

Good morning. Hey. Before I start my sermon, I just felt this week I wanted to start off by praying for all of us. I just been aware this week of just the sadness. I'm not saying for me, just human sadness, partially for me and my wife.

Both my wife's parents passed away this year and a number of other things. But it's just more like I just wanted to pray because I know some of you probably have sadness going on in your life. We're supposed to be married this time of year. But some of you have. Your spouses died years ago.

You have family issues going on in your kids. And I want you to know that Jesus is with you in your sadness. He knows your sadness. So let me just pray. So, Jesus, I want to pray for those, all of us here who have various reasons that we're sad, disappointed, maybe even lonely.

And so Jesus, would you be with us in the midst of all this? You are. We don't have to ask you to be. We want you to help us be aware that the spirit of Jesus, you're with us in the midst of this. So in the midst of our sadness, in the midst of our hopeful expectation for what you do in our lives and for Christmas, we love you.

But let us know that you're with us and we ask this in your name. Amen. So topic for the day is great one liners from Christmas movies. All right, Great one liners from Christmas movies. So we're gonna have some one liners.

You gotta tell me what movie it's from. All right, first one is this. Go to the next. From now on, we won't let Rudolph join any reindeer games. That's an easy one.

It is. What movie? Rudolph. Red Nosed Reindeer. All right, next one.

No man is a failure who has friends. Nah, nah. Wonderful Life. All right. One of my kids saw that for the first time ever.

Thought it was a great movie. All right, next one. God bless us, everyone. Christmas Carol. Tiny Tim.

Next one. You're the only person I know who can take a wonderful season like Christmas and turn it into a problem. Charlie Brown. Lucy said that to him. Happy birthday.

Hey, I said my first words. Frosty the Snowman. All right, next one. The best way to spread Christmas cheer is singing loud for all to hear. Elf.

Everybody knows that one. I can't carry it for you, but I can carry you.

It's a little bit of a twist here. Next one. Lord of the Rings. Now you're like, wait a minute, that's not a Christmas movie. And it's not all Right.

But for Noah Sailor, who works here, and my son Mark, who lives in Denver, this movie is a Christmas movie. It's a New Year movie, It's a Flag Day movie. It's a July 4th movie anytime you wanna watch it. So we'll count this as a Christmas mov. All right, next one.

A few more. You shoot your eye out, kid. Christmas story. All right, next one. I'm the Lord's servant, may it be to me.

As you have said. This actually was in a movie. Go to that. It's called the Nativity stories out a handful of years ago. But this movie, it's a true story.

We're going to look at that today in Luke chapter one. Those are the words of Mary when she found out from the angel she was going to have the child Jesus. So we're going to read. I'm going to read. We're doing a series.

This series is called Faithful and Fearless. And we started a handful of weeks ago with Eve. It's the women, kind of a weaving story of the women of Christmas Eve and Bathsheba. And last week Maggie did Elizabeth. This week we're doing Mary.

In a few weeks, Sean will do Anna, the Prophet. But all about the faithless, Faithless, faithful and fearless stories of the women who all point to the Christmas story. So this particular. And we're also going to reintroduce the weird meter. I had this last week or a few weeks ago.

Where's my weird meter? Weird meter. There it is. There it is. The Christmas weird meter.

Right. The weird meter is a reality that the invisible world is just as real as the visible. And sometimes we read the Bible and we don't realize this is, if we're honest, it's weird. Cause there's supernatural stuff happening. So the passage we're looking at today, Luke Chapter one, let's just be honest, it's supernatural and it's weird.

I don't mean weird in a bad or a wrong way, but let's just be honest. There's something going on here where we understand the invisible world is just as real as the visible world. That's the kind of the core foundation of Christian faith. Because the incarnation was that way. So let me start reading Luke chapter one.

And here we're not going to put it on the screen. I want you to listen to the story. It's probably a story you've heard. If you've been in

church, some of you have heard this story dozens and maybe hundreds of times. All right?

