

“Awaken to Advent - Yes to the New Day”

Scripture: Luke 1:26-38

Graphics: bedroom, large alarm clock, time, light only on clock, new day/light

Big Truth: Advent is a coming, and appearing. For Christians, this is the season during which we prepare our hearts to once again celebrate the incarnation of Jesus on earth. In many ways, we've felt like we've been sleeping - not knowing how to be awake right now - amidst all the political, social, medical, and financial struggles. Yet, while the world is in darkness, God IS light. Advent gives the people of the Panama UMC the opportunity to awaken to the advent of Jesus and prepare for His second coming.

Focus Phrase: God is asking me to say, “Yes!” to Jesus today and every new day.

1. Introduction

- A. If you're joining us for the first time this season, or tuning in for the first time online, you may be confused as to why we have a bedroom set in the sanctuary.
- B. Well, throughout Advent - this amazing season that leads to Christmas and beyond - we're saying (shout) “WAKE UP!” And not only “WAKE UP!”, but STAY AWAKE. Jesus commanded the disciples and us in Mark 13:37: “And what I say to you I say to all: **Keep awake!**”
- C. Yet, in the darkness before the dawn, when you're awake but not yet UP, God puts a call on your life every day - God claims you - even in the darkness. We are awaiting His second coming...and we will know it's near when it gets darkest before His dawning! **In the darkness, God is preparing to shine His light of HOPE in our world.**
- D. While we wait, though, God calls each of us who follow Jesus to Get Up to Clean Up! John the Baptizer and Jesus called those in the first century to repent and believe in Jesus...to be forgiven of our sin. **Every day is a new opportunity to prepare to follow Jesus through repentance.**
- E. But now that we've seen the dawn and now that we've spent time cleaning up, what's next? Think about your own life...your normal day. Do you just plow into the new day without thinking or planning? Or is there some intention to it? There are always choices to make - should I have cereal or a fruit smoothie for breakfast. Will I drink coffee or tea and what style should I drink? It is peppermint latte season, after all! Am I going to school or work today...or shopping or running errands? A wise person once said, “Life's all about choices.” But choices require a decision.
- F. In order to do anything, really, there must be a process of saying YES to your choices and decisions. Yes, I'll get up. Yes, I'll clean up. Yes, I'll eat breakfast and drink water. Yes, I'll go to school. Yes, I'll get to church. Yes... yes...yes...

- G. **Anything we actually DO in life is the direct result of saying YES.**
Sometimes we have all the details, but most time we don't. Even if we plan ahead, there are lots of variables. Yet, we go ahead anyway and do life. And, do you know what? (listen - glad you asked) Tomorrow...you'll get to do it all over again until God calls you home.
- H. So, when it comes to our lives, because we're followers of Jesus, **God is asking you to say, "Yes!" to Jesus** today and every new day. (write it down)
- I. Today, we're going to one of our favorite passages of scripture in the gospel of Luke...the beloved story of the Angel Gabriel's visit to Mary, who would become the mother of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord...the Anointed One.
- J. And one of my most favorite parts of this most favorite narrative is that Mary said YES. A new day was upon her - upon the world - and she said YES!
- K. Let's pray and then we can read this awesome story again!
- L. **PRAY!!!**
- M. I hope you brought your bible with you today...please turn with me to Luke chapter 1, starting in verse 26. If you're ready, say "Let's GO!"

2. Scripture

- A. **READ Luke 1:26-38**
- B. This is the GOSPEL of the Lord Jesus Christ - the truth about Him!
- C. Can you even imagine being Mary? In one moment, Mary's life was whatever it was (we aren't told in scripture) and in an instant, she was face-to-face with a messenger from God. Her every-day life of decisions and chores and, well, life, was interrupted abruptly.
- D. But as amazing as this encounter is, Mary was certainly not the first person to be interact with God and be told some incredible and difficult truth. Rev. Tim McConnell wrote, "We have many Biblical examples of "yes" answers to God's call to action: Noah to build the ark, Moses to lead his people, Esther to save her people, David to provide the Messianic lineage, and many more. But there is one person, besides Jesus, who stands out in my mind as the ultimate "yes" person. That person is Mary, the mother of Jesus." (<https://www.citizen-times.com/story/life/2017/08/26/devotional-making-easier-say-yes-god/591126001/>)
 - i. Noah, in Genesis 6, was chosen by God to save his family from flood destruction by building an Ark that would save animals as well. It took a visit by God and some difficult decisions...and a YES.
 - ii. Abraham was asked by God to sacrifice his son Isaac, as told in Genesis 22. Talk about a difficult decision and an even more excruciating YES. God ended up substituting Isaac for a ram caught in the thickets, but WOW!

