



Jason Smith – The Whole Story of Christmas

Part 2: “The Courage Of Yes”

Mary and Joseph were young, poor, and powerless. Yet God chose them to parent the Messiah. Their story is one of stunning courage and radical obedience.

What can we learn from how they responded when God disrupted their lives with His plan? When God calls, our “yes” can change the world, even when it costs us everything.

Scripture: Luke 1:26–38; Matthew 1:18–25

Advent is a season of waiting, of preparing, of remembering that God stepped into our world in the most unexpected way—through the birth of His Son, Jesus.

We’re in week two of our series, *The Whole Christmas Story*. Last week, we talked about the silence between the Old and New Testaments—those 400 years when no prophet spoke, yet God was still moving.

His promises were alive, waiting to break into history at just the right time. This week, we shift from the silence to the story of a young couple—Mary and Joseph.

Imagine the weight of what God asked of them.

Their lives were interrupted, their plans turned upside down, and yet they chose to trust Him.

Today, we'll see how their obedience wasn't just about them—it was a vital piece of God's bigger story. And it reminds us that sometimes the greatest gift we can bring to God is simply the courage to say “yes.”

STORY: In the late 1800s, Thomas Edison's friend and business partner, Edward Johnson, did something bold. At the time, people lit their Christmas trees with candles, which was a dangerous practice that caused many fires.

But Johnson had a crazy idea. Using Edison's invention, he hand-wired 80 red, white, and blue lightbulbs onto a Christmas tree. People thought he was out of his mind.

Who would ever replace candles with tiny glowing bulbs? But Johnson said yes to the idea anyway, and that one yes changed Christmas forever.

Today, millions of trees shine with electric lights because one person was willing to step into the unknown.

Two of the most famous characters in the Christmas story are Mary and Joseph. This young Jewish couple became the focal point of the work that God wanted to do in the world.

Mary and Joseph's yes was far greater than Johnson's, of course, but the principle is the same.

Sometimes God asks us to say yes to something others might not understand, something that feels uncertain or risky. And just like that first lit tree, their yes lit up the world with the glory of Christ.

READ Luke 1:26-33

²⁶ In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin betrothed^[a] to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David.

And the virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!"^[b] ²⁹ But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be.

³⁰ And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹ And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.

³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

Can you imagine what it must have felt like for Mary to hear those words? "You will conceive and give birth to a son... and He will be called the Son of the Most High."

She was likely a teenager, engaged to be married, living an ordinary life in a small town. Suddenly, God interrupts her plans with a message that would change everything.

(Stella as an example)

1. FOLLOWING GOD'S CALL CAN BE SCARY

Think about the fear she must have felt. What would Joseph think? What would her family say? Would the community believe her story or condemn her?

Following God's call in this moment didn't come with a neat and tidy guarantee of how it would all work out. It came with questions, uncertainty, and risk.

Here is what I have found to be true in my life: **saying yes to God doesn't always make life easier, in fact, it often makes things harder in the moment.**

It can mean misunderstood relationships, disrupted plans, or stepping into places where the outcome isn't clear. But it's in those very places of fear and uncertainty that God's glory shines the brightest.

I remember hearing about a little boy who was terrified to go down into the dark basement of his house. His mind would play out all kinds of terrible scenarios that made him nervous.

One day, his mom asked him to grab a broom for her from the basement, and he froze at the top of the stairs. She told him, "Don't be afraid, Jesus is with you even in the dark."

The boy thought about that for a moment, then cracked the door open and yelled, "Jesus, if you're down there, can you hand me the broom?"

We laugh at that story, but the truth is, we often feel the same way. When God calls us into the unknown, we want Him to make it safe and comfortable before we move.

But courage doesn't mean we have no fear; it means we step forward in faith even when the fear is still there, trusting God is already waiting for us in the dark places.

This message from the angel to Mary was inviting Mary to step into the unknown. The whole story of Christmas could have easily ended there, and it almost did. Mary was unsure.

Luke 1:34-38

³⁴ And Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?”^[a]

³⁵ And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born^[b] will be called holy—the Son of God.

³⁶ And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. ³⁷ For nothing will be impossible with God.”