But I want you to just listen and I want you to do me a favor here, too. No flash forwards. Here's what I mean by that. You know, we talk about flashbacks. Flash forward is, you know how the story ends.

If you've been to any church in any of your life, you know how this story ends. But I want you to end the story as if you're hearing it for the first time. I want you to stand next to Mary, the teenage girl, as if you have no idea what's happening and what happens in successive chapters of the Bible. All right? So no flash forwards.

Let's read it and be with it in the moment as it is. Just be in the story. All right? So we're gonna slow down the story and just read the story. So just listen, maybe even see what's happening in your mind's eye.

This is Luke, chapter one, starting with verse 26. In the six months of Elizabeth's pregnancy, that was from last week, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a village in Galilee. It was a nothing place, right, Angel Gabriel to a virgin named Mary. She was probably 16, 15, we don't know. But somewhere around that age, she was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David.

In those days, if you were engaged, it was the same legal bonding as being married, except you didn't have sex. But she was engaged to Joseph. Gabriel appeared to her and said, greetings, favored woman. The Lord is with you. Let me just stop for a second with angel Gabriel.

Whenever I see some. I saw some Christmas movies just a couple days ago where they're reenacting and the angel is kind of a. Looks like his hair had been, you know, professionally manicured and stuff. And it just, it wouldn't have scared me. You think about angels, they are called the hosts of heaven.

They're the armies of heaven. So angels were probably awe inspiring figures. They didn't have nice soft skin and long flowing hair. So let's just throw that out of your hand. They didn't all speak with British accents.

You notice that every angel speaks with a British accent. It seems like. So this is the angel Gabriel who actually appeared to Zechariah when he was told that his wife would have John the Baptist. So he says, the angel says, greetings, favored woman. The Lord is with you.

Confused and disturbed, Mary tried to think what the angel could mean. Don't be afraid, Mary, the angel told her, for you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name

him Jesus. He will be very great. And he will be called the Son of the Most High.

The Lord will give him the throne of his ancestor David, and he will reign over Israel forever. His kingdom will never end. And then teenage Mary asked the angel, how can this happen? I'm a virgin.

The angel replied, the Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the baby to be born to you will be holy and he will be called the Son of God. What's more, your relative Elizabeth has become pregnant in her old age. People used to say she was barren, but she has conceived a son and now is in her sixth month. For the word of God will never fail.

Mary responded, I'm the Lord's servant. May it be to me as you have said. And then the angel left her.

So let's look at this story from the context of they had been expecting something to happen, a messiah, for generations. And now Mary, this unexpected, unassuming nobody peasant town, probably couldn't read. Angel shows up to her and we're gonna look at her story. And part of my challenge is gonna be how will you respond when God shows up to you? I'm not saying in some dramatic way like this, but God talks to us, right?

Advent is a time of expecting. So how will you respond when Jesus asks you something? So we're look how Mary responded, but we're going to use that as a model for how do we respond when Jesus wants to show up in our lives? Because Jesus wanted to show up. That's what's happening here.

So how do we respond? A couple things. First thing is this. As you wait for Jesus to show up in your life, be prepared to be confused and disturbed. The passage says Mary was confused and disturbed.

The word confused and could also be perplexed. She was puzzled, she was baffled, she was disoriented, understandably so. The word even has this sense of things were rolling around and spinning around in her mind. She had no idea what was happening. Another word is often used is she was in disequilibrium.

She had no idea. She was confused, she was disturbed. The word there is kind of this sense of agitated. When Jesus said, don't let your hearts be troubled. Same kind of thing.

She's agitated, she doesn't know what's going on. So when God speaks to Mary, the angel speaks to Mary, it's not unlike maybe when God might speak to us, there's going to be confusion. You're going to have questions. I mean, look at the gospel story with Jesus and the disciples they were often confused at what he was up to. Confusion is

not a bad thing.

