Ann Murray

Advent IV Year B

December 24, 2023

1

“Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to

your word.” What powerful words we hear from Mary today. She has

just been told the most remarkable, unbelievable thing in the world and

after asking just one question she accepts it and submits totally to the

will of God. We would all do well to live by Mary’s example. In it she

acknowledges that she is a servant of God, that God’s word is the

ultimate authority, and she will abide by it.

Let’s see how we can live into Mary’s commitment in our lives.

First, she acknowledges that she is a servant of God. This is something

that is easy for us to forget. Sometimes it is easy to believe we are the

masters of our own fate. We are in charge of everything. Then,

something happens in our lives and we realize we only thought we had

control over things.

Thinking back over the last few years, the pandemic definitely

showed us that we were not in control of most things in our lives. We

had to isolate from each other, not even being able to come to church.

However, God was still with us during this desert time and we were still

God’s servants. And, here we are now, back together worshipping and

loving God.

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What is God calling you to do in service of God? It could be

something here at St. Michael’s working to prepare the meals for the

unhoused or bringing foods for local pantries through Sharon’s wagon. It

could be something in the Norman community. Serving at the Christmas

dinner tomorrow or volunteering with the Red Dirt Collective or

Churches Caring for Creation. It could be serving at the altar or

discerning a call to the Diaconate or Priesthood. Or, it could be

something you have not even dreamed about. I encourage you to open

you heart and your mind to God’s calling for you in your life. God has a

purpose for you just like God had a purpose for Mary and God is waiting

for you to fulfill that purpose. God may not send the angel Gabriel to

speak God’s purpose to you but God has many ways to influence you in

this life. It may be that someone has been asking you to participate in a

certain ministry, or that you have become interested in doing certain

things. It may be that you end up choosing something as an avocation

that becomes a vocation. You never know. However God is speaking to

you, it is up to you to say “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be

with me according to your word.” And to go and do what God has set

before you.

The second thing Mary does during her exchange with Gabriel is

to accept God’s word as authority for her life and abide by God’s word.

We will see this lived out tonight in the incarnation of Christ as we

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celebrate. Mary accepts that she, a virgin, will be made pregnant by the

Holy Spirit and bear the Son of God. Mary listened and assented to what

God wanted. And, to settle the issue once and for all, Mary knew. Mary

knew that her baby boy to come was Lord of all creation and that he

would one day rule the nations. And, she knew this because Gabriel, the

messenger of God, told Mary that the child to be born will be holy; he

will be called Son of God. Mary accepted this news from Gabriel. She

understood she would become pregnant with the Messiah who would

save her people.

What do we know? What has God said to us? Well, we have the

Bible that shares God’s story and relationship with God’s people, Israel

through the Old Testament and the Good News of Jesus Christ that we

celebrate tonight and always through the New Testament. The Bible is

not inerrant. Humans wrote it and we are fallible. However, it is full of

truth. From the truth that when we go against God our lives become

more difficult like it did for Adam and Even when they were removed

from the Garden of Eden. To the truth which we celebrate through

Mary’s annunciation that the God whom we love and worship will come

to us to offer us love and salvation.

God, through Jesus, reminded us how we are to live—to love God

with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength and to love ourselves and our

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neighbors. Jesus gave us the beatitudes and told us how to live our lives.

He reminded us that what we do for those who are sick, lonely, or

imprisoned, is what we do to him and that we are to serve and aid these

vulnerable populations. God speaks to us not only through the Bible but

also in many other ways. God may send someone into your life to share

something with you that God wants you to know. I think seeing a

beautiful sunset or enjoying being out in nature is another way God can

speak to us. A common way God&#39;s call manifests is through the gentle

nudging of the Holy Spirit in the form of a still, small voice in our

hearts, a sense of peace or confirmation, or a feeling of conviction.

Ultimately, the way God&#39;s call manifests is unique to each individual and

situation. We must remain open and receptive to God&#39;s voice,

responding with obedience and faith.

It is up to each and every one of us to discern when and how God

is speaking to us in our lives and what God is calling us to do. Once we

discern God’s voice and what God wants us to do, we then have a choice

just like Mary had a choice. Mary had the power and volition to say No

to God. God does not force us into anything and has always given us

free will to say no. But Mary said yes and bore her beautiful Son to save

us all. I do not know what God is asking you to do but I imagine that

God is working in your life in such a way to show you a path to follow.

It is your choice whether you want to follow it. You can always say no.

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I will tell you, however, that God can be relentless in the call God

has for you. Think about Jonah and his story of going to Nineveh. Jonah

went through a lot including the belly of a whale before saying yes to

God’s call. Hopefully, we will say yes to God before being swallowed

by a whale.

While Jonah’s path to God was long and circuitous, Mary’s was

short and straight. She was approached by an Angel, advised what God

was asking of her and she agreed and submitted to God’s will. Let us all

hope that when confronted by God’s call for us that we can say “Here

am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.”

And, as we say these words even with all our worry and misgivings we

must remember what the angel Gabriel told Mary that these things are

occurring because “nothing will be impossible with God.” Now, that

doesn’t mean that they won’t be difficulties or calamities. Pandemics

will still happen. Bad things will still be reported on the news. People we

love desperately will die but God will be there with us through it all.

God will bless us during the positive things and comfort us during the

bad times. God will always be with us. As we leave here we must

remember to listen for God’s plan for us so that we can answer, like

Mary, that we are God’s servant and that all things may be done

according to God’s will. Amen.