

Bay City Wesleyan Church  
December 18, 2016

---

---

Fourth Sunday of Advent 2016

Declaring what we believe because it shapes our view of the future.

<http://bible.com/events/143203>

---

---

Lighting the Fourth Candle of the Advent Wreath: OBEY!

Matthew 1:18-25 NLT

This is how Jesus the Messiah was born. His mother, Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. But before the marriage took place, while she was still a virgin, she became pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit. Joseph, her fiancé, was a good man and did not want to disgrace her publicly, so he decided to break the engagement quietly. As he considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. “Joseph, son of David,” the angel said, “do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. For the child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit. And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” All of this occurred to fulfill the Lord’s message through his prophet: “Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel, which means ‘God is with us.’” When Joseph woke up, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded and took Mary as his wife. But he did not have sexual relations with her until her son was born. And Joseph named him Jesus.

To keep our focus on the real meaning of Christmas, we will dig into one of the most famous songs in history. It’s the song of Mary, the mother of Jesus. We call her song “the Magnificat.” The first words of this song come from the Latin word for “magnify.”

The Magnificat is a song of revolution and of power. It is a song of strength in the face of injustice. Mary bursts into song because God plans to interrupt darkness, injustice, and poverty. God plans to redeem all the broken pieces of life that are scattered across this dark world.

Luke 1:39-56 NLT

A few days later Mary hurried to the hill country of Judea, to the town where Zechariah lived. She entered the house and greeted Elizabeth. At the sound of Mary’s greeting, Elizabeth’s child leaped within her, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Elizabeth gave a glad cry and exclaimed to Mary, “God has blessed you above all women, and your child is blessed. Why am I so honored, that the mother of my Lord should visit me? When I heard your greeting, the baby in my womb jumped for joy. You are blessed because you believed that the Lord would do what he said.” Mary responded, “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. 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! 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.” Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three months and then went back to her own home.

Sermon in a Sentence:

You can see the obstacle. Or you can see the opportunity. The choice is yours.

Finding God's way usually involves seeing the opportunity in seeming obstacles. He connects concepts we won't see without his help.

There are at least four connections mentioned in Mary's song.

1. The connection between belief and blessing

We tend to connect blessing with comfort and security.

2. The connection between mercy and miracles

We tend to connect miracles with desperation and long shots.

3. The connection between position and promotion

We tend to connect promotion with position and popularity.

4. The connection between hunger and satisfaction

We tend to connect satisfaction with hard work and having things.

We are accustomed to focusing on the obstacles in our lives but we can begin to see the opportunities when we are open to the Lord's presence with us. He gives us reason to rejoice.

FIRST STEPS:

- PRAY – Ask God to show you opportunities where you see obstacles.
- READ – Check out the accounts of Jesus' life in the Bible.

[Image]

[http://d1o2alqw72z1h8.cloudfront.net/5722009-1482042867922\\_152x152.jpg](http://d1o2alqw72z1h8.cloudfront.net/5722009-1482042867922_152x152.jpg)

INVITATION:

COME BACK in January – Discover what Jesus means when he calls you to follow him. (Hint: You may be surprised to find out that regardless of what you believe, regardless of how you behave, Jesus invites you to follow.)