

JESUS CHANGED MY LIFE
MARY - He Changed My Story
Advent Worship Series – Week 1
December 2, 2007

WORSHIP SERVICE OUTLINES
 Each worship outline contains all elements needed for your worship service. The order of each service presented is only a *suggestion*. No doubt changes will be needed to accommodate the flow and worship style of your corps. The outlines are flexible and allow opportunities to “cut and paste” as needed. If you are blessed with instrumental or vocal music resources, you may find there is more structured material here than needed. It is recommended that the headings of each section of the service be included in the bulletin.

Announcements and Offering

Call to Worship:

“Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you,” Gabriel said. Seeing her terror, he assured her there was no reason to fear, for the news he brought was wonderful. God had decided to bless her. She would have a son who should be called Jesus. He would be the Son of the Most High, and he would reign over his people forever.

Such a powerful message is unlikely to take hold quickly. Mary, naturally enough, thought about the practical elements rather than the eternal ones. She wanted to know how it was that a virgin could become pregnant. Gabriel patiently explained that the Holy Spirit would miraculously bring forth a child from her, and this child would be the Son of God.

(Why the Nativity?, pages 15-16)

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| SB#104 – Come, Thou long expected Jesus, | TB-370 – Hyfrydol | HTD1-T14 (3 vs.) |
| Additional Optional Songs | | |
| SB#100 – Angels, from the realms of glory | TB-398 – Come and Worship (Regent Sq.) | HTD4-T12 (4 vs.) |
| SB#113 – Joy to the world! | TB-87 – Joy to the World! | HTD4-T9 (3 vs.) |
| SB#114 – Light of the world HC#146 – Here I am to Worship | TB-653 – Here I am to Worship HC-146 | HCD13-T16 |
| SB#103 – Christians awake, salute the happy morn | TB-476 – same | HTD10-T1 (3 vs.) |
| SB#107 – Hark the glad sound! The Savior comes, | TB-87 – Joy to the World! | D4-T9 (3 vs.) |

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|--|---------------------------------------|-----------------|
| SB#108 – Hark! The herald angels sing | TB-270 – Hark! The Herald Angels Sing | HTD4-T5 (3 vs.) |
| HC#141 – All Hail the Power | HC-141 | HCD13 –T11 |
| CF#17 – Angels we have heard on high | CF-17 | No CD |

Responsive Scripture/Candle Lighting:

Solo 1: Come, let us adore him.

Solo 2: Immanuel, God with us.

Leader: The Advent season gives us a chance to slow down and catch our breath, to consider the direction our lives are going, to re-examine our focus. Slowing down to reflect on what it means to be a person of faith can profoundly impact our relationships, our behaviors, our dreams, and ultimately the course of our lives.

[Lighting of the first Advent candle.]

Solo 2: As we light the first candle, we are called to open our hearts to the miracle of Christ's coming and to his plan for our lives.

Leader: Mary was astonished when the angel interrupted her life with the startling announcement that she would be the mother of Jesus. Yet she regrouped and fully opened her heart and life to a radical change of plans.

All: “Oh, how my soul praises the Lord. How my spirit rejoices in God my Savior! For he took notice of his lowly servant girl, and from now on all generations will call me blessed.

Leader: For the Mighty One is holy, and he has done great things for me. He sows mercy from generation to generation to all who fear him. His mighty arm has done tremendous things! He has scattered the proud and haughty ones. He has brought down princes from their thrones and exalted the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away with empty hands. He has helped his servant Israel and remembered to be merciful. For he made this promise to our ancestors, to Abraham and his children forever.” (Luke 1:46-55)

All: Lord, help us affirm with Mary, "Let it be with me just as you say."

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| HC#65 – God Will Make a Way | HC-65 | HCD5-T15 |
| Additional Optional Songs | | |
| HC#123 – Shine on Us | HC-123 | HCD11-T13 |
| HC#3 – He is Able | HC-3 | HCD1-T3 |
| HC#82 – Jesus, Name Above All Names | HC-82 | HCD7-T12 |

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| HC#72 – Emmanuel | HC-72 | HCD6-T12 |
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[NOTE: It is recommended that either the movie clip *OR* the drama be chosen for the service—*NOT BOTH*.]

