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“Intrude” Sermon Series

Hope Lutheran Church

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How is your Christmas planning going? This is one of those seasons where many people try and have everything planned out, hoping that there will be no surprises. You have your calendars all marked up with what parties are happening on what days and when family is coming in, how long they are staying, when you may be traveling. Or maybe it's the same thing every year and you're excited for the routine of the season. Chances are pretty good though that not everything will go as planned.

In our gospel lesson today from Luke, we come to a familiar story where everything definitely does not go as planned. Mary is engaged and like any normal engaged girl, she is probably trying to have everything go as planned. She doesn't want any surprises and she plans for her perfect day. Then all of a sudden an angel shows up. The angel Gabriel comes telling Mary that she is going to be a mom. But not just any mom, the mother of the Son of God and it's going to happen now, while she is still a virgin.

God's intrusion into Mary's life is absolutely incredible. He uses the normal means of childbirth, makes it completely abnormal, and brings the promised Messiah into the world as a baby and He uses this normal girl from Nazareth to do it. Mary was just trying to plan, trying to have everything ready for her wedding day, but God wanted to use her for something more. God was going to use her for something extraordinary.

God is taking Mary, who before this is no one special, and He is making her the mother of the promised Messiah. Way back in Genesis, right after Adam and Eve committed the first sin, God made a promise that He would send a Savior. A Savior that would crush satan's head, defeating sin and death, and now that Savior is finally coming. The one that they had been waiting for for generations is finally making His arrival. But He isn't coming in a way they would expect. Not some flashy, “look at me” sort of way. The Savior is coming through normal, everyday childbirth. And He will be born of a normal, everyday girl who is engaged to a carpenter.

This is life changing news. After this moment, everything would be different for Mary. And not just for Mary, but for everyone. The angel Gabriel comes to her and says, your child, “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, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.” To us, this news is awesome, we know what this means, but to Mary this was probably terrifying. All of a sudden, in a single moment, an angel has appeared to Mary and told her that she is going to be pregnant and that this child of hers will be the King of kings, the Son of the Most High!

The promised Son of God is coming into the world, just like anyone else, through childbirth. God chooses this normal act to do His extraordinary work. Jesus is coming to live with normal people because it is exactly those people that is came to save. And it is through normal people that God chooses to work. He uses normal people to do His will to show that no one is too big or small for Him to use. He does not need to work in this way but He chooses to. God wants to use normal, everyday people to work His extraordinary will.

So that means that you and me, as God’s children, are also being used. Just as God used Mary to bring the Savior into the world, God is using us to bring the message of this Savior to the world around us. God is using our everyday, normal, actions and conversations to show others the love and forgiveness of Christ. God purposely puts us in situations where we can show the love of Christ. At times these situations may come in an intense heart-to-heart conversation, but those times are rare. Just like Jesus entered the world in a normal, under the radar way, God works through the normal, quiet, actions of our daily lives.

Just like Mary could in no way plan for the news that Gabriel gave her and just like you can’t exactly plan for every little thing that will happen this Christmas season, we cannot plan out how God will use us to show the love of Christ. But that doesn’t mean we can’t be ready. We know that God is using us. In the coming weeks as people visit your house, or you visit others, that is God working. God is placing you in situations where you can show His love.

As you attend Christmas parties and concerts, dinners and plays, that is God using you for His extraordinary work. Just like Jesus was brought into the world with hardly anyone noticing, we don’t always notice where God is working. But He tells us that He is, He promises that He is. So we trust that God is using us, in our normal lives, to do His work.

But trusting that God is working invites us to respond to God's work, we have the privilege to work with God. After the angel Gabriel told Mary what was about to happen, Mary responds in an absolutely incredible way. In verse 38 we hear Mary say, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word."

Think of the enormity of this statement. Think of the faith and trust it would have taken to respond in this way. Think of all that Gabriel just told Mary. If an angel had come to me and dumped that information on me, I don't think I would have been able to respond as Mary did. The angel tells her that the Savior of the world will be born through her and she faithfully responds by simply saying, "Ok Lord, I am your servant. Use me as you say you will."

Mary responds in faith. She responds in a way that imitates the future life of her child. Without even knowing it, Mary is reflecting the future life of Christ. She responds humbly, knowing that God is bringing her into the promise, bringing her into His plan. She may not completely understand what this all means and she certainly doesn't know what will happen in the coming years as Jesus' mom, but what she does know is that God will be with her. She knows that she is a servant of God and she responds as a faithful servant.

She responds as her son, Jesus, was soon going to live. Jesus did not live the life of a king, though He could have, instead He lived a life of humility and service. Jesus did not ask for people to serve Him, instead He looked for ways to serve others, reaching to those on the very outskirts of society. Jesus lowered Himself from His throne in heaven, submitting to the will of the Father, humbling Himself even to the point of dying on a cross.

As children of God, we too are called to imitate the life of Christ. We are called to lead servant lives and to humble ourselves to the will of God. And God gives us plenty of opportunities follow His will. Every day we interact with others that may need to hear and see the love of Christ. When those opportunities arise, we can either let God work through us and live out the love of Christ or we can turn our back towards those opportunities that God places before us.

Later on in Luke's gospel, we hear Jesus give the parable of the good Samaritan. If you remember the parable, three individuals were given an opportunity to either show the love of Christ or ignore what God was trying to do. A man had been beaten and robbed and was left for dead on the side of the road. A priest and a Levite had both seen the

man and walked right by. They ignored the opportunity. But the Samaritan did not pass up the opportunity. He saw the man and took the time out of his day to stop and help him. The Samaritan saw that God was using him at that time.

The Samaritan saw an opportunity where God wanted to use him and he did not ignore it. Every day, God gives us opportunities where He wants to use the normal in our lives to work His extraordinary will. We can either walk on by or we can stop, acknowledge that we are servants of God, and let Him work.

These opportunities are hardly ever as big as the one before the Samaritan, or before Mary. But even in the small opportunities, that seem too normal, God chooses to work. It could be a conversation with your kid after they get home from school. Or a conversation with your parent when they come home from work. It may be taking the time to stop and talk to that coworker that always looks tired and worn out. Sure, some of these conversations may seem awkward or even unnecessary, but those are the very conversations that God will use to spread His love to others.

When we see the opportunity that God places before us to have a conversation or lend a helping hand, we have a choice. We can either turn our backs and wait for someone else to hopefully step in or we can do what God has called us to do. We can respond in faith to God's calling and let God work through us, imitating Christ.

As we keep our eyes open for opportunities to imitate Christ, we remember Mary's response. She did not respond with the idea that she would be doing everything on her own. She knew that God would not leave her out to dry. He promised to be with her. God goes with us too. In our normal days to do His extraordinary work, God goes with us.

Throughout this Christmas season, God will give us plenty of opportunities to either ignore what He is doing or let Him work in us. These opportunities may come about through people that disrupt our plans, taking a little extra grace and love, or they may be in the planned and normal days. Either way, God wants to use us to spread the love of Christ. In response to God calling us to work with Him, we respond as Mary did saying, "Behold, I am a servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word."