

Welcome and Introduction

Welcome back to our church building! What a joy to be with you all in this Advent Sunday together, worshipping the Lord our God, the one who sent us His precious son, Jesus Christ! Let's pray: *"Father God, thank you for being with us all during this second lockdown in our nation. Thank you for your grace and protection and we rejoice with the good news of a vaccine against this deadly virus. We want to lift up your name and praise you this morning fully hearted and we give you all the honour and glory. In Jesus' precious name, we pray, amen."*

Song 1 – Joy to the World by Isaac Watts, 1719

<https://youtu.be/cr8myPmEpWw> Click on the link or copy and paste to your browser in order to hear and follow the song on YouTube.

*Joy to the World, the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare Him room,
And Heaven and nature sing,
And Heaven and nature sing,
And Heaven, and Heaven, and nature sing.*

*Joy to the World, the Saviour reigns!
Let men their songs employ;
While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, repeat, the sounding joy.*

*No more let sins and sorrows grow,
Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make His blessings flow
Far as the curse is found,
Far as the curse is found,
Far as, far as, the curse is found.*

*He rules the world with truth and grace,
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders, wonders, of His love.*

Song 2 – Hark The Herald Angels Sing by Wesley, Mendelssohn 1739

<https://youtu.be/lCt1s44cfMM> Click on the link or copy and paste to your browser in order to hear and follow the song on YouTube.

*Hark! the herald angels sing: "Glory to the newborn King!
Peace on earth and mercy mild God and sinners reconciled"
Joyful, all ye nations rise join the triumph of the skies
With angelic hosts proclaim: "Christ is born in Bethlehem"
Hark! the herald angels sing: "Glory to the newborn King!"*

*Christ by highest Heav'n adored Christ the everlasting Lord!
Late in time behold Him come offspring of a Virgin's womb
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see; Hail the incarnate Deity
Pleased as man with man to dwell Jesus, our Emmanuel
Hark! The herald angels sing: "Glory to the newborn King!"*

*Hail the Heav'n-born Prince of Peace! Hail the Son of Righteousness!
Light and life to all He brings Ris'n with healing in His wings
Mild He lays His glory by born that man no more may die
Born to raise the sons of earth born to give them second birth
Hark! the herald angels sing: "Glory to the newborn King!"*

Preaching and Teaching

The Life of Mary

Reading from Luke 1:26-56

26 In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, 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 favoured! 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 favour with God. 31 You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him 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 Jacob's descendants for ever; 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 on 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 unable to conceive is in her sixth month. 37 For no word from God will ever fail.' 38 'I am the Lord's servant,' Mary answered. 'May your word to me be fulfilled.' Then the angel left her. 39 At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, 40 where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. 41 When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. 42 In a loud voice she exclaimed: 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! 43 But why am I so favoured, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? 44 As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. 45 Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfil his promises to her!' 46 And Mary said: 'My soul glorifies the Lord 47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, 48 for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, 49 for the Mighty One has done great things for me – holy is his name. 50 His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. 51 He has performed mighty deeds with

his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. 52 He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. 53 He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty. 54 He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful 55 to Abraham and his descendants forever, just as he promised our ancestors.’ 56 Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months and then returned home.

Introduction

This is our second Christmas Advent service and in a couple weeks we will be celebrating the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ! Last week we lit a candle of hope in preparation for Christmas and the expectation of Christ's return in all His glory and power. We read the scripture, which spoke about the Magi, who brought expensive gifts to Jesus and we asked the question: which are the gifts Jesus would like to receive from us in this season? We answered: 1. we may accept His invitation; 2. we may follow Him and that we may hear His voice and open our hearts to receive Him. As I was preparing for this Sunday and meditating on the Gospels accounts of Jesus' birth I was inspired by this young lady, Mary. She is one of the most inspirational people in the Bible. Mary is this humble, courageous and beautiful young woman, who carried Jesus in her womb and she was blessed. In her song we just read Mary rejoiced in God her Saviour, I would like you to light up a candle of joy in your homes this week. Jesus is the Joy of the whole world! And the joy of the Lord is our strength! ***And Mary said: 'My soul glorifies the Lord 47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, Luke 1:46-47*** Today I would like to point out 7 aspects about Mary's life and her character and I hope it will encourage and help us to apply them in our own lives.