Movie Clip



The Nativity Story – The Journey of a Lifetime, a Story for All Time
(Distributed by New Line Home Entertainment)

Scene 7

Start: 19:51 Mary sits by tree
End: 22:04 ...”according to your word”...dove flies away...

Optional Additional Movie Clips

Close to Jesus – The Stories of Those He Touched

Disc 2 – Joseph of Nazareth

(Distributed by Artisan Home Entertainment)

Scene 4 – Handmaid of the Lord

Length: 2:13
Start: 21:54 City Scene
End: 23:48 “...Let it be as you have said”

Jesus of Nazareth (Distributed by Artisan Home Entertainment)

Scene 5 – Message from God

Start: 9:04 Mary sleeping
End: 13:02 “...and I must go and visit her”

Mary of Nazareth (Distributed by Questar, Inc.)

Scene 2 - Handmaiden of the Lord

Start: 8:08 Bread on table
End: 12:38 “...Let it be done to me as you have said”

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| Drama: Good News/Bad News |
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Reading:

Consider the change that came about in Mary’s life. Thoughts of marriage turned to thoughts of motherhood, and thoughts of a quiet, ordinary life turned to the anticipation of being at the center of a spectacular miracle from heaven. No wonder God sent Gabriel himself to help her understand and prepare.

Why Mary? Mary herself must have wondered, *Why am I a “favored woman”?* *Why me?* Indeed, the reasons she was chosen are known only to God. But it is clear that she was no random selection.

Mary was favored by God for a task that would finally allow each of us to be favored. Gabriel said, “The Lord is with you,” and as a result, the Lord is with us all. In that way, God sent the ultimate Christmas gift not just to Mary but to all of us—and it was Mary who delivered the package.

(Why the Nativity?, pages 16-17)

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| SB#153 – Thou didst leave thy throne and thy kingly crown | TB-94 – Margaret | HTD10 –T6 (4 vs.) |
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| HC#45 – While We are Waiting, Come | HC-45 | HCD3-T15 |
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Congregational Prayers: [Select 2 people from the congregation to read the following prayers from their seats.]

Prayer #1:

Your plan of redemption was advanced when one simple peasant girl said yes to you—a yes that would change the world. There was no complicated ritual, nor advanced theological training involved. Just the trusting words, “I am the Lord’s servant. May it be to me as you have said.” Lord, may it be the same in my life. Help me to cooperate with your plan for the world by saying yes to you. Even now, I say yes to you, Holy Spirit. Come upon me so that the life of Christ may be manifested through me to the needy world around me. Amen.

(Praise & Worship Bible, page 1372)

Prayer #2:

Lord, the honor bestowed on Mary was staggering. So was the responsibility. To be the one not only to bear you but to protect you, raise you, teach you. I pray that even across so many centuries she could teach me too. There is so much I could learn from her. What wonderful things would be birthed in my life if only I could learn to pray, “I am your servant. May it be to me as you say.”

If that were my prayer, how would it affect the thoughts I think, the plans I make, the words that come from my mouth? If I read my Bible this morning with such a response, how different would this afternoon be? How different this afternoon would I be?

“I am your servant.” The words seem so religiously correct. But are they really true? Am I *really* your servant? Am I willing to submit to whatever plans you have for my life, regardless of the risk, the cost, the consequences?

For years she taught you, Lord, with so many words and in so many ways. It’s sad so few words have been saved for us. But thank you for saving the words, “I am your servant. May it be to me as you say.” If I learn nothing else from her, those words have given me a model not only of how to pray but how to live.