If you feel confused, you're in good company. Mary, Peter, John, all these people who followed Jesus. But confusion was the very first part of this story. She was confused, she was disturbed because these things don't happen. Virgins don't get pregnant.

So why does Jesus put confusion and disturbance into our lives? Why does he do that? So I want to talk about something else with this story because again, confuse and disturb is the category here. All right. This is not a magic trick.

Feels like it is with this black thing on here. But. So the Gospel of Matthew, we're also told a little bit more about the story. But here's the order of events, and I'm gonna ask some questions about the order of events. I think a large part of understanding scripture sometime is when do you feel confused and are you curious about it?

All right, here's what this is. Matthew, chapter one. Kind of go tie that with Luke, chapter one. Here's kind of the order of events. Gabriel tells Mary she's gonna have a son.

Mary tells Joseph she's pregnant. Joseph decides to break the engagement. Understandable. 18 year old guy, his fiance says I'm pregnant. He knows it wasn't him.

She says it was an angel. He's probably like, I don't know. Angel appears to Joseph in a dream. Angel appeared in Joseph and said the baby in Mary's womb is of the Holy Spirit. Joseph takes Mary as his wife.

Here's my question.

Why didn't the angel appear to Joseph in a dream up here once Gabriel told Mary she was a kind of a sin. Why didn't God tell Joseph then? Because what ends up happening is I'm tearing all these things down. Here's the order. I'm challenging God, right?

Here's the order I would have done it in. All right, I'm rolling around. All right? I would have had Gabriel tell Mary she's having a son. Then I would have.

The same night Joshua should have a dream, right? Cause then Mary can tell Joseph she's pregnant. Oh, yeah, the angel already told me that. But God didn't do it that way.

Joseph decides to break the engagement. This wouldn't have had to happen if I would tell God how he should have done things, right? Why do those things happen in our lives that way? Cause this would be the order. If we believe, which sometimes we do, God's objective on our

lives is to remove stress and distress.

So if that was his objective, this would be the order. But that's not the order he chose. Can you imagine what it was like for Joseph to hear from Mary for the first time? I'm pregnant. And, oh, by the way, an angel told me Joseph deciding to break the engagement was no easy thing for Joseph.

It was certainly not an easy thing for Mary.

Why did God do it that way? Maybe God's objective in my life and your life is not to remove stress and distress. Maybe his objective is to help us know that he's with us in the midst of that stress and distress. Because it could have been much easier for Mary in this story. I mean, confusing.

To serve as an angel. Yes, but why does she have to make this relational tension with Joseph?

This is exactly the order God wanted. Because, again, his objective in my life and your life is not to remove stress and distress. His objective is he wants us to know he's with us right in the middle of it. So there's something that God knew. Mary was gonna grow and her faith was gonna get deeper because she had to go through not just the confusion and disturbance of an angel, but she had to go through the stress and distress of however many days, whatever it was that she and Joseph weren't sure, and Joseph was gonna break the engagement.

How many days was that, and what was that like? Come on, God, you could fix that. How many things in your life do you just wish that God would reorder things? And like, come on, God, why can't change that? But his objective is not to simplify your life.

His objective is that you become holy, deep, and joyful. And sometimes those things that we wish God would change, he doesn't. But there's a much deeper reason. So first point again was be prepared to be confused and disturbed. Second point, be prepared for your own moment of crisis.

So when I say moment of crisis, Mary's facing this moment of crisis. This angel's telling her something. Actually, say that with me. The phrase moment of crisis. One, two, three.

Moment of crisis. All right. We all have moments of crisis in our lives, but this one of Mary is a big one. Because the moment of crisis basically means you have two different options. I can accept what God is saying and accept him into my life, or I can say, I just can't go with this.