- iii. Even though we don't read about it directly, Queen Esther said YES to God after she was commanded to do hard things to save her people... God's people. She said YES.
- iv. King David, in 2 Samuel 7, responded to a visit from the prophet Nathan, speaking for God... and promised that David's throne would reign forever.
- E. They all said YES. And that throne on which David agreed to sit was the same throne that the Angel Gabriel announced would be the one on which JESUS would sit... and sits today.
- F. Yet, Mary had to say YES. But it wasn't that easy, was it?
- G. Luke told us in verse 1 that Elizabeth, who was a cousin of Mary, was also pregnant. Earlier in Luke 1, we read the story of how that came to be - that Elizabeth was barren, and only God could make that change. He did! Her husband Zechariah had a hard time believing it. Elizabeth was unsure how. Yet, she said YES. Zechariah eventually said YES as well.
- H. Mary, too, gets that offer - to believe God and say YES to the New Day.
- I. Gabriel, an agent of the Triune God, visited Mary on a non-descript night, in a nowhere place, without any fanfare, in order to tell her **three** important things:
 - i. First, he said **she was favored**... but not just favored, **HIGHLY favored**. By God! She could've said, "Aww shucks, you say that to everyone." But that's not true. God doesn't call someone HIGHLY FAVORED in any other place than right here in Luke's gospel, in THIS verse.
 - ii. The second thing he said was, "The Lord is WITH you." The Greek word for WITH is **metá**, which is a preposition which means **with or among**. But, this word also has the sense that after something is with or among you, there is a change after that... something is new or different. When the Angel said God is WITH you, something was about to change for Mary. And we know from what the angel said next, that was so very true.
 - iii. The third piece of this announcement was, "You're going to be pregnant with the Son of the Most High. He will reign on David's throne. He would be a total fulfillment of prophecy. His reign would never end."
 - iv. You are HIGHLY FAVORED. The Lord is WITH you. You will bear a SON, who will be God's Anointed One. WOW! WOW!
- J. Now, here's where this thing could've gone either way. Either she says YES to the Angel and to God, OR she runs in contempt and we never hear from her again. I mean, she's seriously confused and probably very skeptical about what she just heard from an ANGEL, no less.
- K. And, up to verse 29, the Gabriel doesn't even say her name. If it were me, I'd probably ask, "Are you SURE you have the right person?" Mary, rightfully, had some questions... she had some doubts... she was wondering. "How? I'm

a virgin.” But, once the Angel said her name in verse 30, “Mary...,” the pieces began to fall into place...at least some of them.

- L. And at that moment, I picture the rest of the angels and heavenly hosts and Gabriel and God himself rejoicing because Mary is not only true, but her heart is pure and her mind is ready...to say YES to the new day God had for her.
- M. Thankfully, the Angel got the OK from upstairs to tell her, “...the REST of the story.” The Holy Spirit will come upon you and you will conceive...you will give birth to a son...the Holy One born will be called the Son of God. And to prove this is from God, go ask your cousin Elizabeth...she’s pregnant too and God did THAT too.
- N. “For no word from God will ever fail.” Mhhmmm. Amen!
- O. And then, in the most incredible, humbling, powerful moment in the gospels - when heaven and earth became one and the course of history took a turn that continues to today...as God’s plan for the salvation of the world and of you and me began...and the angels began rejoicing and God’s kingdom began breaking into the world - the NEW DAY starts to dawn!
- P. Mary said “YES”. MARY said YES! Just like Noah, and Abraham, and Esther, and David, and others. Just like Mary’s husband Joseph would say YES when an angel came to HIM in a dream. Just like the disciples and followers of Jesus said. And just like you and me. Mary said YES to the new day.
- Q. God asked Mary to say, “Yes!” to Jesus that day. She said YES.

3. Application

- A. What about you?
- B. Donna Otto is quoted in Joanna Weaver’s book, “Having a Mary Spirit,” as she discusses Mary’s affirmation of her role as Jesus’ mother. “As far as I can tell, once Mary had said yes to the angel, she kept on saying yes to whatever God was doing in her life and her home. “She said, ‘Yes, I’ll go to Bethlehem with my husband even though I am very pregnant.’ She said, ‘Yes, I’ll settle for a stable.’ And ‘Yes, I’ll agree to let all those grungy shepherds see my newborn.’ Later, she said, ‘Yes, I’ll let my Son leave home to become an itinerant preacher.’ And ‘Yes, I’ll be with Him no matter what - even at the foot of a cross.’”
- C. Michelangelo's "Pieta" in St. Peter's Basilica in Rome is a sculpture of Mary and grown-up Jesus. Mary said "yes" to God throughout her life, even when it led her to the foot of the cross. “The life of Mary shows that great things, important things, always begin with someone saying yes to God, and then moving along one yes at a time.”
- D. Church, God gives you, every day, the opportunity - the offer - to say YES to what He’s doing. You can look at the story of Mary and think one of two

things. Either you think there's no way that anything like that would ever happen to you and you're glad it doesn't. OR you can think that if anything like that DOES happen to you, then would you be willing to say YES? Would I respond with a YES? Would God ever use me?