I – Mary Was Chosen

“The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” (which means “God with us”). Matthew 1:23 God had a plan for Mary before she was born. God knew she would be carrying Jesus in her womb. Mary had an assignment, a destiny and a real calling from God. She was only a teenager when the angel appeared to her. I wonder if she knew about her calling before the angel appeared to her. I believe there was something very special about this young lady. From her reactions and in her beautiful song we can say she knew God very well and she also knew about what was happening with her people, the people of Israel. Mary was chosen and I wonder how she felt later on as she watched Jesus playing as a little boy and went through potty training with him. I wonder what Jesus' first words were. And she fed him, just think about the intimacy of a mother feeding a child. I remember when my wife was breastfeeding our own children. How precious it was for me to simply look at them looking into their mother's eyes as they felt secure, comforted and loved. You Mothers who are here would probably know better what I am talking about. Mary breast fed Jesus, the son of God. I love Christmas season and nativity plays and carols, last year I was Herod and Andrea was the Angel in a play we performed to our students at Open Hands. The majority of our students are from other faith, but we want them all to know Christ, the Saviour of the World. But here is the great new. Mary was chosen and you are also chosen, in fact Paul's write this: ***“For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.” Ephesians 1:4*** The father who made everything and who is the only true living God made you, to know Him, to walk with Him, and to be transformed by His presence. Every part of life is better with Jesus! Regardless of your age, your occupation or education, your background, your challenges or your difficulties you are chosen to fulfil the will of God for your life. You

have a purpose and destiny and you are not here by chance or by accident. God had a plan and purpose for your life before you were born

II – Mary Was Free

“In the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin’s name was Mary.” Luke 1:26-27 She never allowed her past to limit her. She was from a poor family and she lived in a very small and insignificant town. Her upbringing and the fact she was a woman would mean people had very small expectations that she would ever achieve anything important in life. How do we know that Mary and Joseph were poor? We read in **Luke 2:22-24** when Joseph and Mary took Jesus to the temple to be circumcised...**22 When the time came for the purification rites required by the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord 23 (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord”), 24 and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: “a pair of doves or two young pigeons.”** If we read in Leviticus it says it was required for a son to bring a Lamb, however for poor families, the law would allow them to bring a pair of turtle doves instead. They had limited resources, yet she seemed so free, so bold, so confident and God’s presence was all around her. Mary was free and the good news is that you also can be set free. You can be set free because of Jesus Christ, the son of God Jesus himself said this...***“Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” John 8:32.*** Is there anything in your life that may be holding you back? Every fear, anxiety, obsessive compulsive disorder, eating challenges, sadness, shame AND depression. You can be set free! Not because you deserve it, but because of the grace and mercy of God. Jesus died on the cross to set us free! You can grow and live a life to your full potential. Mary was free and you can be free too!

III – Mary Showed Amazing Faith

We need to picture this event: a teenage girl, all alone and an angel appearing to talk to her. How would you respond? Hello, I am Gabriel...How would you feel? Yet she responded: ***“I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May your word to me be fulfilled.” Then the angel left her.”” Luke 1:38.*** We know that few months earlier the same angel appeared to Zachariah, who was a priest and the Luke tell us that in **v.12 When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. 13 But the angel said to him: “Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John 18 Zechariah asked the angel, “How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years.” Luke 1:12-18.** There is a big difference in how they respond to God’s call. Zachariah, an old man of God and Mary a young teenage girl and she showed amazing faith. Both had an angel appearing to them. Both had promises of a miracle: Zachariah said: ***“How can I be sure of this?”*** Mary said: ***“may your word to me be fulfilled”.*** She was brave even against all odds; she walked in obedience to God’s will for her life. Mary showed amazing faith and you can show amazing faith. ***“Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.” John 14:12*** You can show faith by trusting God with your life to run with all the plans he has for you and not to be limited with the labels that people have placed on you. They’ve tried to put you inside a box, saying: “You’re never going to be able to do this...this is how far you

can go". You can rebuke this in name of Jesus and you can believe for his kingdom to come. Stand for truth and for justice and show amazing faith!

