

Title: The Gift of Yes: Mary

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Text: [Luke 1:26-38](#)

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My favorite Christmas story is about the young boy who was given a very important role in the church Christmas play. He was to be the angel and announce the birth of Jesus. For weeks he rehearsed the line that had been given to him, "*Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy.*" The grandparents got in on it and any time the family was

together, and the boy was there, they would dress him up in his costume and he would rehearse his part for them, "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy." They were certain that when he grew up, he would be another Tom Hanks winning multiple Oscars because of his dramatic ability.

The great night came for the Christmas pageant and everybody was in place. All the grandparents and extended family were there. Visitors had come in and all the children were in costumes, complete with bathrobes for the three kings and fake wings and halos for the angels. Everyone were excited, and was really into this thing. As the pageant started, the excitement was electric around the room. The dramatic event in the first part was the announcement of the angel, "*Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy.*" The spotlight hit this young boy and as he stood center stage in the middle of it all, he delivered the line to Mary, "*Boy, have I got news for you.*"

Those words are really what the angel Gabriel should have said to Mary, rather than the greeting he gives her.

When the angel came to her, he said, "rejoice favored one! The Lord is with you!" She was confused by these words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. The angel said, "Don't be afraid, Mary. God is honoring you. Look! You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus." Luke 1:28-31

Over the next four weeks, Christians around the world will prepare themselves for the greatest gift- the coming of the Christ child. Alongside our shopping lists, end of the year tasks, meal preparing, and cookie baking, the season of Advent allows us to prepare our lives for the coming of the Christ child.

We begin a new sermon series called *The Gift of Yes*, looking at the ways characters central to the Christmas story said YES to God so that God can be with us in the world. It's also a challenge to each and every one of us to say YES to God.

We begin with Mary's yes to God- One of the things about God is that God tends to arrive in our lives when we are going about our daily business. When God asks us to be a part of God's plan for the world, it usually causes a disruption in our lives, a holy disruption, but still a disruption for sure. Most of us do not like to have our carefully made plans for life to be disrupted.

Think about the times you've been asked to do something. When someone invited you to join a group, lead a committee, come to church, lead that soccer team, or join the softball league - or even go to a party, a chance to get a break, have a little fun. How many of us first go through the list of ALL the things we need to do first? Or we think, I can't possibly fit that into my schedule, I just don't have time for that. These are just the simple, ordinary things that are asked of us. It feels like things are already chaotic enough.

Mary goes through this as well. When the angel Gabriel shows up and says "*rejoice favored one! The Lord is with you,*" Luke captures Mary's reaction like this

"She was confused by these words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be." Luke 1:29

In other words, Mary wonders "who exactly is this" and "who exactly talks like this?"

I believe we can find encouragement in Mary's response that her yes to God is not an automatic yes. It's not without some confusion on her part, she is perplexed. She gives Gabriel all the reasons this shouldn't work - we are young. Joseph and I are just starting our lives, we are not settled, this is not in our plan, if we even have a plan at all. We believe that Mary's family was poor, as Nazareth truly was the other side of the tracks, some have even suggested that Mary's family even lived in a cave. She lives in a country controlled and occupied by a foreign power She has many reasons to say NO. We know this feeling, because when God disrupts our lives, asks us to do something different, something hard, when God says to us, "have I got some news for you," it is in our nature to say "isn't someone else more

qualified" or "check back in a few months" or even "that's impossible" We search for reasons to say NO.

Two artists were commissioned to paint their conception of peace. A panel of distinguished judges would determine which artist had best captured the idea. The winner would get a rich commission. And after they had been painting for a long time, the judges assembled to view their work.

The first artist unveiled his painting, and there was a beautiful, magnificent pastoral scene, with a farmer coming in after a hard day in the fields. His wife was cooking, his children were playing around the hearth, and all was at peace in this tranquil and beautiful farm.

"That's it," said the judges, "but we'll look at the other rendering anyway." They removed the veil of the second painting. Instead of a tranquil, pastoral scene, there was a raging waterfall producing a mist which communicated hostility. But over on the side of the waterfall was a tiny branch of a tree growing out of a rock, and on the end of the branch was a bird's nest. And on the edge of the nest was a mother bird, singing her heart out in the midst of the turbulence around her. The judges thought for a moment, then said, "This is peace, tranquility and celebration in the midst of turmoil."

This is how God comes into our lives and into the world. There is never a perfect time or perfect place or perfect situation. God doesn't wait for us to have everything "just right" before breaking into our lives with the possibility of something greater.

We might say that God is the great disruptor. By choosing Mary to bear Christ to the world, God causes a disruption.

Mary's yes is a great disruption to the prevailing wisdom of the day

God's ask and Mary's yes are testimonies to the nature and character of God.

"Nothing is impossible for God. Then Mary said, 'I am the Lord's Servant. Let it be with me just as you have said.' Then the angel left her." Luke 1:37-38

For Mary, saying yes to God was saying YES to the conventional wisdom and social practices of the day. Joseph could have shunned her and left her penniless. If people thought that she had committed adultery, the punishment for that was being stoned to death. But Mary still was ultimately able to say "Here I Am, the Servant of the Lord."

She said YES to God and YES to God's way. This call from God is dangerous in so many ways, but Mary knows in her heart of hearts that nothing is impossible with God.

The sink was sitting at the bottom of the hill. It was a least 500 pounds sitting at the bottom of the hill, needing to go up to the house being built half a mile up the steep hill. Who in the world was going to carry this sink up this hill? It certainly couldn't be our Guatemala mission team would it? Then the people from Casa Tat Loy showed up. In Guatemala, alcoholism is an epidemic among males. Many of them end up shunned from society. Casa Tat Loy is a facility that seeks to give these men a second chance at life, a chance to bounce back and know some kind of life once again. One might say, that they believe that nothing is impossible with God.

On this day, as we wondered just exactly who would get the sink up the hill and into the house. Six men from Casa Tat Loy showed up that day, serving as part of their work they do to beat the disease of alcoholism and get back on their feet. Perhaps the most unlikely of heroes, they said YES and carried this sink all the way up the hill, so that the family could have a kitchen sink. As they reached the top and I sat there looking at them, I could recall the words from the Gospel of Luke. "Nothing is impossible with God."

Friends, God comes to each and every one of us, asking us to bring God's way into the world.

No matter your to-do lists. No matter the very real responsibilities, pressures, worries that weigh upon your shoulders. No matter the very real challenges our world faces – you, can help bring God into this world.

When God asks, know that God trusts and God walks with you.

You too can be courageous like Mary...in fact, God is counting on it. God is counting on you and me, to bring something new, something of God into this world.

For what often feels impossible, is in reality the way of God.

For nothing is impossible with God.

Will you pray with me?