³⁸ And Mary said, “Behold, I am the servant^[c] of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her.

Mary's first response to God's call is a question: “*How will this be?*” Her response was honest and reasonable. She was a virgin after all. That makes having a child very difficult.

She didn't immediately jump to obedience. She paused, reflected, and voiced what she didn't understand. She was basically saying, "God, this doesn't make sense.

I don't have what it takes." Sound familiar? God calls us to forgive, and we say, "*But they don't deserve it.*" He calls us to give, and we say, "*But I can't afford it.*"

He calls us to serve, and we say, "*But I'm not qualified.*"

He calls us to share our faith, and we say, "*But what if I mess it up?*"

Excuses are natural and normal, but they can rob us of the miracle God wants to do in us and through us.

2. IT'S EASY TO MAKE EXCUSES

As John Maxwell once said, "*Small disciplines repeated with consistency every day lead to great achievements gained slowly over time.*"

In other words, what God can accomplish in your life doesn't depend on your perfection, your resources, or your fear, it depends on your willingness to say yes... over and over and over again.

Mary's yes, even after hesitation, allowed God to birth the Messiah into the world. God wants to use you to do incredible things. However, he wants our courage, our obedience, and our trust to make it happen.

God's sovereignty invites us into partnership. He is ready to do amazing things, but we have a choice to step forward.

We have the choice to either cooperate with His plans or resist them, and that choice shapes how His blessings and purposes unfold in our lives.

Mary's yes reminds us that God works through ordinary people who are willing to trust Him.

What is interesting is that this was not just a struggle for Mary alone. Joseph had his own encounter he had to work through.

Joseph's story is just as remarkable. When he discovered that Mary was pregnant, he didn't know the full story.

He knew the risk of public shame, the potential for broken relationships, and the uncertainty of the future.

He wrestled with what to do, considering a quiet divorce, a path that would have been justified by the law, but God intervened in a dream and gave him clarity: **this child was from the Holy Spirit.**

Against all conventional knowledge, Joseph, too, was obedient to God. Saying yes to God is an intentional choice; it's an active choice.

Joseph had to courageously protect Mary, care for her, and step into a future that looked risky and uncertain.

Mary had to embrace a calling that would challenge her socially, emotionally, and physically.

Likewise, when God calls us to serve, forgive, give, or step into the unknown, it takes courage.

And **courage isn't the absence of fear, it's moving forward even when fear is present.**

What we need to understand this morning is:

3. OUR "YES" UNLOCKS AMAZING THINGS

The Apostle Paul speaks to the need for us to offer our lives to God in the book of Romans.

Romans 12:1

I appeal to you therefore, brothers,^[a] by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

Paul reminds us that this offering is not meant to be forced, but a response to God's mercy and love. It's an act of worship.

When we surrender to Him, we are saying, "I trust You with my life, my choices, and my future, even when I can't see the whole picture."

Saying yes to God is offering every part of ourselves to Him, even when we don't fully understand the path ahead. Saying yes to God today doesn't always look dramatic.

It can be small acts of faith. Here's the challenge: what is God asking you to say yes to this week?

It might be a big leap of faith, or a small step in obedience. Either way, your yes matters. It allows God to work through you, to shine His light, and to bring His kingdom into your world.

To help us understand what saying "yes" to God really looks like, I want you all to take the blank sheet of paper and pen that you were given as you came in. I'm holding a blank sheet here as well.

Think of it like a contract... except there's no fine print, no instructions, no guarantees. Just a blank page. Most of us would never sign a contract without knowing all the details.

We want to understand the risks, the benefits, the terms. But when God interrupted Mary and Joseph's lives, there was no fine print.

They didn't know how hard it would be, how people would react, or how much it would cost. All they had was God's word, and they had to decide whether or not to say "yes."

I want to invite you now: take a moment and sign your name at the bottom of your sheet.

You don't know exactly what God will write on this page of your life, but by signing, you are saying, "God, I trust You. I will follow You. I will say yes, even when I don't have all the answers."

Just like Mary and Joseph, saying yes to God is stepping into the unknown.

It's letting Him write the story, even when we can't see the ending. And when we do that, God can do amazing things, things we could never imagine, through us.

Let's pray together.