

One was young.  
A teenager.  
Perhaps fifteen.

She'd seen angels.  
In her bedroom.  
Said she even knew them by name. Gabriel.

"I'm 15 and I've seen an angel in my bedroom. Called Gabriel."

Try telling that to your girlfriends down the street.  
They were laughing behind her back. Snickering. Gossiping down the street.

The other was old.  
Probably over 60. Wrinkled. Tired.  
Well past the age to bear children.

Not that it mattered. She'd seen no angels. Inside or outside her bedroom. Named Gabriel or otherwise.

But the street still snickered. Gossiped. Still laughed at her behind her back.

In her day, having no kids was bad luck.  
Her fault. Her shame.

The young one had no husband.  
Which was a problem.  
Which really got the kids laughing and snickering and name calling behind her back.

Try telling your girlfriends that not only have you seen an angel, in your bedroom, name of Gabriel.  
But you're engaged. And wait, there's more. You're pregnant. But no boy was involved.

Try telling that to your girlfriends, already laughing and snickering and gossiping behind your back.

The older one had a husband.  
Just one. A priest.  
A holy roller. An incense swinger.

Who'd gone.

Gone from here, a small village "in the hill country of Judea," south of Jerusalem (Luke 1:39).

Gone to here. To Jerusalem.  
Gone to a once in a life-time opportunity.

His big day out.  
His turn, the only time in his priestly,  
incense swinging life,  
to enter God's holy place.

The priest. Kind.  
But kinda dumb.

Dumb as in silent.  
Back from the big day out, he couldn't speak. Or wouldn't speak?  
Was he mad, sad or just plain dumb?

The young one lived here. Nazareth.

With her news and her stories,  
Of an angel in my bedroom  
Called Gabriel.  
And a baby,  
Not by my boyfriend,  
Growing inside of me.  
One day she left town.  
Left. Or did she run away?

The older one had her news.  
Growing inside here.

What do you do when your girlfriends are giggling? And your neighbours are gossiping?  
And your baby is growing.

Why not visit family. Elizabeth.  
Who lived here, Jerusalem.  
And you live here. Nazareth.

Nazareth to Jerusalem.  
That's 150 kilometres.  
Christchurch to Hamner.

No car. No bike.

Just a long walk for the younger one.

One day the older one, Elizabeth,  
hears a voice. Outside her house.

The voice of the young one,  
her cousin Mary.

And Elizabeth, as you open the door, what do you see?

Do you see a young girl. Gone scatty with angel in her bedroom talk.  
Pregnant to boyfriend.

Or Do you see young girl.  
Brave. Resilient.  
Carrying hope with dignity and grace.

Bearing the future,  
a gift from God.  
Gifted by God.  
Gifted with God.

*Now I invite you to wonder. Time to ask questions of the story; of any of the characters;  
questions of ourselves.*

Let me conclude with Bible reading. Luke 1:39-42

Mary didn't waste a minute. She got up and traveled to a town in Judah in the hill  
country, straight to Zachariah's house, and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard  
Mary's greeting, the baby in her womb leaped. She was filled with the Holy Spirit, and  
sang out exuberantly,  
You're so blessed among women,  
and the babe in your womb, also blessed!

And in response to the story and the Bible reading;

Perhaps you're like Mary.  
And you've got something growing inside you.  
Personal; School or work  
Hobbies; Friends  
House; Health

## Finance

I have some paper dolls. They can represent you. Take the doll. Stand in a circle. And wrote on it a prayer to God about how you feel about what is growing in you.

Perhaps you need to be blessed. Perhaps you need an Elizabeth to bless you with words of hope and courage. There are two couch's over the side, couches for Mary's to be blessed by.

Track: LLS