ADVENT WEEK 2 - PEACE (Light the purple candle from last week at this point reminding all that that is the Hope candle.)

Read Luke 1:26-38

Mary. A key player in the story of Advent and the first coming of Christ. Today, we read Luke's retelling of the day she found out that she—a virgin—would give birth to the King and Son of the Most High. She was scared—and how could she not have been? Pause for just a moment to imagine her situation. What would you have felt? Excitement? Joy? Maybe, but more likely you would feel shocked, confused, and frightened. Yet, the angel, Gabriel, tells her not to be afraid. Why? Because though the announcement brings momentary fear, it ultimately brings a declaration of peace that Mary—or anyone else—had never heard before. After so many years, Gabriel brought news of the long-awaited Savior.

As hard as it might have been for Mary to wrap her mind around what she had just heard, that event was just the beginning. The angel left, and the reality of the news sank in. The incredible promise spoken by Gabriel faded into the reality of being a young, not-yet-married woman who had to answer to her future husband, her family, and all those she encountered about the nature of her pregnancy.

Luke tells us that Mary stayed with Elizabeth for three months, but we aren't told much else about what her pregnancy was like. As with any pregnancy, there were likely difficult days and happy days. Regardless, her pregnancy must have been marked by a sense of expectancy. Not just because she was anticipating the arrival of the Son of God, but because she was expecting.

As she waited for His arrival, Mary surely wrestled with doubt and fear, but she was likely comforted by the words of Gabriel. "Do not be afraid," he said. In her waiting, Mary got a glimpse of a new kind of peace that would soon come to earth—brought about by her very own Son who, right now, was just a baby in her womb. We too, sit in this peace—knowing He has come before and He will one day come again.

Family Time (Light another of the purple candles at this point while stating this is the "Peace Candle". It reminds us of the Peace we have in Jesus.)

Talk about these questions with your family or group.

KIDS

1. Can you remember a time when you heard a very surprising news? How did you respond?

2. How do you think Mary felt when Gabriel came to give her the news that she would have a baby?

TEENS AND ADULTS

3. What makes you afraid? What helps you when you are afraid? How does Jesus help ease your fears?

4. Think about when you or a friend or family member were pregnant. How did a sense of expectancy mark the pregnancy? Did attitudes and expectations change throughout? How does this inform the way you think about expecting Christ's return?

5. Though she was scared, Mary showed incredible openness to God's plans for her when she received the angel's news. In what areas might God be calling you to deeper faith and openness to His will?

Pray

Pray that God would reveal areas of your life where you may be operating out of fear, and that you would begin to trust Him more and more with those things. Pray that, where you may be holding tightly to plans of your own, you would walk in deeper faith and openness to His will.