- E. The faithful answer - the one that God places on the life of every follower of Jesus - is YES to it all.
- F. But how do you do that? How do you say YES to the new day, every day?
- G. Now, I'm not saying that God's angel will come and announce to you that you're pregnant and will have His son. Some of you moms are like, "Whew!"
- H. But, the Holy Spirit, in your life, is speaking to you already...even as I speak. The Holy Spirit is guiding and wooing and inviting and asking you to say YES, every day.
- I. The most simple question God asks you is the same question Jesus asked the disciples on the shore of the the Sea of Galilee. "Will you follow me?" "Can I have your life for my purposes?" "Are you willing to give up what YOU want in order for Me, God, to use you to bring others to Me?" "Are you willing to sacrifice for me and my sacrifice?" Will you say YES to Jesus?
- J. Church, there's no greater purpose in life than to live your life to glorify God alone. Ever. Only. Always. Life apart from God holds nothing compared to the everlasting life that Jesus gives you NOW and forever when you say YES.
- K. But there's more. Let's look at three application points that will guide your steps and mine about saying YES to God every day.
 - i. First, **Begin by agreeing ahead of time to say YES when God asks**
 - a. Mary was pre-willing to say YES. Now, she didn't know ahead of time what Gabriel would say. She didn't know what decisions she would have to make in THAT day. But, we get the sense that she was faithful leading up to that day, which is why God chose HER.
 - b. This is FAITH in action...and the yes might be a simple thing (like a meal for someone, or giving to a ministry, listening to someone who is hurting, sharing a testimony about Jesus). The key is to **be prepared** - to agree ahead of time - to say yes.
 - c. This takes preparation and a willing spirit/heart. It doesn't start when God puts a decision in front of you, but starts in the darkness before the dawn. It starts when things are quiet and you can hear the voice of God in your heart.
 - d. The preparation to say YES continues during the clean up process (and because of the clean-up process). As you repent of anything that grieves the heart of God and receive the freedom of forgiveness, that freedom

allows you to turn your face to God and His plans. When you do, then you are ready ahead of time to say YES.

- ii. Second, **Say Yes even without all the details worked out.**
 - a. Man, is this one tough for me. Again, this takes FAITH. Mary's first few words from the Angel were vague, at best, but eventually she understood enough to know that she wanted to say Yes.
 - b. Each step of Jesus' life was an adventure she never would've imagined, but she trusted in God and it brought her joy even in the heartache.
 - c. For us, depending on how you approach life, saying yes without the details just might be the place where Jesus does a new thing in your life. Sometimes things can seem unsettling without the full picture, but do we ever really have the full picture anyway? This is a sculpture in St. Peter's Basilica. Not sure what it is?
 - d. This is the same sculpture I showed earlier, but you wouldn't know it unless I zoom out to the full picture.
 - e. Say yes, even when you don't have the full picture.
- iii. Lastly, **Keep saying Yes every day, even (and especially) when things get difficult.**
 - a. Mary said yes to the birth, which was as hard as any birth, I assume. But was frustrated when Jesus 'took off' to the Temple at age 12, or as an itinerant preacher at age 30. Mary said Yes when Jesus began to call His disciples (she was one, I think), but also said Yes when she had to watch Him arrested, tortured, and died.
 - b. Consistently saying Yes to the new day, every day, is the place where God can use you for His glory - which is the goal of our lives.
 - c. This Advent season continues to call you and me to slow down, turn our faces to God's plan of salvation as we await the second coming, again/still. **Stare into the manger. Gaze on His face. Look into the eyes of Mary and Joseph. Take it all in!**
 - d. The focus is that Christmas is the day when God said YES to Creation, and our response is to say YES to Him every morning.

L. God is asking you to say, "Yes!" to Jesus today and every new day.

4. Conclusion

- A. When you say YES, your normal day probably won't be so normal any longer.
- B. For the rest of this season, let the story impact you. Don't miss it. Simply say, "YES, God...I will say YES."

- C. I'll finish this morning by simply reading John 1:9-14. This is WHO and WHAT we're saying YES to today and everyday.
- D. The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.
- E. **PRAY!**