Context:

Out of all the Gospel writers, the author of Luke is most interested in the role of women in Jesus’ ministry. In addition to composing the longest Gospel of the four, it is also asserted by scholars that the author wrote both the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts. If you go through and list the different figures you find in both the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts, you will find a long list of women who played important roles in Jesus’ life and ministry. The first one we meet is the most well known of them all, Mary, the mother of Jesus.

Our scripture this morning tells of the story of Mary and how she came to play such an important role in the Christian faith. For many Christians, especially women, Mary is a pivotal figure in the Christian faith. Of all the differences within Christianity, all branches believe that Mary plays a huge role in the Incarnation.

What is amazing about Mary’s story is the background of women in the first and second century era. Following the Levirate laws and other early practices of Judaism, Mary was probably betrothed at a very young age to a man who would have been older than her. As part of the custom of the day, she was probably skilled in ways of taking care of the home, but would not have needed to know how to read or write. Her days would have been spent following women in her community and following the traditions so that one day she would fulfill a role she was born to fulfill. Her life was to be one of marrying a husband, having children, and caring for her family.

All that changed when Mary is approached by an angel who tells her that she will give birth to Jesus, the Son of the Most High. Even as a young single woman in her teens, she will be the one to give birth to the Messiah. That’s a lot of news for one day.

Mary’s response though is one that is simple, yet profound: “I am the Lord’s servant. Let it be with me just as you have said.” And with that pronouncement, the angel is gone.

Application:

In addition to the scripture being a beautiful pronouncement of Jesus’ birth, the story of the angel visiting Mary should be an inspiration to us all. Here in the small town of Nazareth there is a young girl, barely a teen, who is the one who is chosen to carry and deliver Jesus, the Son of God and the one who will bring life to all those he meets. This young girl is the one who has been chosen by God. And her response is that of a servant: “Let it be with me.”

As I get older in life, I see that every person, no matter what age or station in life they find themselves, have some calling on their life to do something for the Kingdom of God. Age nor gender nor other factors really have anything to do with who we think can get the job done; God often likes to surprise us. In every church I serve I continue to be amazed at the gifts and questions that I see children and
teenagers develop as they grow: the young child tugging at the Chrismons on the tree and asking what it means, the college student who comes back home town to ask the preacher questions about faith and service, or the teenager who creates a beautiful painted version of the Nativity story for a United Methodist fundraiser. They hear that God is calling them to do things and ask questions and we get to be right there in the midst of it. And it is something that we should relish as we think about how God continues to call us to serve the Kingdom as well. We are never too young or too old for God to use us to do good in this world.

Our part is to continue to be both the encouragers who help people discern God's call on their lives and to also open ourselves up to new possibilities where God may be leading us. Just think of what happened two thousand years ago when a young woman said: “I am the Lord’s servant. Let it be with me just as you have said.”