

4th Sunday of Advent - Luke 1:26-38

“Let it be done to me according to your Word.” The history of the world turned on that line. All that God planned to do to save us, the gift that divine love wanted to give us hung on Mary’s response, on her willingness to cooperate. Her choice was a free choice, for Mary could have said “no”. It would have been easy to find many reasons to say “no.”

She could have responded to Gabriel by saying, “Wow! This is unexpected. Sort of out of the blue. How long before you need my answer? I’d really like to think about this. I know that God has a plan, but I’m rather upset about being brought into it at the very last minute. You might want to suggest that if God expects human cooperation it might be good to give a little lead time, a few months so you could think things over. I’m sure that God would get a much better response using that approach.

And really, to tell you the truth, it’s not the best time for me. I’m really busy with the wedding and all coming up. We still have to pick a hall and get flowers; I’ve already bought the dress and it’s not going to fit if I’m pregnant. And the more I think about it, this idea of conceiving by the Holy Spirit without a human father, it’s kind of peculiar, isn’t it? I really wish God would rethink that part of the plan. Joseph is a great guy, but I don’t think he’ll sign off on that.

So why don’t we just leave it this way: first of all, tell God that I’m very honored to be considered. But the plan is nebulous and really not that well thought out. So why don’t you take it back and work on it a bit? Put some more detail in it, iron out some of the wrinkles, and we’ll talk again after the wedding.”

Mary could have said “no”, but she didn’t. What she said was, “Let it be done to me according to your Word.” Without much preparation, with very few details, and with a lot of things that were unsettling at best, Mary said “yes” to God.

She said “yes” because she trusted that God had a plan and would not abandon her. Because she said “yes”, we have Jesus; we have eternal life; and we are preparing to celebrate Christmas.

Mary is our model, our model always, but especially our model in the next few days. I am quite certain that in the next few days, in the midst of holiday preparation, God will be asking us to do some things.

God will be asking us for our cooperation. Like Mary, God’s request is very likely to come out of the blue, without much preparation. Like Mary, the call might be unexpected, or even unwanted. It certainly will come at a very busy time. But unlike Mary, we should not expect an angel to announce it to us. Therefore, we need to be watching, watching for the opportunities that God provides, waiting for our chance to say either “yes” or “no”.

That chance might come with a sudden twist in our plans—something unexpected that looks like an intrusion—something our children need or our parents expect.

When that intrusion comes, we can either complain and feel sorry for ourselves, or we can see it as an invitation from God to be flexible and loving. We can choose to say, “Let it be done to me according to your Word.”

It might come because we have a sadness to bear in this holiday season—a sadness because someone we love is not with us, a sadness because there are tensions in our family. When that sadness emerges, we can either hold it in and let it cause anger and depression in our hearts, or we can accept the truth that there is a sadness that we cannot change and reach out to others in love and in hope.

We can say, “Let it be done to me according to your Word.” It might happen as we gather together with family and friends. Suddenly we could be faced with an opportunity to affirm somebody we love, to forgive someone who has hurt us, to listen to someone who is in need.

When that opportunity presents itself, we can either choose to forge ahead with all of the other things that we have to do, or we can stop and accept the invitation to do God’s will. We can choose to say, “Let it be done to me according to your Word.”

Mary is our model, the model of how God chooses to interact with us. What God does is invite our cooperation and then wait for our response. Don’t expect to see the angel Gabriel, but watch for the opportunities. They will be there. When you see them, be like Mary. Say “yes.” Say “yes” to God’s request, “yes” to God’s will. Do your part in bringing Jesus into our world.

“Let it be done to me according to your Word.” AMEN.