It's a crisis moment, and our lives are filled with those crisis

moments. We're gonna see that Mary responds in a whole righteous way. But one of my favorite authors is a guy named Dallas Willard writes a lot about the spiritual life, and he writes about this phrase, moment of crisis. Let me read what he says about this. A successful performance at a moment of crisis rests largely and essentially upon the depths of a self wisely and rigorously prepared in the totality of its being, mind and body preparation.

Mary was ready for this moment. She didn't just wake up this morning and say, oh, I think I'll be spiritual today. She was 16, 17, or whatever, but she was ready for this incredible moment of crisis where God was gonna do something in her life. Some of you staying on the moment of crisis, some of you, I'm sure most of you will know who Steve Alford is, right? Steve Alford shot 89.7% on free throws, made over 500 free throws for Indiana University.

How many of you remember Steve Alford's routine of shooting free throws? Anybody got the ball? Socks, shorts, dribble, dribble, dribble. Some people I read online thought it was 1, 2, 3. But I think the fans would go, socks, shorts, dribble, dribble, dribble.

Then he'd shoot it. Socks, shorts, dribble, dribble, dribble. So at his moment of crisis on the free throw line, Socks, shorts, dribble, dribble, dribble, shoot it. So how many young kids during that time probably thought, oh, that's how you shoot free throws. Socks, shorts, dribble, dribble, dribble.

Oh, it's not going in 89.7% of the time. Why not? Because they had not prepared themselves for the moment of crisis. Steve Alford probably shot thousands and thousands of free throws, practiced it thousands of times. So when that moment of crisis came, of course he knew what to do.

Socks, shorts, dribble, dribble, dribble went in. So think about your life, my life, and in terms of relationship with God, Mary was ready for that moment. She grew up in a devout Jewish family, but something in her of all the experience of reading the Torah, the Old Testament scriptures and prayers, she was ready to receive what God wants. She was ready for her moment of crisis. Sometimes our moment of crisis are small things.

It might just be a situation where your spouse says something to you and you wanna respond in a hurtful way. But that's a moment of crisis. If you welcome the spirit of Jesus at that moment, you don't respond that way. Maybe your moment of crisis has to do with a money decision or other kind of decisions in your life. But the preparation for that moment comes with your spiritual practices, praying, reading scripture, listening to God, understanding God.

So we all will be faced with moments of crisis. None of us are going

to be having baby Jesus be born again. But Jesus wants to be reborn inside of us. And maybe your moment of crisis may come in a really small conversation. It may come when you're figuring out stuff with your checkbook.

It may come when you figure out other things or God's doing other things in your lives. But it's the preparation that makes you ready in those kind of times of response. So be prepared for your moment of crisis. And that starts now. Last thing, be prepared to open your hands.

Mary says to the angel, when the angel says all this, she's like, how's it gonna happen? I'm a virgin. And she says, let it be unto me if you have said. And she's willing. It's not resignation.

It's not like, oh well, whatever you want, God. It's not that I'm gonna. I have a picture on the screen, but I have in my hand this small painting. It's like if you wanna call an icon. It was given to me by Father Dan Atkins of St.

Paul's Catholic years ago. Some of you may know who he was. And I know, I know, I know there's things about Mary that we don't agree with. We don't, but there's a lot we do. We believe that she's blessed, she's among, she's a mother of Jesus.

She was an incredible woman. And he gave this to me, this small thing probably 20 years ago. And I don't know if you can tell it or not, but I kind of mocked it at first because you can hardly see, but there's like these beams of light coming out of Mary's hands. And I said to Father Dan, kind of with a mocking attitude, what is this Marvel superhero? I mean, she's got stuff coming out of her hands like Spider Man.

What is that? I mean, I was kind of making fun of it in as much of the way I could with the Catholic priest, right? So I was like, what is that, you know, superpower? And he goes, no, no, no, no. Those beams of light aren't coming out from our hands, they're highlighting our hands.

