

### **Media Notes**

There is one scripture verse to display as part of the sermon today

### **Key Questions, Metadata and Outline**

#### ***What is this sermon about?***

This sermon is about God seeking Mary through the angel Gabriel and the message that she will give birth to a child.

#### ***Why is this sermon important?***

This sermon is important because it offers the model of Mary to say yes to God, even when what God asks is hard and difficult.

#### ***What is the context of this sermon?***

This is the first Sunday of Advent. The Hanging of the Greens worship service is in the afternoon at 5:00 PM.

#### ***What are the next action steps?***

Pay attention to your spending this Christmas. Whatever you spend on your family, I invite you to give an equal amount to our Christmas Eve Offering to help others in Butler County and Africa.

#### ***What is the good news (bottom line)?***

Nothing is impossible for God.<sup>1</sup> Even when what God asks is hard and difficult, we can say yes.

### **Metadata**

1. Topic(s)
  1. Advent
2. Sermon Books of the Bible
  1. Luke
3. Series
  1. Seek
4. Speaker
  1. Andrew Conard
5. Tags



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<sup>1</sup> Luke 1:37, CEB.

1st Sunday of Advent  
Seek - The Present (Angels)  
First United Methodist Church of El Dorado  
Text Online at <http://j.mp/1FGwpj9>

November 30, 2014  
Luke 1:26-38  
Preaching Target Word Count: 2,472  
Video is not available online

1. seek, humble, Mary, Gabriel, difficult, yes, humility, willing, spirit, God, Advent

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Saying "Yes" to God can be Difficult

Good News

Call to Action

Invitation

Closing Prayer

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## Luke 1:26-38, CEB

26 When Elizabeth was six months pregnant, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a city in Galilee, 27 to a virgin who was engaged to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David's house. The virgin's name was Mary. 28 When the angel came to her, he said, "Rejoice, favored one! The Lord is with you!" 29 She was confused by these words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. 30 The angel said, "Don't be afraid, Mary. God is honoring you. 31 Look! You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. 32 He will be great and he will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of David his father. 33 He will rule over Jacob's house forever, and there will be no end to his kingdom." 34 Then Mary said to the angel, "How will this happen since I haven't had sexual relations with a man?" 35 The angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come over you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore, the one who is to be born will be holy. He will be called God's Son. 36 Look, even in her old age, your relative Elizabeth has conceived a son. This woman who was labeled 'unable to conceive' is now six months pregnant. 37 Nothing is impossible for God." 38 Then Mary said, "I am the Lord's servant. Let it be with me just as you have said." Then the angel left her.

## Response to Scripture

One: The Word of God for the People of God.

All: Thanks be to God!

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## Introduction

### Sermon Starter Video

Play sermon starter video.

\*\*\* Start Sermon Timer \*\*\*

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## The Search for Presents

At 5:45 PM last Thursday night we were pulling into the parking lot of Target in Hutchinson. We had traveled to Hutchinson to be with my parents for Thanksgiving and decided that we were going to go out shopping as a family. All four of us and my parents made our way to the end of a line that stretched down the front of Target and turned up the side of the parking lot.

While we were waiting in line, a friendly employee handed us a map of where particular items would be located in the store. My Dad and I were headed to pick up a new television for my parents. I am glad I took a look at the map because for the day,

the televisions were set up in the opposite corner of the store from where they were normally located.

The doors opened and we made our way inside. We picked up everything we were looking for and were in and out in less than an hour.

Even with a successful shopping trip this week, we are not quite done yet.

There are still some people for whom we are looking for gifts.

### ***Transition***

What are you looking for?

What are you seeking this year?

I am not just talking about gifts that you might give to family or friends.  
Really...

What are you looking for?

What do you seek?

Who do you seek?

This is the focus of our worship series this month.

### **Series Review**

Today we begin our journey toward the birth of Christ at Christmas.

Over the next several weeks, we prepare for the coming of Jesus who came:

... so we could know God's love for us.

... so that we could know God.