(Moments With the Savior, pages 27-28)

Message – Mary - He Changed My Story

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| HC#156 – Enter In | HC-156 | HCD14-T15 |
| Additional Optional Songs | | |
| HC#130 – Lead Me, Lord | HC-130 | HCD11-T20 |
| HC#112 – The Potter’s Hand | HC-112 | HCD10-T12 |

Benediction:

Lord Jesus, we come with praise and thanksgiving for the marvel and miracle of your birth we celebrate this season. Come once again to us this hour that we may rejoice because you have been born in our hearts. We pray that in all our labors, in all our relationships, in all of our life, you will live and love through us, in all our seasons of life, as our Savior and Lord. In your name, we pray.

(Colonel Henry Gariepy)

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| Vocal Benediction – HC#140 – O Come, All Ye Faithful SB#85 – O come, all ye faithful | HC-140 TB-552 – Adeste Fideles | HCD12-T20 HTD3-T1 (3 vs.) |
| Additional Optional Songs | | |
| HC#61 – Crown Him King of Kings | HC-61 | HCD5-T11 |
| HC#141 – All Hail the Power | HC-141 | HCD13-T11 |
| HC#149 – In Christ Alone | HC-149 | HCD13-T19 |
| HC#151 – Fairest Lord Jesus | HC-151 | HCD14-T11 |
| SB#112 – It was on a starry night HC#180 | TB-535 – same HC-280 | HCD16-T20 |
| HC#260 – Go, Tell it on the Mountain | HC-260 | HCD24-T20 |

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| Week # 1 | |
| DRAMA | |
| Good News/Bad News | |
| By Martyn Scott Thomas | |
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| Topic: | God's message |
| Scripture: | Luke 1:26-38 |
| Synopsis: | An expectant teenager contemplates how to break the news to her family. |
| Characters: | Mary – the mother of Jesus (14-16). |
| Props/Costumes: | Biblical or modern dress. |
| Setting: | Bare stage. |
| Running Time: | 3 minutes. |

Mary: *[excited, but a bit nervous about what she has to share]* “I have good news and I have bad news.” When given that choice, which would you want to hear first? If you choose the good news, maybe you hope that it will be much better than the bad news. Maybe you just want to be happy before you're brought back to reality. If you choose the bad news first, perhaps you are hoping the good news to come will wash away the bad. Or maybe you just want to get the bad news done with. In the end, it really doesn't matter which you get first, you still need to hear both sides.

If you're the one sharing the news, which would you want to give first? Again, I don't think it really matters. It all depends on the perspective of the hearer.

That brings me to my news. To me, it's the most wonderful news ever. But to my family, and to my fiancé, it could be devastating, disgraceful and even potentially deadly.

It's the kind of news that signals a new beginning; the kind of news that changes lives. And I know that not everyone will be ready to hear what I have to say.

I'm having a baby. There, I said it. And it went pretty well – no screaming or crying or fainting. But in a little while, I'll have to say it again to those I care about most. And then, there will be screaming and crying and probably fainting. I just hope they can get past that so I can tell them the rest of the news. And I hope they'll believe what I have to say. I'm still having a hard time believing it myself.

You see, I'm engaged to be married, legally bound, but not yet physically bound. That's where the news may seem bad. Unmarried girls are not supposed to be pregnant. It's a sin, punishable by stoning.

It also brings disgrace to the groom-to-be and to the girl's family. They could even be forced to move to a new town and start life over again.

So what's the good news? Well, I haven't been unfaithful to my husband, Joseph. The child I'm carrying doesn't represent my sin, but represents freedom from all sin. My child is the long-promised Messiah. I will give birth to one who will be called the Son of the Most High.

How do I know all this? How is it possible? How can a virgin conceive? Those were my questions exactly; spoken to the angel of the Lord who brought this news to me.

"Don't be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God!" He went on, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the baby to be born will be holy, and he will be called the Son of God."

So I have the most wonderful news. It's the kind of news that signals a new beginning; the kind of news that changes lives. And I know that not everyone will be ready to hear what I have to say. I just hope that those closest to me are ready for the good news.