Cause it's a posture of submission. I'm the Lord's servant, may it be unto me as you have said. And we don't know that she actually did that, but the posture is accurate in terms of what her response was. Cause it was highlighting this open handedness to whatever God wanted in her life. Can I do that?

Can you do that? There may be things right now that you know that God's saying to you or asking you to do. Or you have a sense that maybe God's prompting you to do this or that and responding this way is pretty vulnerable. I mean, Mary had. She had no idea completely what she was saying yes to.



She had no idea the cross was going to be coming. She had no idea of all the pain of that. She had no idea of the joy after the cross and the resurrection. But she said, may it be unto me, as you have said. Isn't that a posture worth replicating?

Maybe not actually. Think about this, too. I've often thought about this. Remember the Garden of Gethsemane? When Jesus is praying and he's asking God, he's like, if there's another way, take this cup from me.

Nevertheless, I want your will and not my will. Maybe Jesus was taught to pray by his mother, Mary. We don't know that. It's very possible. Mary probably taught Jesus how to pray.

And she may have taught him. Whenever God wants to do something in your life that confuses you, disturbs you, makes you afraid, or totally throws you off, trust God. Submit in strength and trust. And God will do what he will do. And he will bring joy to people through that.

So when Jesus prayed, I'm quite sure Jesus learned to pray from his mother, Mary. He didn't come out of the womb with the Lord's Prayer on his mouth, right? I'm the Lord's servant. So here's the question. Well, you say yes to Jesus when he's prompting you to do something.

There's probably, I'm guessing, if I were to ask you the question, which I am asking you the question, what is Jesus saying to you lately? And what are you doing with it? You may have a certain sense of, I think God wants me to do this. But I don't know. I'm confused, I'm disturbed.

I'm troubled by it. I'm afraid.

May it be to me as you've said. Cause I am the Lord's servant. I want you to stand up for a second.

And I want you. If you don't mind, just do this. Hold your hands out. Let's mimic Mary no beams out of your hands. All right?

Can't do that, Right? But let's mimic that posture. And I want you to close your eyes. I want you to just repeat after me. If you can say this to God.

If you can't say it to God, it's okay. If you don't, it's to your own peril, but it's okay. So I want you to think about something. That maybe you feel like God's prompting you about stretching you, about asking you to do, asking you to stop, do.

And just repeat after me. You can whisper as loud as you can hear

yourself or you can talk. I don't care. Say this. I'm the Lord's servant.

May it be unto me as you have said.

One more time, say this to God. I'm the Lord's servant. May it be unto me as you have said.

So, Jesus, this room is filled with people who are your servants. We're sometimes scared, we're sometimes confused. We don't understand. But we really, the depths of our hearts, we want to follow you. We want to follow the example of Mary, who in the spite of her being confused and disturbed and anxious and afraid, she trusted you.

Her trust was a pivot on which the world became changed. She brought Jesus into the world. So we love you, God. I pray for each person here that as we face our own little moments of crises that actually will lead to life in other people, life because of you, in us. We want to be responsive like Mary was.

And we ask this on your name. Amen. Stay standing. We're going to read. Or just before we sing, we're going to read.

So later, Mary goes to Elizabeth, and she has what's called Mary's Magnificat. It's her, Mary. It's her song of praise. Because this is hard, confusing, disturbing, fearful. But it always leads to honor and glorify and point out Jesus.

Scripture says Jesus, for the joy set before him, endured the cross. So let's. Let's out loud and loudly put it on the screen here. Uh, we're gonna. We're gonna join Mary in praising what God did through her and what he can do through us.

Here we go. Out loud. Here we go. Oh, how my soul praises the Lord. How my spirit rejoices in God, my Savior, for he took notice of his lowly servant.

From now on, all generations will call me blessed, for the mighty One is holy and he has done great things for me. He shows mercy from generation to generation to all who fear Him. His mighty arm has done tremendous things. That last slide again. His mighty arm has done tremendous things.

Go ahead and have a seat.