Jesus' presence is constant and available but we must seek it out.

This was true for those who sought Christ on that very first Christmas and it's true for us today.

Jesus draws near to those who draw near to him.

Jesus promises that those who seek him will find him.

### **Sermon Notes and Scripture Study**

I invite you to open your bulletin to a place where you can take notes during the message today. Today, I hope that you will hear:

- Something new or find new questions
- Perspective on your life or something in your life that gives additional meaning to the message today.
- Guidance about how to live as a disciple of Jesus.

I invite you to write down some of the things that you hear in the sermon today and take your bulletin home as a tool to grow in your faith outside of worship. You can

reflect on what you heard today, pray for people of our congregation and read scripture to prepare for worship next week.

## Prayer

Will you pray with me? O God, use these words to speak good news so that as individuals and as a congregation we will fear nothing but sin, desire nothing but you and live as part of your kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

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## Nazareth

Out of all the places, in all the world, Nazareth is not where you would guess God would look for anyone.

This was a tiny, no account town.

There were probably less than 100 people who lived there at the time.

## List of Towns - Josephus and Talmud

Nazareth did not even make the list of towns in the region.

Josephus, the great historian and general was from the area of the Galilee.

He lists over 40 towns and does not mention the town of Nazareth.

The Hebrew Talmud lists 63 towns in the area of the Galilee.

It does not mention the town of Nazareth.

## Phillip and Nathanael - Can anything from Nazareth be good?

Later, you remember, that Phillip has just been called to be one of Jesus disciples and he comes to Nathanael and says,

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*"We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law and the Prophets: Jesus, Joseph's son, from Nazareth." Nathanael responded, "Can anything from Nazareth be good?"*

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This is an insignificant town.

This is Nazareth.

This is where God seeks a young woman to become the mother of the Messiah.

## Transition

How does God do it? God sends an angel.

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## Gabriel

The word angel, means messenger.

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<sup>2</sup> John 1:46, CEB.

Gabriel is seeking Mary to deliver a message from God.

## Angel's Message

Listen to what the angel says in Luke 1:30-33:

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. He will be great and he will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of David his father. He will rule over Jacob's house forever, and there will be no end to his kingdom."<sup>3</sup>

This is not just any baby, this is a king.

He will be great and he will be called the Son of the Most High.  
He will rule over Jacob's house forever.

There will be no end to his kingdom.  
Not just the king of an ancient empire or one of the past.  
This is the crown prince of the kingdom of God.

## Kingdom of God

In God's kingdom,  
... You love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength.  
... You love your neighbor as you love yourself.  
... You love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.  
... You do to others as you would have them do to you.  
... You love God and love others.  
... You take up your cross daily and seek to follow wherever God leads.  
God had promised David 1,000 years before, that one day, one of his descendants would be on the throne forever.  
What kind of king rules forever?  
Except the king who died on the cross and rose from the grave.  
We still seek him every day.  
God has chosen Mary to have *this* baby.

## Mary's Role

Mary plays a greater role in the salvation of the human race than any other human being except Jesus himself. In Mary, we find a woman who is willing to risk everything to play a role in God's work in the world.  
During the nine months of her pregnancy, she bears divinity within herself.  
Her body is supporting the son of God.

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<sup>3</sup> Luke 1:30-33, CEB.



When he is born, she teaches him and nurtures him.  
She instills in him values, faith, love of God and love of people.  
She helps the Son of God grow up.

### ***Transition***

Yet, all this was ahead.  
Can you imagine what it was like to be Mary in this moment?  
When God seeks her out through the angel Gabriel?

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## **Mary**

Christian Coon, a pastor, wrote an article some years ago which told the story of the annual Christmas pageant at the church.

### **Who wants to be Mary?**

"Our music director asked a group of seven-, eight- and nine-year-old girls [Who wants to be Mary?] a couple weeks ago, as children from the church gathered for their first Christmas pageant rehearsal. A handful of would-be Marys eagerly raised their hands, each wanting the chance to stand up front with a (probably uncomfortable) young Joseph and hold the baby-doll Jesus.

