

## Fear No More Luke 1: 26-38

In just a few hours, the season of Advent will come to an end, and we will begin celebrating the 12 days of Christmas. Our emphasis will shift from that of preparation and anticipation to one of celebration and anticipation. Tomorrow we will remember and celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who came to earth in human flesh. We will also remember the promises of Scripture that proclaim He will come to earth again. Jesus will come to earth again, not as a defenseless baby in a manger, but as a conquering warrior and king. Both world- changing and life-changing events became possible because someone, in this case a young teenaged girl named Mary, said yes to God. When she agreed to bear the Christ-child, it was the beginnings of a marriage made in heaven, the perfect union of Gods will- the plan of salvation that existed before the beginning of creation, and human will- the choice that God gives each of us to respond to His love.

The direct result of that perfect union of human and divine wills was that Jesus Christ entered the world, fully God and fully human. God chose Mary to be the birth mother of Jesus more than 2000 years ago, and today God still chooses people- even people like us- to accomplish His divine will, all the while allowing us free choice. It is one of the most wondrous mysteries of the season. Perhaps the most important thing to remember during this holy season is that good things happen to the world when people say yes to God.

It is amazing to consider that the Christmas story, the one we Christians hold in such high esteem and base our whole faith around, began with an ordinary person and an extra ordinary decision. When Mary said yes to God it as likely the most difficult decision she ever made in her life. Here was a young girl, engaged to be married, anticipating her wedding day and beginning a new life with her husband to be. She was excited about moving into a new house and starting a family of their own.

Perhaps she was praying and giving God thanks for those very things when a holy messenger arrived and basically asked her if it would be alright if God changed up that traditional sequence of events. Of all things, she would conceive in a miraculous way and give birth to a child before her wedding day- in an age and culture where her husband to be would unlikely believe her story and an unwed mother would likely be stoned to death.

She was afraid, but the amazing thing is that Mary said yes, and we can only point to God's grace for the reason why. Such a thing would be impossible to believe if God was not squarely in the center of it. If you or I were writing the story we would probably have written it much differently to avoid all the whispered questions and eyebrows that are raised, even today some 2000 years later. The story of Jesus virgin birth is hard for some to believe, let alone His crucifixion and resurrection. It is a holy mystery why some of us respond to God's love why others seem oblivious to it. But the truth is that God allows us to have freedom of will and still uses us- yes even sinful people like you and I- to accomplish His divine will.

Sometimes God will use circumstances, people or unusual events as divine agents to allow our will to meet His will in a most amazing way. In Mary's case, God's agent of change was the Archangel Gabriel. In a fearful and troubling time, the angel brought her a message of comfort and assurance- do not be afraid, for you have found favor with God. Mary conquered her fears.

Luke 1:30 Mary found favor with God. She conquered her fears, yet she would still endure the whispered accusations of immorality, the physical pain of childbirth and eventually the emotional pain of watching her firstborn son suffer and die on a Roman cross. Even so, she wouldn't let those things stop her as she trusted God enough to say yes. The tears she shed as friends and relatives gossiped about her, the tears she shed as she experienced the excruciating pain of childbirth, the tears she shed at the cross watching her first-born Son die in agony, would one day be replaced by tears of joy from knowing that she had a role in the empty tomb and the Risen Messiah.

Good things happen in the world when people conquer their fears and say yes to God. Abraham said yes to God and from then on faith would save people from their sins. 42 generations later Mary said yes to God and as a result the Messiah, the Lord God in human flesh, was born in Bethlehem. Jesus said yes to His Father in heaven and suffered and died for our sins so that we don't have to. Good things happen in the world when people conquer their fears and say yes to God.

Unfortunately, because that world is fallen and damaged by sin, it also means we may experience some bad things along the way. However, in the end it will be worth it. Revelation 2:11 Revelation 3:10-12. If you haven't said yes to Jesus yet, now is the time.

Lord, thank you for coming to earth and offering to rescue us from our sins and helping us to conquer our fears. Help us now to continue to love and trust in you even more, and say yes when you call, every minute, every hour and every day. Amen.