

## **ADVENT SERMON**

### **There's Something About Mary**

**During the Advent season, my sermons have been focusing on the different characters involved in the story of the birth of Jesus. First Sunday of Advent, we discussed Jesus and his warning to be awake, for he is coming. Last week, 2<sup>nd</sup> week of Advent, we discussed John the Baptizer and his call to judgment. Next Sunday, we'll examine the dad who did not have to be a dad, Joseph. And today, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent, today there's something about Mary.**

**In confirmation class just last Sunday we studied the lives of Joseph and Mary. Each one of the students was impressed with how young Mary was. She was probably about their age, a teenager just like them.**

**And each student was impressed with Mary's faith. They all agreed that Mary is one of the Bible's best examples of belief. Mary had to believe that what the angel told her was true. She**

**had to trust that Joseph would believe her. And she had to believe that she had the strength to carry out God's request, to bear God's son.**

**Mary is not just the Bible's great example of faith, but an example of the amazing things that happen when young people believe!**

**Today's Gospel reading is a beautiful and disturbing reminder. A God who would impregnate a poor, unmarried teenager, that God will stoop to almost anything.**

**There are some moments in life that are simply too much. Carlos, a friend of mine, is fond of saying, "Life is good if you can stand all the excitement."**

**Mary, not near old enough to be thinking about a baby shower. No, her mind is on her upcoming marriage. She's engaged, maybe all she's thinking about is her wedding ceremony. How it will be, what she will wear, who will attend.**

**A little boy attended his first wedding service. After the service, his cousin asked him, “How many women can a man marry?” “Sixteen,” the boy responded. His cousin was amazed that he knew the answer and that he answered so quickly.**

**“Sixteen? How do you know that?” his cousin asked him.**

**The little boy said, “Easy. All you have to do is add it up, like the preacher said: 4 better, 4 worse, 4 richer, 4 poorer.”**

**Life is good if you can stand all the excitement. Here was Mary, looking forward to marrying Joseph, to being a wife. But God had bigger plans. More than a wife, God asks Mary to be a mother. God uses Mary to deliver the Savior. Even today, God still uses Mary’s example as a birthing place for our believing. She is the Bible’s prime example of faith, belief and courage.**

**Mary also reminds us of the two great myths of parents. Myth #1. Your job is over when they turn 18. And myth #2. You never have to worry about your adult children.**

**Yes, Mary has much to remind us. She is a testament to the importance of belief. What if the angel visits you? What if that email comes? What if the door opens? What if you answer that phone call from an unknown number?**

**What if the heaviness lifts and joy takes its place? What if that prayer you almost stopped praying finally starts to unfold?**

**You are not being naïve by hoping. You're being brave. Hope is holy and joy is your inheritance. Look at your life with fresh eyes and say, "I do not know what God is up to today, but I will show up with open hands and an open heart and even a little sparkle in my soul, just in case today is the turnaround." It just might be.**

**Life is good if you can stand all the excitement.**

**You have the capacity for courage, great capacity. Put it to good use. In ways, small and large, fear can prevent you from doing what is best for your life.**

**Think of Mary, there's something about Mary. She's our example of stepping up and saying yes. Here I am, Lord, use me.**

**Counter your fear with the courage of Mary. How do you activate that sort of courage? By connecting it to a purpose. Courage always takes a wider, long-term view.**

**What do you care about more than anything else? What gives your life a sense of meaning and purpose? Here is where you will find a sustaining courage. Like Mary, follow your purpose, move forward and live fully the life God wants you to live.**

**And one more thought for you to consider as we think about Mary's faith and her courage. This time of year, we talk about Mary a lot. She is a key figure of Christmas. She said yes to God's request. She is the mother of our Lord.**

**But what about Mary's mother? Someone had to raise Mary to find favor with God. Someone had to raise Mary to treasure purity. Someone had to raise Mary to honor Joseph. Someone had to raise Mary to recognize the voice of God. Someone had to raise Mary to not turn and run away from the angel.**

**Mary's mother. We do not know her name. We do not know what her life was like. We do not know who she was married to or what he was like. All we know is, she raised the mother of Christ. She raised a daughter, highly favored of the Lord. She raised a daughter to respect and obey the Lord. This is what we do know.**

**Mary's mother did not have an encourager like another angel, telling her to raise Mary carefully because of how God was going to use her. Mary's mother chose to raise Mary as best she could, in an honorable and God-pleasing way. She had no idea, no one could ever have imagined, what was awaiting her daughter. She raised a daughter who raised the Lord. And her good work still impacts us today.**

**Who you raise can impact eternity. The example you set in marriage can impact eternity. Your home can impact eternity. Your home can make the gates of Hell tremble.**

**But it starts with you. And your relationship with God.**

**Mary, plucky little teenage Mary, she is our hero of faith, belief and courage.**

**If a little one such as Mary can do it, you can do it.**

**Have faith, have belief and have courage. Amen.**