

Fil-Am Community Church

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8 December 2013

Key Verse: Luke 1:26-38

“MARY DID YOU KNOW?”

Good morning! Magandang Umaga! Guten Morgen! Welcome, Pastor Chris. He just came from Germany. If this is your first time to meet him, he's not German. He is Filipino. And to all our first-time guests this morning, I'd like to welcome you all to Fil-Am Church.

Whenever Christmastime comes around, most people, especially children, are filled with joy and wonder and excitement. But many are also filled with dread and fear and anxiety. We're afraid we're not going to have enough money to buy gifts and decorations. We're anxious about entertaining guests, friends, relatives. We feel nervous because of all the hustle and bustle during this season. But many are just afraid of what's going to happen next in their lives after all the excitement has died down. Especially, if we think about it, Christmas almost signals the beginning of a new year.

Let me tell you, this experience is not something new. The Bible tells us that many of those people who were there when the baby Jesus was born felt afraid, too. But in a different sense. Like King Herod who feared that the little child would someday dethrone him. Like the shepherds who were terrified when an angel appeared to announce the birth of Jesus. Like the wise men who must have felt anxious when an angel told them to avoid Herod after visiting baby Jesus. And Mary? The Bible says that she was confused and disturbed when the angel Gabriel appeared to her. The NIV says she was “greatly troubled”. Which is why Gabriel

told Mary not to be afraid. Because Mary's life was about to be turned upside-down forever. And that's never an easy thing to handle.

Generally, change is hard. Positive changes we generally welcome. A better job, a new relationship, an improvement of some kind in our lives.

But even then, change comes with certain difficulties. Getting used to the new thing takes time. Getting married is wonderful, for example, but then you have to give up half the bed.

Now, picture Mary's changes. She was engaged to a good man, Joseph. They were going to be married. But then, an angel showed up and told her she was going to have a baby. Fine. But to have a baby before marriage? That confounded her. She hadn't slept with any man, much less with Joseph. To have a baby was impossible. Then, the angel assures her that with God all things are possible.

So, we see, Mary's plans were being changed by God. She didn't wish for it. She didn't even imagine it. All she wanted was just to be a plain housewife. In fact, to her limited understanding, it would surely cause a lot of pain to Joseph when he learned she was pregnant. But God had other plans for her life. God decided to intervene in her life and make these changes because it was for the greater good. It was for everybody's good. Even if the changes were not going to be 100% pleasant, they were certainly good.

I think of the Chronicles of Narnia. The King, the lion Aslan, is returning to the fantasy world of Narnia. When he returns, he will set the world right. And one of the characters in the book prophesies, "Wrong will be right, when Aslan comes in sight, At the sound of his roar, sorrows will be no more, When he bares his teeth, winter meets its death, And when he shakes his mane, we shall have spring again."

But the question is, is Aslan dangerous? Well, yes. He is. I mean, have you ever met a tame lion? He most certainly is not safe. But, he's good. He's not safe, but he's good.

I think that describes God's plans too. They are not always safe. They will sometimes lead us into dangerous places. Missionaries go to unsafe places. Many of the early explorers were believers, and they entered unsafe places.

Many believers over the years have lost their lives because they were willing to follow their faith in unsafe places, like Communist regimes and radical Muslim countries, or dangerous remote areas. Look: if you think that following God's plans will always lead you to green pastures and beside still waters, you're in for a shock. God's plans are not always safe.

But they are good. God's plans for Mary's life were good. She was favored. The Lord was with her. She had found favor with God. You can see the excitement in Mary's voice as she sang her song that we call the Magnificat, in Luke 1:46-55. She was excited to be part of God's plans. She took the angel's words to heart when he said, "Don't be afraid."

And this morning, I want to give you reasons why you shouldn't be afraid as well. Though you don't understand what's going on around you and in your life, let me give you reasons why this Christmas, you can be filled with hope and excitement about the future. This morning, I'd like to imagine talking to Mary and ask her a few rhetorical questions about Jesus. As you know, rhetorical questions are not meant to be answered. They are meant for the hearer to ponder and consider the message the one who asks the question is trying to convey. And I hope that I ask these questions, you will consider this message from the Bible. It will make a difference in your life.

So, let me start by asking Mary...

DID YOU KNOW THAT JESUS...

1. ...WAS THE CREATOR OF THE UNIVERSE?

On that first Christmas night, Mary must have been exceedingly awestruck by the sight of the beautiful newborn baby that she was holding tightly in her arms. She knew that this was the Son of God, God himself who came to earth. She held the creator of the universe in her arms and surely that was overwhelming to her. And I think it's difficult for us to comprehend also.

That the God of creation would come to earth in the form of a fragile human infant is far beyond what any of us would expect or even dream of. But the Bible clearly teaches that Jesus was the main agent in creation.