After a bit of deliberation, the director chose a second-grader named Sophie. Sophie's eyes opened wide behind her glasses, and she whispered in joyful disbelief, "Me?"

Sophie's a bright young girl, the child who always has just the right thing to say during the children's sermon. I delighted in hearing about this scene. But some of the girls were disappointed. Elizabeth, also a second-grader, was told that she could be a lamb. She was silent for a moment as her brow furrowed; then she looked at one of the pageant coordinators. "Well," she asked suspiciously, "what does the lamb do?"

Everybody wants to be Mary.  
But did Mary want to be Mary?"<sup>4</sup>

## **Mary's Circumstances**

### ***14 years old***

You remember that Mary was probably around 14 years old.  
You say, "Wait a minute, I thought she was engaged to be married?"  
Yes, that's right.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.christiancentury.org/blogs/archive/2008-12/who-wants-be-mary>

The average life expectancy for a woman in this time was somewhere between 29 and 35. The moment a young woman was able to have children, she was engaged to be married.

### ***Engaged and Pregnant***

Mary is engaged to be married to Joseph.

An angel, a messenger, comes to her and says that you are going to have a baby, even though you have not been with your fiancé.

### ***Death Penalty***

Mary would have known that according to the Law, the penalty for a woman found to be pregnant, who is engaged to someone else, is to be put to death outside the walls of the city.

Do you think Mary wanted to be Mary?

### ***Risk of Childbirth***

Mary would have known that many women died giving birth in those days. She might give birth to this child and die in the process.

I wonder if Mary wanted to be Mary.

### ***Family Outcast***

Mary would have known that her family would likely make her an outcast. You can imagine, even in those days a 14 year old girl coming home saying that she is pregnant and doesn't know who the father is, or she explains and no one believes her.

You see, all of her hopes, her dreams - maybe even her life - was at risk in the decision that she makes when the angel Gabriel came to her with the possibility that she might bear the Christ child.

### ***Transition***

The angel says, you are highly favored by God. This is how God shows favor to people? God calls them to do things that are hard and difficult?

Sometimes, yes.

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## **Conclusion**

### **Saying “Yes” to God can be Difficult**

Sometimes when God seeks us, God has something difficult in mind.

It is not going to be easy.

It is not what we want to do.

It is not what we dreamt of doing.

It is dangerous and risky.  
Sometimes what God has in mind is going to derail our hopes and dreams.  
Sometimes God is going to ask us to be with people we don't want to be with and to go to places where we do not want to go.  
We might have to give up what we have, so that we can pursue the things which God wants us to pursue.  
Mary teaches us, that this is sometimes how God works.

## Good News

The good news that the angel Gabriel had for Mary is the good news for us today:

Nothing is impossible for God.<sup>5</sup> Even when what God asks is hard and difficult, we can say yes. This is what Mary models for us when she says:

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*"I am the Lord's servant. Let it be with me just as you have said."*<sup>6</sup>

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## Call to Action

This year we will be giving away our entire offering on Christmas Eve to initiatives to change the lives of children and families here in Butler County and across the world in Africa.

- 50% of our offering on Christmas Eve will be used locally to launch an MLK Day of Service with community partners to address needs of children and families in El Dorado and Butler County.
- 50% of our offering on Christmas Eve will be used internationally to transform the lives of the most vulnerable: children, youth, single women and the unemployed in Zimbabwe and Malawi where our Methodist partners are already at work.

Pay attention to your spending this Christmas. Whatever you spend on your family, I invite you to give an equal amount to our Christmas Eve Offering to change the lives of others in Butler County and Africa.

## Invitation

As you are preparing your hearts for Christmas, it is not about how much you buy or who you give gifts to or where you are going.

It is about what you are seeking.

It is about who you are seeking.

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<sup>5</sup> Luke 1:37, CEB.

<sup>6</sup> Luke 1:38, CEB.