[*Blackout*]

JESUS CHANGED MY LIFE

Advent Sermon – Week 1

December 2, 2007

Mary—He Changed My Story

Text: Luke 1:26-38; 46-49

Premise: Aligning ourselves with God’s plan for us will transform the potential and the course of our lives.

There are certain events that change the courses of our lives – marriage, birth of a child, death of a loved one, and meeting that special someone, and if Monster.com is right: landing the perfect job. Throughout this Advent season, we will be looking at the impact the birth of Jesus had on the lives of various people from the Scripture narratives. Every believer’s celebration of the Advent season can be enriched by understanding that God relates to us today in a similar way as He did with the individuals in the biblical narratives.

At the beginning of the movie *Hook*, Robin Williams’ character, Peter is so busy with his business that he misses his daughter’s play and his son’s baseball game. It’s only as he slows down, relearns the joy of life and relationships, that he is able to change the sad story of his life, face his fears and defeat his old enemy, Capt. Hook. At times, the Christmas season in The Salvation Army can cause our lives to be just as hectic and consuming as Peter’s if we aren’t careful. It would be tragic if we allowed ourselves to become so busy with raising money and helping people that when we come to Christmas morning, we are not prepared to celebrate the birth of our Savior.

This Sunday marks the beginning of the Advent season. God gives us four weeks to prepare our hearts and lives to celebrate the gift of His Son, Jesus. Although many people like to take life just as it comes – day by day, the fact is, a time of preparation is a marvelous gift - and a necessity! Imagine not having nine months to prepare for the arrival of a baby. Imagine a football coach sending his team to play a championship game without practicing or reviewing game films. We need times of preparation in order to be ready for any significant undertaking in life.

Life often rushes by at such a pace that it’s quite possible to miss important events. People sometimes make comments like:

Where have the years gone?

How did you grow up so quickly?

It seems like it was only yesterday . . .

God uses times like the Advent season to help us slow down and catch our breath, to consider the direction our lives are going, to re-examine our focus. Taking time to slow down and reflect on what it means to be a person of faith can profoundly impact our relationships, our behaviors, our dreams, and ultimately the course of our lives.

I. Everyone has an idea of the direction of their life story (27,34)

“Once upon a time...” – there is something special about that phrase. A good story pulls us in, grabs our emotions, and causes our imaginations to wake up – to see new horizons and new potential.

- A. In our Scripture passage, we meet Mary. Although we know a lot about Mary, there is much we really don't know for sure. We do know:
 - a. Mary was a young woman (vs. 27)
 - b. She was unmarried, but engaged to a man named Joseph. (vs. 27)
 - c. Engagement in that time was a more formal and binding relationship than what we think of today.
 - d. She kept herself pure (vs. 34).

- B. As do so many young women and men, Mary probably had dreams, and her own idea of the direction her life story would take.
 - a. Mary probably had dreams of being married to Joseph
 - b. Of being a mother
 - c. Of serving her God as both an individual and member of God's chosen people. Mary's response to the angel's announcement was indicative that she was already someone sensitive to God's presence and leading in her life.

- C. We each have an idea of the plotline of our lives
 - a. The author J. M. Barrie once said, “The life of every man is a diary in which he means to write one story, and writes another. . .”
 - b. Think of how you used to respond to, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” at various stages in your life. What changed?
 - c. Proverbs 19:21: “Many are the **plans** in a man's heart, but it is the LORD's purpose that prevails.” In aligning our plans with God's purposes, we will experience joy rather than frustration and bitterness.

II. When God enters our story, He reveals new paths and possibilities in our lives. (26, 28-33, 35-37)

- A. Then one day, Mary encountered an unexpected visitor – the angel Gabriel
 - a. This is the same angel who visited Zechariah.
 - b. “I stand in the presence of God” – Gabriel would have heard the Father's plans.
 - c. The angel calmed Mary's fears by pronouncing God's favor. “Highly favored” in Greek shares the same root word for grace and joy. As people who share in God's grace, we are favored and have reason for joy!