IV- Mary Was Blessed

"In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!" Luke 1:42-45 Elizabeth was her cousin and she was Zachariah's wife. He was an old man and she was way beyond child bearing. They were waiting for a long time and now Elizabeth is pregnant. Mary goes to visit her and when she walks in the room something happens in Elizabeth's womb. ***41 When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.*** Here is John the Baptist jumping with joy inside his mother's womb. Mary was blessed because she believed of what God had promised to her. She was not perfect. One of the challenges of our world today is that Mary has become an idol and a deity in many Christian segments. In fact she was a sinner just like me and you and surely she had her moments of anxiety and doubt. However, her life is such an inspiration and encouragement for us all today and we should follow her example of devotion and submission to God. Mary was blessed and you are blessed! ***"Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." John 20:29*** The father's heart is for you to live in his blessings. You can live a blessed life if you truly believe and trust in the goodness of God. Thinking about this year, I can see that we as a family have been incredibly blessed by God. We've seen God's protection and provision for us in a time that many were struggling, many had lost their jobs. We've been so blessed, even in the challenging year we've all had. If we start counting God's blessings and faithfulness, we will see how much He has already done for each one of us. There is a hymn that I used to love singing in the Baptist Church I grew up in Brazil that says: *"Count your blessings, name them one by one. Count your blessings, see what God has done! Count your blessings, name them one by one. Count your many blessings, see what God has done!"*

V- Mary Was a Worshipper

And Mary said: "My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed." Luke 1:46-48. When Elizabeth made that exclamation about how blessed Mary was. Mary's position was to humble and worship her heavenly father. She delighted in His presence. This young lady was full of devotion and purity and Mary was a worshipper and you can be a worshipper. ***"God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth." John 4:24.*** What a privilege we have as we all can be worshippers today. He is looking for worshippers to worship in spirit and truth. God's presence is everywhere, be available to him and be a worshipper. We were born to worship God!

VI – Mary Remembered the Goodness of God

"...But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart." Luke 2:19 This verse comes just after the shepherds came to visit Jesus. The shepherds had a tremendous encounter with the heavenly hosts and they were the first to visit Jesus. ***8 And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their***

flocks at night. 9 An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10 But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. 11 Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. 12 This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” 13 Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, 14 “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.” The first ones to be invited to see Jesus was the simple shepherds. They probably could not write or read and were probably quite smelly from taking care of the sheep. However, they were invited to see the King of the World. Mary thought about these things often. She was keeping in her heart all that she has saw and heard about all that what God was doing. Mary remembers the goodness of God and you can remember the goodness of God this Christmas. **“Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name.” Psalms 100:4** Paraphrasing it we could say... Enter His presence with the password: ‘thank you’. God is good - in fact in your biggest challenge He is still good. Remember the goodness of God and count the blessings! I am so grateful for becoming a member of this church. What a privilege it is for us to be called to serve in His kingdom. Looking back at my own life, I also came from a poor family and I grew up in a dangerous neighborhood and many of my friends got into drugs and many were killed. Yet, God’s mercy and goodness reached me and set me a part to fulfill his plan for my life.

