

“CHRISTMAS EVE MORNING”

Sunday, December 24, 2023 Minnesota Valley Church

4th Sunday in Advent

Prelude-Rebekah Olson

Welcome & Prayer

Hymn #41 (vss. 1&2) “The Happy Christmas Comes Once More”

Lighting of the Fourth Advent Candle

Hymn #331 “Away in a Manger”

Luke 1:26-38 *In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, 27 to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. 28 The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." 29 Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. 30 But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. 31 You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, 33 and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end." 34 "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?" 35 The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. 36 Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month. 37 For nothing is impossible with God." 38 "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said." Then the angel left her.*

Hymn #334 (vss. 1,2&6) “O Come, Little Children”

Matthew 1:18-25 *This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. 19 Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.*

20 But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." 22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 23 "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"-which means, "God with us." 24 When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. 25 But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

Hymn #336 (vss. 1,2&8) “Thy Little Ones, Dear Lord, Are We”

Christmas Testimonials

Announcements

Hymn #32 “When Christmas Morn is Dawning”

Message: “A TOUGH ASSIGNMENT” Luke 1:38; Matthew 1:24&25; Pastor Tom Olson

LIES: One of the biggest lies of the devil that keep us from fulfilling our destinies and allow us to live a life of no regrets is this lie: the goal in life is to be happy and comfortable, to avoid hardships. But if comfort was the goal of a piece of wood, it could never become a great carving or part of a fine home. If comfort was the goal of an athlete, they would never win. If comfort was the goal of a worker, they would never accomplish anything of value.

EXAMPLE: Mary and Joseph could have refused their difficult assignments from God. But they would have missed being a key part of the greatest story ever told. Let’s look together at A TOUGH ASSIGNMENT from Luke 1 and Matthew 1.

I. MARY’S TOUGH ASSIGNMENT

Luke 1:38 "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said." Then the angel left her.

MARY: Mary heard what the angel said about becoming the mother of the Son of God as a virgin. This was a very tough word for a young, engaged woman. She was likely in her late teens.

IMPLICATIONS: What would this assignment from God mean for her life at home. It would mean many things like:

1. Being labeled as an immoral and unfaithful fiancé.
2. Being rejected by Joseph.
3. Being rejected by extended family and the community.
4. Facing a life of poverty and abuse.

ACCEPTANCE: But notice what Mary doesn't do. She doesn't bring up all of these arguments to the angel. She willingly accepts this difficult assignment from God by faith. She doesn't hesitate. Her spirit is totally yielded to God throughout the whole process. All she asks is how this can happen since she is a virgin. This allows the angel to give an answer that helped her and helps us understand who Jesus really is.

FAITH: Mary is one of the prime examples of a person who is totally yielded to God and totally trusting. Faith does not have to see results. Faith obeys God based upon the character of God and not upon the results of the faith. That is why Job could lose everything and still say, ***“Though he slay me, yet will I trust him.”*** (***Job 13:15***) That is why Abraham could trust God when asked to sacrifice Isaac and that is why Isaac could trust Abraham as he was bound to the altar. Faith trusts the character of God.

That is easy to do when things are going well. It is hard to do when God asks us to bear a heavy load or lay down our life. Mary did not question, she accepted the assignment.

II. JOSEPH'S TOUGH ASSIGNMENT

Matthew 1:24-25a *When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. 25 But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son.*

HESITANT: Joseph did well but he did not immediately accept the assignment of marrying a girl carrying someone else's child. Remember that Joseph was about to end the engagement. You can't blame him. No one had ever heard of a virgin birth in all history.

UNDERSTANDABLE: Do you think that Mary tried to explain to Joseph that the angel told her that the child was the son of God? I suspect she did. But I don't think he believed it. He wanted to break the engagement. He was a good man and wanted to do it quietly. God had to send an angel to speak to him. He needed more than Mary's word. He needed a supernatural encounter.

ANGELIC: But when the angel spoke to Joseph, he accepted it. He went back and took Mary to be his wife. He was ready to face the ridicule, the gossip, the accusations. He was willing to take the responsibility of raising up the son of God.

ACCEPTANCE: Joseph also stands as an example to us of willingness to take a hard assignment from God by faith.

III. THE END RESULT

Matthew 1:25b *And he gave him the name Jesus.*

HARDSHIP: So what was the end result of Mary and Joseph accepting a tough assignment from God? In the short run, it was extremely difficult. They had to walk 82 miles to Bethlehem for the census and taxation late in the pregnancy. They had to deliver the child in a barn. They had to flee from King Herod in the middle of the night and escape all the way to Egypt. They had to remain in Egypt until Herod died. They had to watch innocent Jesus be arrested and nailed to the cross.

WORTHWHILE: But notice the thing that made it all worthwhile: HIS NAME! ***“And he gave Him the name Jesus.”*** Jesus means Jehovah Saves. The long-term result of their obedience was the sacrifice of the perfect Lamb of God to take away the sins of the world...including their own.

SONG: So many of these things remind me of our precious songs in our hymnal like this one:

*Oft times the day seems long, our trials hard to bear,
We're tempted to complain, to murmur and despair;
But Christ will soon appear to catch His Bride away,
All tears forever over in God's eternal day.*

*It will be worth it all when we see Jesus,
Life's trials will seem so small when we see Christ;
One glimpse of His dear face all sorrow will erase,
So bravely run the race till we see Christ.*

GOOD: It was worth it all for Mary and Joseph. They raised the Messiah who takes away the sins of the whole world. It was worth it for Jesus who **“for the joy set before Him endured the cross.”** It will be worth it all for the martyrs who give their lives as a testimony for Jesus. No assignment is too difficult if it is from God and for the sake of the salvation of the lost.

APPLICATION: *Joy to the world, the Lord is come. Let earth receive her King.* Our world desperately needs to come to know Jesus. We need Him to return and make things right. And He is coming back soon to do that. Until then, we keep our eyes on Him and run our race with endurance, knowing that He is preparing a place for us in heaven by His grace. HEAVEN MAKES TOUGH ASSIGNMENTS WORTH IS. May we be like Mary and Joseph and willingly accept whatever God asks us to do. Amen

Now may the peace of God that passes all understanding, guard your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus. Amen

Hymn #26 “What Child Is This?”

Lord’s Prayer

Benediction

Doxology & 3-Fold Amen

Postlude: Rebekah Olson