- B. Mary discovers God's plans as Gabriel elaborates on what “being favored” means for Mary
 - a. She will have a child - OK, that's part of her plan.
 - b. She will name him Jesus – this is still not earth-shattering. Jesus, a Greek form of Joshua (Yeshua) was a common name.
 - c. He will be great – doesn't every mother think that?

It is in the last three of Gabriel's pronouncements that Mary's world is rocked off its foundations.

- d. Her child, Jesus, will be called the Son of the Most High
- e. He will be king over Israel
- f. He will be king forever!

The angel was saying Mary's child was different than any other baby born – He is **the** eternal God! Now that is going to cause some drastic changes in Mary's life.

- C. Mary doesn't say: "Hold on, that's not how my life is supposed to be." What is Mary's response?
 - a. How can this be since I'm a virgin?
 - b. Her question isn't due to a lack of faith as in the case of Zechariah. Mary is simply asking, "Help me understand how what you are saying can happen. Doesn't producing a baby require a father?"
 - c. When God entered Mary's life, He revealed new paths and possibilities. Her life would not be as she planned or dreamed; in fact, it would never be the same again. The same can be said of us – encountering God will reveal new possibilities and our lives will never be the same again.
- D. Gabriel tells Mary the child will indeed have a father: the Heavenly Father.
 - a. This is not like the joining of gods and human described in Greek and Roman mythology. God himself in the person of the Holy Spirit will overshadow Mary. This overshadowing is possibly God's Shekinah glory covering Mary as it did the tabernacle in Exodus 40:38.
 - b. The miraculous birth was necessary because of Jesus' deity and preexistence.
- E. Gabriel, using Elizabeth as an illustration, reminds Mary that God is in the business of doing the impossible to accomplish His plans.
 - a. If a woman who has never been able to have a baby, and who is now well past the age for bearing children is able to have a child, then God can also certainly bring about the miraculous conception of which Gabriel has just told Mary about.
 - b. God is still in the business of doing the miraculous in the lives of His people today through:
 - i. Forgiving our sin
 - ii. Enabling us to live victoriously through His sanctifying power
 - iii. Bringing comfort and wholeness to broken lives
 - iv. Healing
 - v. Breaking the cycle of addiction
 - c. The Advent season is a perfect time to either remember and celebrate the day when God changed our life's story by graciously and miraculously entering our lives, or allowing Him to do so for the first time.

III. Cooperating with God in the rewriting of our life's story leads us to a life of blessedness and impact (38; 46-49)

- A. Mary decides to say yes to God's plan for her life. Mary had only one response to Gabriel's explanation: "I belong to the Lord, body and soul, let it happen as you say" (Luke 1:38, PH).
- B. Mary declares in her song of joy, known as The Magnificat, her realization that her life will be radically changed as a result of her decision. When God entered Mary's life, He revealed new paths and possibilities.
 - a. Her life would not be as she planned or dreamed; in fact, it would never be the same again.
 - b. "From now on, all generations will call me blessed" (Luke 1:48). Everyone acknowledges God's favor in Mary's life.
 - c. As a result of Mary's obedience, God's Son entered the world. That is a life of lasting impact.
- C. Admittedly, although Mary's role in God's plan of salvation was unique, in some ways, the same can be said of us. Encountering God will reveal new possibilities and our lives will never be the same again.
 - a. We will pass from death to life
 - b. We will experience God's grace and favor.
 - c. We too, will impact our world as we live as salt and light (Matt. 5:13-16).
 - d. We can love others with abandon as well allow God's love to live in us and flow from us.

Mary's life of blessedness and impact unfolded when she agreed to allow God to rewrite her life's story. The question you and I must resolve is: who will be the author of our story?

May each of us make a fresh commitment as we start this Advent season to allow God to be the author of our life's story. Open yourself to a life of blessedness and impact. It will not be without its problems, but it will be a "happy ending."