He created everything there is. Nothing exists that he didn't make. – John 1:3

As Mary looked around her at the green grass on the ground and as she gazed at the stars glistening in the night sky, she held in her hands the one responsible for it all.

Christ is the one through whom God created everything in heaven and earth. He made the things we can see and the things we can't see—kings, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities. Everything has been created through him and for him. He existed before everything else began, and he holds all creation together. – Colossians 1:16-17

Did you know that about Jesus? Did you know that the one we whose birth we celebrate this Christmas season said “Let there be light” and there was light? Did you know that Jesus designed the universe, created countless solar systems, set time into motion, started the planets spinning, put natural law into place, and is responsible for sustaining all of the activity in the universe even today?

That is what the Bible tells us about Jesus, the helpless infant resting in the arms of His mother Mary – and it is something we must keep in mind as we worship Him.

Because he is Creator and he created everything in the universe, including you and me, then he must know the beginning and the end. He must know the purpose for which he created something.

In fact, that is what he tells you in Jeremiah 29:11. I like the Message version of this verse. God says, *“I know what I’m doing. I have it all planned out—plans to take care of you, not abandon you, plans to give you the future you hope for.”*

God has it all planned out. You don’t have to lose a night’s sleep worrying about what’s going to happen next. He knows exactly where he is going to take you. He is in front of you, always, and all you need to do is to obey and follow him. Being the Creator, he is in total control of his creation in general, and of your situation, in particular.

The second question is, Mary, did you know that Jesus

2. ...WAS THE PROMISED MESSIAH?

In the Gospel of Matthew, as we read through the long genealogy of Jesus’ ancestors, we come to this conclusion:

Jacob was the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary. Mary was the mother of Jesus, who is called the Messiah. – Matthew 1:16

After a long history of waiting for this one promised to them, the Jewish people finally had their Messiah, but He wasn’t quite what they expected.

In March, 2001, a little Jewish girl was killed in the tit-for-tat fighting in Hebron on the West Bank while she sat in her stroller. On a wall near where she died, there is a poem in her memory. According to the *Chicago Tribune*: It is an elegy to her pinchable cheeks, her sweet smile, her kerchiefed cuteness—and to the urgent need of revenge. The poem says, "We will take revenge, we will scream for revenge in body and spirit and await the coming of the Messiah".

That is how people thought of the Messiah in Jesus' day, too. That's why they were so unprepared for a Messiah who preached repentance and faith, who paid scant attention to the Romans, and who said He would win freedom by dying for sins. They were expecting a military ruler, a deliverer, one who would take from them the oppression of Rome, and put their own nation in charge.

I assume that Mary had the same expectations as did her people. And while the angel confirmed that the baby in her womb was the promised Messiah, I wonder if she really knew what kind of Messiah He would be?

What about you? What if I were to ask you today about what it means to say Jesus is the Messiah? How would you answer? Everything that the Old Testament said about the coming Messiah was fulfilled in Jesus Christ, but it was not fulfilled in the way most people expected. Jesus came to deliver His people, not from an oppressive government, but from the sin that dominated their lives. Jesus came to conquer, not by military force, but by transforming minds and hearts. Jesus came as a revolutionary leader, who not only stood against the world's value system, but even against much of the religious teachings of His day. And what Jesus the Messiah wants to do this Christmas is to deliver each of us from sin, and transform our minds and hearts, and to make us whole again.

People look to other things to make them whole – self-help books, yoga, pills, diet, work-outs, religion, watching Oprah or Dr. Phil. But none of these could ever change us from the inside. The reason is because of sin that has tainted our beings. None of those things can remove our sin.

Only Jesus, the Messiah of 2,000 years ago is still in the role of soul-cleansing today, waiting for us to respond to His offer of wholeness.

The third question would be, Mary, did you know that Jesus

3. ...WOULD BATTLE SATAN AND WIN?

I recently read the story of a woman who was released from the hospital. This after extensive rounds of therapy failed to turn back the progress of a deadly disease. Confined to her bed at home, the woman received regular visits from her physician, but she couldn't work up the courage to explain her illness to her six-year-old daughter. One morning, however, the little girl overheard the doctor speaking gravely with her mother and father.

"I'll be frank with you, Susan," the physician said. "You don't have much time. I don't think you'll survive the autumn."

A short while later, the mother glanced out the bedroom window and saw something that nearly broke her heart. She watched as her daughter stooped to pick up the leaves that had begun to fall in the September breeze; and then, as if to foil the force of gravity itself, the little girl worked to scotch-tape each leaf back on a branch.

I wonder sometimes if Mary wished she could do something like that. As she raised the infant Jesus and saw Him grow, and began to understand more and more of His plight here on earth, she must have wanted to turn back the clock. To know that this child of hers would be faced with everything that evil had to offer up against Him, that surely sent fear into her heart.