VII – Mary Went Through Many Challenges

I love the story of Simeon in the temple waiting to see Jesus. The Holy Spirit had revealed to him that he was not going to die before he had seen the Messiah, the Lord and Saviour. He was a righteous man and full of devotion to God. Every day he waits...Is this the day? And the expectation was building up, when he finally saw Jesus in the temple He said: **“Lord, now let your servant depart in peace...for my eyes have seen your salvation! Luke 2-29-30** Then he makes this amazing statement to Mary and Joseph: **“This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.” Luke 2:34-35** Mary overcame many challenges. She never allowed her background to stop her. She went through poverty and probably had a limited education. She knew that Joseph could have left her. A pregnant woman outside of marriage! Just think for a moment about the shame and stigma that it would have been at that time and culture. Later as she was watching her son being rejected, betrayed, beaten and crucified. She had the grace of God to pass through every test and you can also walk through every challenge. **“Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.” Psalms 23:4** I know each of us will experience difficulties and dark valleys, embrace them and remember God is with you. His name will be Emmanuel, God is with us. He will help us to pass through the cold winter and the spring will come. We should fix our eyes in Jesus and rejoice in our suffering. ... **“weeping may stay for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning.” Psalms 30:5b**

Conclusion

Mary was chosen and you were also chosen to fulfil God’s purpose for your life! Mary was free and you can be set free. Some may be living with chains which are holding you

back. It is time to let Jesus set you free! Mary showed amazing faith. You can show amazing faith. Let's believe for new outpouring of His presence, for healing and deliverance, for vision and miracles. Mary was blessed and you are blessed! Mary was a worshipper and you can be a worshipper in fact you were born to worship God. Mary remembered the goodness of God and you can also remember the goodness of God by being thankful and grateful. She went through many challenges and she overcame them. We also can overcome through the blood of the Lamb. We can rest assured that God is with us through each and every one of our challenges and difficulties.

Response Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father,

Thank you for the joy and wonders of this season and the wonderful lessons we can learn through Mary's life. Thank you for choosing us and calling us to be part of your kingdom. May we obey and fulfil the purpose you have for each one of us. Lord set us free from our sin, iniquities and every hindrance that may be pulling us back. We want to be carriers of the Gospel of Jesus and His light in this world of darkness. May we declare your goodness and Lord help us to be thankful and grateful for all you have done! Father we thank you for sending Jesus and we are blessed and saved when we believe and accept your truth. Thank you for your presence and your promise for being with us in times of trouble. Lord fill our heart with faith, hope, joy, love and peace this Christmas, in Jesus' holy name, I pray. Amen.

Song 3 – Mary Did You Know by Mark Lowry, 1984 (Pentatonix)

<https://youtu.be/gDpoJ5z1Qlw> - Click on the link or copy and paste to your browser in order to hear and follow the song on YouTube.

*Mary, did you know that your Baby Boy would one day walk on water?
Mary, did you know that your Baby Boy would save our sons and daughters?
Did you know that your Baby Boy has come to make you new?
This Child that you delivered will soon deliver you*

*Mary, did you know that your Baby Boy will give sight to a blind man?
Mary, did you know that your Baby Boy will calm the storm with His hand?
Did you know that your Baby Boy has walked where angels trod?
When you kiss your little Baby you kissed the face of God?*

Oh Mary did you know... Ooh Ooh Ooh

*The blind will see the deaf will hear
The dead will live again
The lame will leap
The dumb will speak
The praises of The Lamb*

*Mary, did you know that your Baby Boy is Lord of all creation?
Mary, did you know that your Baby Boy would one day rule the nations?
Did you know that your Baby Boy is heaven's perfect Lamb?
The sleeping Child you're holding is the great "I am"*

Final Words and Apostolic Blessings

We are coming to the end of our service today and we hope you enjoyed it. Next week we will continue with our Christmas Advent services and I would like us to have a BRBC got talent and I would like you all to participate. The theme will be God's love in Christmas and you can prepare a poem, a play, a prayer or play a carol in the piano. Please sign up and let me know what you are going to do by Wednesday by email, Phone or WhatsApp so I can organize the order of the service. After the service there will be a church meeting and the leadership team would like you all to participate. Our Christmas Service will be on Sunday, December 20 and there will be a special group visiting us and they will be performing and singing some Christmas carols for us. Please invite your friends and families.

Let us end our service this morning praying the Lord 's Prayer together:

*Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory
forever and ever. Amen.*

Have a blessed week and see you all next Sunday at church!