

**Willow River Parish: Clear Lake, Deer Park, and Faith Family**

**Title: Trusting Through Uncertainty**

**Lesson: Luke 1:46b-55**

<sup>46b</sup> *“My soul glorifies the Lord*  
<sup>47</sup> *and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,*  
<sup>48</sup> *for he has been mindful*  
*of the humble state of his servant.*  
*From now on all generations will call me blessed,*  
<sup>49</sup> *for the Mighty One has done great things for me—*  
*holy is his name.*  
<sup>50</sup> *His mercy extends to those who fear him,*  
*from generation to generation.*  
<sup>51</sup> *He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;*  
*he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.*  
<sup>52</sup> *He has brought down rulers from their thrones*  
*but has lifted up the humble.*  
<sup>53</sup> *He has filled the hungry with good things*  
*but has sent the rich away empty.*  
<sup>54</sup> *He has helped his servant Israel,*  
*remembering to be merciful*  
<sup>55</sup> *to Abraham and his descendants forever,*  
*just as he promised our ancestors.”*

**(Slide 1)** Today is the Fourth Sunday of Advent. The fourth candle we light today represents love. This candle is also known as the Angel’s Candle. On this Sunday, we especially read the story of how God sent an angel to Mary to tell her about the birth of Jesus. This story is often called the Annunciation.

We’ve heard the story of Mary accepting God’s calling and His plan many times, so much so that it feels familiar and natural to us. However, if we imagine the story from Mary’s perspective, I think it’s safe to assume she would have been overwhelmed by the unexpected events unfolding before her.

Mary was just a young girl, probably 15 or 16 years old, and engaged to a man named Joseph, who was only slightly older than she was. One day, an angel of God suddenly appeared to her. Seeing the angel for the first time must have shocked her and filled her with fear. And when the angel told her that the Lord was with her, Mary might have wondered if this meant she was about to be called back to God. I can imagine her mind being flooded with confusing and anxious thoughts.

As she listened to the angel, she tried to stay composed, but the more she heard, the more complicated her feelings became. The angel told her that she was favored by God, that she would bear a son, and even told her what the child's name would be.

Friends, imagine you were in Mary's position at 15 or 16 years old. Today, many young people choose their partners, date, get engaged, and marry when they feel ready. But the customs of Mary's time were very different. Marriages were arranged by families, often without the direct input of the couple involved. This means Mary and Joseph's engagement was likely agreed upon by their parents, not them.

Mary may have only met Joseph a handful of times and probably knew very little about him, apart from what her parents had told her. After getting engaged, Mary would have known that Joseph would spend the next few years working hard to support her family before they officially married.

Then, out of nowhere, an angel appeared and told Mary she would conceive and bear God's Son. If I were Mary, I think I would have been extremely troubled and anxious. In her conservative society, becoming pregnant before marriage was a serious matter. The news of her pregnancy would not only bring her shame but also disgrace her family. The people in her village would likely judge and ostracize her, and there was even the possibility that she could be stoned to death for being considered immoral.

Today, we know Mary's pregnancy was a tremendous blessing, but at the time, from her perspective, the news brought great confusion and challenges. If Mary hadn't been a believer, she might have considered this news the greatest misfortune of her life.

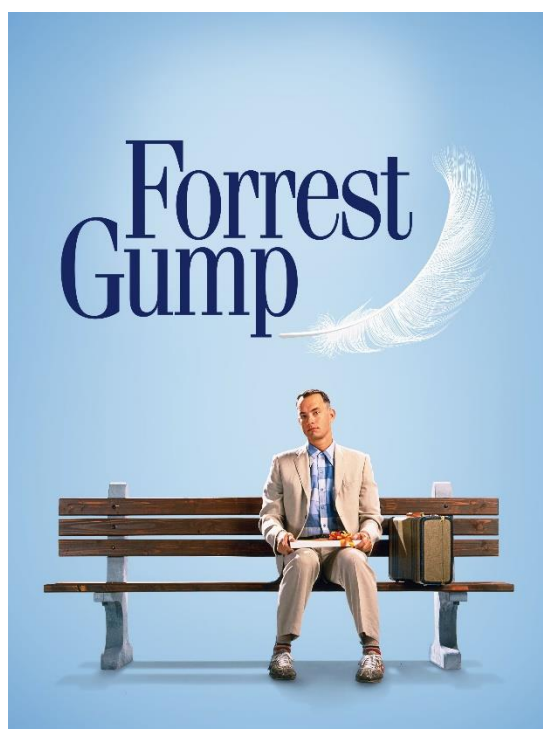
But Mary was a woman of faith. She didn't see her situation as a misfortune. Even though she didn't fully understand God's plan, she sensed that this was part of something greater. She chose to trust God, embrace His calling, and accept her destiny with courage.

Friends, Mary's attitude in the face of difficulty teaches us an important lesson. As you know, this year has been challenging for our parish in many ways. We've heard heartbreaking news from near and far, including the loss of loved ones and illnesses affecting those we care about. While we hear messages of faith, peace, and joy at church, how do we respond when unexpected difficulties come into our lives?

We often feel fragile in the face of hardships. It's easy to worry and feel anxious, losing sight of faith, peace, and joy. When difficulties come, they can trap us, making us feel as though we'll never escape.

But Mary was different. Even though her life was turned upside down by her unexpected pregnancy, she didn't see it as a misfortune. Instead, she chose to embrace it and accept it as part of her life. Once she made the decision to accept her destiny, her struggles no longer defined her. Gratitude and joy filled her life.

I believe that our lives are deeply shaped by how we respond to the situations we face.



**(Slide 2)** One of my favorite movies is "Forrest Gump." It shares the message, "Life is like a box of chocolates. You never know what you're going to get." The movie's main character, Forrest, faced many challenges. As a child, he had difficulty walking and a lower IQ, which made him an easy target for bullying. From one perspective, Forrest's life might seem like a series of misfortunes.

But Forrest approached life differently. With the encouragement of his friend Jenny, he learned to embrace his challenges. When Jenny told him to "Run, Forrest, run!" he obeyed, discovering his talent for running. His talent opened doors—he played football in college, served in the army, and even started a successful shrimp business.

Forrest's success wasn't because life was easy for him, but because he accepted his circumstances without being weighed down by negative thoughts or stereotypes. He faithfully did whatever was before him.

Friends, what do Mary's and Forrest's stories teach you? Life depends on how we accept and respond to the challenges we face. While some may lose hope in hard times, others trust God's presence and move forward one step at a time, relying on His strength.

I hope and pray that we, too, will trust in God's promises of eternal life, no matter what we face. Let us never lose faith in the goodness of God, who gives us all good things.

Mary trusted God and accepted her circumstances with gratitude. To close, let us reflect on her song of praise:

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<sup>47</sup> and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,  
<sup>48</sup> for he has been mindful  
of the humble state of his servant.  
From now on all generations will call me blessed,  
<sup>49</sup> for the Mighty One has done great things for me—  
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but has sent the rich away empty.  
<sup>54</sup> He has helped his servant Israel,  
remembering to be merciful  
<sup>55</sup> to Abraham and his descendants forever,  
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