

Family Carols
Mary is expecting

4th of
Advent

Luke 1. 26 - 38
Luke 2. 4 - 7

We have watched the story move on.

One angel - making an announcement.

The unbelievable message:
the virgin birth;
the Son of God carried in the womb
by an unmarried young girl ;

is confirmed by Mary's elderly cousin up the road.
This is awesome - but this is really good news - the Best.

Joseph has his visit by an angel,
to put his fears at rest.

Mary and Joseph travel to Bethlehem,
fulfilling the old Testament prophecies,
and Jesus is born.

More angels - all sorts of heavenly signs -
and the greatest story ever told - begins.

We love it!

Christmas. Nativity plays.
Good will. People feel warm inside.
The Queen addresses the Commonwealth.
Families meet up together.
Carols, and jingle bells,
mistletoe and wine.

Where is Jesus?

Let's just briefly go back to the start.

God has come to earth.

That's good.

He is the Prince of Peace.

That's good.

He brings a message of Joy.

That's good.

It is even better than a tin full of chocolates.

Must be good.

But what is this Kingdom of God about?

The angels say

"Peace on earth

to those on whom his favour rests"

Peace on earth - to God's favourites.

Are you one of God's favourites?

Is this good news for you?

Who are God's favourites?

Those who, like Mary, love God -

and that is a life-style choice - in our hands -

and prove it by saying "yes" to whatever God asks.

And he sometimes asks an awful lot.

Mary didn't draw a line.

We have only two occasions in the Bible
when Mary 's words are recorded.

At the Annunciation, to the Angel

I am the Lord's Servant

May it be to me, as you have said."

And at Cana in Galilee, as Jesus began his ministry

Whatever Jesus says, do it.

Who amongst us likes the spirit of Christmas?

Who amongst us trusts God
to have worked it out right?

Who amongst us truly wants
God's kingdom of peace on earth?

Me, me, me?

Then you and I have to give in to God's rule now
in our lives, in all our dealings.
Every moment of the day.

That is where God's Kingdom begins,

That is where the true working out of Christmas begins.

You and I have to say, and really mean it

I am the Lord's Servant

May it be to me, Lord, as you say."

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Setting the Scene

Very quickly - the story so far ...
The Prophets told us that one day ...
John the Baptist said, one day soon ...
the ancient promise of the Scriptures
That God's special servant will come
and he will put right all the wrong things
and God's Kingdom will be established.

Everybody knew that.

Except we haven't got to the John the Baptist bit yet -
he's got another three months before he is born.

God promised it - so it is true - it will happen ...
but not yet.

Now God's messenger visits
an insignificant young lady, called Mary,
and tells her some news.

Good News, and bad news.
The "one day in the future" event
has just been upgraded from prophecy
to present day fact.
The Messiah is going to arrive in a few months.

The bad news - is - God is looking at you!
He needs someone to do an important task
and "just anybody" won't do.

The Lord of the Universe
the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, etc etc
has looked at everyone on the earth
and he has chosen Mary.

Why Mary?

The Angel called her "highly favoured"
God has favourites, and at the moment
Mary is top of his list.
God is about to ask of her
more than anyone could be expected to give.

God doesn't get it wrong.

Why will Mary say "yes"?

Because she loves God, she trusts God,
She wants to please God every moment of her day.

It means, simply, that Mary is a good girl.
And there weren't many around, it seems.

So the question to ask ourselves today.
Am I like Mary?
Do I love God, trust God, want to please God enough?

If he asks something impossible;
if he asks something embarrassing;
if he asks something infinitely costly;
what will my answer be?

All this stuff about God's kingdom,
Messianic hope
prophetic promises
a call to repentance and faith, to be ready
God's love shown to us, will we return it?
Does it mean anything.
Mary said Yes.
God asks the same of us.

So - the Advent ring - the candles.

First week - one candle - The Advent **HOPE**.
God has promised that Jesus will come again.

Second week - Isaiah and the Prophets
and their message that one day
God will send a special servant
to bring in an age of **PEACE**
And we know - it is the same promise!

Third week - John the Baptist, and the **JOY**
that God's Kingdom was about to appear.
But it needs an individual response from us -
Repent and Believe
Get ready for God's Kingdom.

This week Mary
her **LOVE** for God, shown in trust and obedience.
The challenge to us - if God's kingdom depends on me?
Am I a "yes" person for Jesus?

God's Kingdom does depend on you!

LIGHT FOUR CANDLES.

More later.

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Birthdays and presentations

Collection.