

Advent – Prepare Yourself – Dec. 1, 2021

Advent season focuses on expectation & anticipation of Christ's birth

- lasts 4 Sundays leading up to Christmas.
- combines old & new. **Israel**: celebrated God's leading from Egypt, looked forward to coming of the Messiah.
 - o **Now**: celebrate the 1st coming of Jesus, the Messiah; looking forward to the 2nd coming.
 - o **2 elements - remembrance & anticipation**

Advent: looking forward to something greater that is to come b/c we know what God has done.

Tonight – let's remember ... so we can anticipate ... be excited.

Mary - chosen by God as mother for Jesus.

Matthew tells us: **virgin**.

Luke: "**highly favored**" ... We know little about Mary.

- she was **willing** to be God's servant. She said to **Gabriel**: "I am the Lord's servant," and - "may it happen to me as you have said."
- **Elizabeth** says to Mary: "You are blessed because you **believed** that the Lord would do what he said." (*Luke 1:45*)
- **Mary's song** (*Luke 1:46-55*) shows us who Mary is: humble, knew God ... knew His mighty deeds & His mercy.

3 things: Mary was **humble; believed** in God, was **willing to be used**.

She isn't honored for healing, writing, preaching... b/c of skill, gifts, etc.

She's blessed – revered – favored - for the virgin birth.

A miracle happened to her b/c of what was in her heart.

Mary was afraid . . . but she listened to Gabriel. Kept moving forward.

Was young . . . but she was chosen. Believed she was blessed. Special.

Wasn't perfect . . . had a heart to please God. Do whatever...

Wasn't well educated . . . but knew God... what He could do.

- This Advent, let Mary be your guide. **Remember her & anticipate** . . . prepare for Christmas. **U anticipate rain, get an umbrella**

Prepare:

- 1 – pregnant woman prepares for the birth of a baby.
- 2 – invite people to dinner, prepare for it.
- 3 – Build a house, you take steps ...

This Christmas . . . Prepare for it to be amazing... God do something **great**.

1 – Be a Believer.

Get to Know God. Know His power... that **He does the impossible**.
Know His mercy. He **uses imperfect people**: Jacob-deceiver; David.

2 – Be Willing.

Don't just wrap gifts, be willing to be a Gift. Be willing to give time...

“As for you, Solomon my son, know the God of your father, & serve him wholeheartedly and with a willing mind, for the Lord searches every heart & understands the intention of every thought.” – **1 Chr. 28:9**

3 – Be Humble.

God uses people who don't think they're too important to be servants.
Jesus - servant. Born – stable.

Humble people serve others . . . anticipate that you can help another.

“Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, so that He may exalt you at the proper time” – **1 Pet. 5:6**

4 – Be Less.

John the Baptist said: “He must increase, but I must decrease”- **Jn 3:30**

- This Christmas: **let Jesus' love be more than our decorations.**
 - Let God shine through the actions of our lives.
 - Let God's love flow to those around us.
 - Speak of Christ this Christmas.

5 – Be Prepared.

When you believe, are humble & willing . . . God does great things.

Miracles happen. **Like Mary, be prepared to give birth to love & joy.**

Stay positive. Test negative. Vaccinated. Jan. 5, 2022

Song of the week: **“Be Born in Me”**- Francesca Battistelli.