When Mary and Joseph took the infant Jesus to the Temple, they were met by the prophet Simeon who prophesied to Mary: *"The deepest thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your very soul."* – Luke 2:35

Simeon was speaking of the Cross – the most horrible, and yet the most wonderful event in all of history. Leading up to that day, Mary would see her Son mistreated, rejected by their own people, tried by the religious leaders and then the Roman government. And then she would see Him nailed to a Cross – as hard as it would be for us to watch, it is hard to imagine what it would be like for Mary, His own mother.

But I have no doubt that if Mary were here speaking to us today, she would say the pain and suffering was worth it all, because through His death on the Cross, Jesus defeated Satan's control over this world and over all of us who will come to the Cross and accept Jesus as our Savior and Lord.

Because God's children are human beings—made of flesh and blood—Jesus also became flesh and blood by being born in human form. For only as a human being could he die, and only by dying could he break the power of the Devil, who had the power of death. – Hebrews 2:14

He canceled the record that contained the charges against us. He took it and destroyed it by nailing it to Christ's cross. In this way, God disarmed the evil rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross of Christ. – Colossians 2:14-15

The good news for us this Christmas is that we don't have to battle Satan, because Jesus has already won the battle for us. That infant born 2,000 years ago was destined for the Cross, and on that Cross He died for your sins and mine, so that we could be forgiven and be with Him forever.

This Christmas the best thing that you could do, if you haven't done it already, is to place your trust in Jesus and let Him lead you into the life you've always wanted.

The fourth question I would ask Mary is did you know that Jesus

4. ...WOULD REIGN FOREVER AS KING?

We need to keep in mind that Mary was a young lady who hadn't known a life of luxury – she was a poor girl from a poor town. The man she was to marry, Joseph, was a carpenter, who certainly didn't have much to speak of when it comes to worldly possessions. And while they were both descended from the royal line, Mary could have never dreamed that she would become the mother of a King. Yet, when the wise men came to Jerusalem, they asked this question.

"Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We have seen his star as it arose, and we have come to worship him." – Matthew 2:2

What a paradox that the baby born in a manger should be called a "King." Yet even as an infant, Jesus Christ revealed power. His birth affected the heavens as a brilliant star appeared. The star affected the wise men, and they left their homes and made that long journey to Jerusalem. Their announcement shook King Herod and his court.

Jesus' birth brought angels from heaven and simple shepherds from their flocks on the hillside. Midnight became midday as the glory of the Lord appeared to men.

The King of the Jews born in a cow stall, the King of the Jews rejected by His own people, the King of the Jews nailed to a Cross.

Unlike any other King prior to His birth or since, most would not recognize Jesus' position as King until later in His ministry, and for some, not until His death and resurrection from the dead.

A signboard was fastened to the cross above Jesus' head, announcing the charge against him. It read: "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews." – Matthew 27:37

While this sign might have been placed in mockery, we know that in the end everyone will recognize Jesus as King.

On his robe and thigh was written this title: King of kings and Lord of lords.
Revelation 19:16

The infant that Mary bore was not just the King of the Jews, but the King over all Kings. My hope and prayer is that you've made Him the King of your life.

Finally, I would ask Mary, did you know that Jesus

5. ...WOULD LOVE YOU UNCONDITIONALLY?

I have no doubt that Mary loved Jesus with every fiber of her being, just as any good mother would. But did she have any hint of the intensity, sincerity, and unconditional nature of the love that Jesus would have for her, as well as for the world? And do we have any concept of how much Jesus loves us, without condition?

So the Word became human and lived here on earth among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the only Son of the Father. – John 1:14

The word for “unfailing love” here can also be translated grace, and what it means is that Jesus loves you in spite of your sin, in spite of your faults, in spite of you turning your back on Him over and over again. And it also means that Jesus loves you enough that He not only died in Your place, but that He offers you the opportunity to be the recipient of His love and companionship for all eternity if you’ll just place your faith in Him.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. God did not send his Son into the world to condemn it, but to save it.” – John 3:16-17

No matter what you’ve done, no matter where you’ve been, Jesus is willing to shower His unconditional love on you right now, and give you the gift of eternal life.

Many of you will sit around a Christmas tree on Christmas eve, or on Christmas day, opening presents and spending time with loved ones, and that’s a great thing. But I really hope that we’ll all take the time to consider who Jesus is, what He has done, and how we can serve Him in a greater capacity than ever before.

God's wants you to ponder and consider his message for you this morning. God wants to give you hope today and for the future. You don't need to be afraid because you already know what Mary did not know at first.

It will be a different day for you when you realize that Jesus is the Creator, that he is the Messiah, that he battled Satan and won, that he will reign forever as King, and that he loves you unconditionally. There is nothing more reassuring and soul-satisfying than knowing who Jesus really is.