

Sunday – December 18, 2011
Pastor – Rev. Walter W. Westbrook
Sermon – **Here Am I**

St. Matthias UMC
Fredericksburg, Va 22405
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Scripture: **Luke 1:26-38**

God calls a lot of people in the Bible: **Noah** (Ark), **Abraham and Sarah** (a new nation, promised land, countless descendents), **Isaac** (saved from being a sacrifice, inherits call from Abraham), **Jacob/Israel** (wrestles with an angel, name and purpose in life are changed), **Gideon** (hiding in a winepress, “The Lord is with you, mighty warrior“ - either sarcastic or prophetic angel), **David** (anointed by Samuel to be king), **Solomon** (called to build the Temple), **Isaiah** (In the Temple, “Here am I, send me”), **all the disciples** and **Paul**, just to name a few.

This week’s Gospel passage precedes last week’s passage in which Mary sang The Magnificat. **This** is her call.

She has a choice, free will, to accept or reject the call. It **sounds** like Gabriel is just telling her how it’s going to be (Luke 1:31-35). But, please notice that this passage concludes with Mary agreeing to be Jesus’ mother (v.38).

Sometimes I wonder how many other young women God may have called, but who chose not to accept the offer. Of course, their stories would not be included in the Bible. The Bible is full of stories of people who answered God’s call, but there aren’t very many that recount someone simply refusing God’s call (Pharoah? Judas?).

The Bible tells one story, from the Creation through the end of time and into a New Creation. The story is populated by people who answer God’s call on their lives and the people whose lives are touched by them, in any number of ways.

God calls **Noah**, but his whole family gets involved. God calls **Abraham** and his son and so on, but the nation of Israel is made up of descendents who were not individually called. **Gideon** leads an army that trusts in his call. **David and Solomon**, as kings, touch many people who respond to their call. Isaiah, as a prophet, spoke to kings and to regular people, sharing God’s word, changing people’s hearts. Then, **in the NT**, the disciples and Paul brought thousands of people into the Way of Christ, even before it was called the Church.

When a person answers God’s call, there will be countless ripples outward into the lives of many, many people. God calls people into ministry, who then touch the lives of people in the churches they serve and in the communities where they live, who then touch the lives of other people. God calls people into mission work, and they affect the people they help, who then affect more people, who affect more people. God calls people into medicine, into teaching, into all kinds of vocations and avocations.

Whenever one of us says “yes,” God’s work spreads. Old ideas are challenged and new ones brought to life. More people hear the invitation to be part of the Body of Christ.

People who are **discouraged** are **encouraged**.

Somebody loved you enough to bring you to church, to read Bible stories to you when you were little, to share God's love with you. Think of who that person might be. That person did not know what sort of life you would lead, how you would influence people around you. But, that person heard God's call to share, and that person made a difference in you.

Do you hear God's call to do something new? To be someone different? To make it a point to go out of your way to share God's love with people who are not **your** people?

God has always loved the human race. But, in this season, we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, God made flesh, God living among us as one of us. That was a new kind of love. Let's live as though we understand that, as though we have a good, strong sense of how God needs us to answer his call and share it with others, who may not ever recognize that call if we don't help them.

Love came down at Christmas, in a new and earth-shaking way. We should be at the epicenter of that earthquake of love. At Christmas, or at any time, there is no better place to be.