post It** note off--it won't happen. I've told you about my friend's uncle who told me I had **big legs**. That comment **still** rings in my mind 50 years after it happened. But **I never saw him again!** He never had the chance to say, "Actually, Ken, **your legs are quite normal!**"

- c. So: **What post-it notes do you have stuck to your forehead?** Too old? Too young? Not good enough. **Not enough!** Addict? Ugly? Fat? Uninteresting? Dumb? Geek? **Never-amount-to-much? Sinner?**

-Here's the deal; Jesus—labeled a **bastard child**—and later, **demon-possessed, failure, blasphemer**—spent his life ignoring the labels people put on Him--ripping people's labels off of others. And these were **tough** labels: like, **crippled, leper, demon-possessed, tax collector, scum, bottom feeder, whore**—He ripped the labels off of them!

-There were other people with labels; **righteous, religious profession, important, royal, bible professor, ruler, priest**—He took those labels off, too. And **that** was pretty much why some people hated Him. See, those labels, too, are post-it notes! We'd **like** to have them put on with Gorilla glue—but they're **low-adhesive!**

8. Jesus is no longer labeled as a sinner, a bastard child, or demon-possessed. He's Jesus, Son of God, Savior, Prince of Peace, Messiah, Lord of all. He is, however, still called the **friend of sinners!** And **He** has the authority **and** the power—to rip the post-it notes off of **everything**. Including you. It could be that you've started to **believe** the notes—and label yourself—and limit your expectations because of what someone else has said.

That's not was the most **NOTE-WORTHY** Being in the universe says. Not at all! Because of Him, all the labels change—to **beloved child of the Most High God!** And that's not a **Post-It note**; that's true. Jesus, see, changed **everything!**