

December 18, 2005 (Advent 4 b – HC.4)

**Luke 1:26-38**

**HOLIDAY CHECKLIST**

**#4 \_\_\_ *Let this GOOD NEWS sink in!***

**Jack** won 10 million dollars in Lotto 6/49. He just heard the news. So he says to himself: *“Well, that’s nice . . . . I’ve really got to get my oil changed, it’s overdue. . . . I wonder if Conrad Black’s high-priced lawyer can get him cleared of all those charges . . .”* YEAH RIGHT! He won \$10 million – that’s news you don’t just brush off! Conrad Black and the oil change would be the furthest thing from his mind after receiving that news.

**Mary** just heard that she’s going to have a child. He’ll be the Son of God – the promised Messiah. She gets to be his mother. So – she says to herself: *“What am I going to make for supper tonight? I think I’m low on olive oil. . . .”* YEAH RIGHT! She gets to have the Son of God – her Saviour and the Saviour of the world – the central figure of all human history – born to HER! And she’s a virgin. She gets to have a personal role in the biggest rescue mission the world’s ever seen. That’s mind blowing news! Who cares about olive oil??

This year – again, **you** get to hear the true meaning of Christmas. You get to hear that the Christ-child is God in the flesh who came of a virgin to take YOUR spiritual debt and pay the bill (in its entirety) himself. He would open the door to eternal paradise for YOU. And you say: *“. . . . What am I going to do with all these cookies? . . . How am I going to find time to get to the mall? . . . .”* Are we nuts?! This is BIG news! This is OUR Saviour – this is the greatest miracle and greatest gift that we personally get to enjoy and will experience forever! Don’t let that news float by! **Let it SINK IN!** That’s the next item on our HOLIDAY CHECKLIST: **#4 \_\_\_ *Let this GOOD NEWS sink in!***

Let’s learn from Mary. She was, undoubtedly floored by the news the angel brought her – but as God’s humble servant, she accepted it.

**Luke 1:26-38**

**<sup>26</sup>In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, <sup>27</sup>to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin’s name was**

**Mary. <sup>28</sup>The angel went to her and said, “Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.”**

**<sup>29</sup>Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. <sup>30</sup>But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. <sup>31</sup>You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. <sup>32</sup>He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, <sup>33</sup>and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end.”**

**<sup>34</sup>“How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?”**

**<sup>35</sup>The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. <sup>36</sup>Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month. <sup>37</sup>For nothing is impossible with God.”**

**<sup>38</sup>“I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May it be to me as you have said.” Then the angel left her.**

For JACK – millions of dollars would certainly change things. His life would be quite a bit different now – he’d have to deal with and manage all this wealth.

Mary’s BIG NEWS certainly changed things for her. I would guess Mary had plans for her life; she had expectations as to how things were going to go and what the future would hold. GOD, however, had different plans – He was about to show the world the full extent of his love by sending Jesus into our sinful world to remove the sin that separates us from God. He was about to carry out His gracious plan, and he made use of his servant Mary – she got to be a part of this incredible thing that God was doing.

Gabriel got to tell her this incredible news – notice how he begins, **“Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.”** “Highly Favored” literally means, “you have been REALLY blessed” and she was because she got to be a part of this wonderful thing that God was doing for mankind.

Her immediate reaction was that she was very agitated and confused – well of course, she’s human, we can understand that. The angel calms her fears and goes on to tell her how God was going to

send the Saviour through her, how her elderly relative Elizabeth is already pregnant, and how nothing is impossible with God.

Her response to those incredible words is an inspiration for us all. The humble child of God replies, “**I am the Lord’s servant, may it be to me as you have said.**” She ACCEPTS it. She puts both her body and soul in God’s hands and lets him be in control – *and she’d just let this incredible news sink in.*

How do YOU deal with the *GOOD NEWS* of what God did for you? What’s YOUR reaction to the **true** meaning of Christmas? It certainly IS incredible news! Because of this Child of Mary, God actually says to you, “**Greetings, you are highly favored, the Lord is with you**”

If you’re like me, your conscience pipes in – “No, no, no, you don’t understand. I’m sinful and selfish, lazy and rotten, and greedy – those words might apply to Mary but NOT TO ME.

God DOES know our sin – he’s painfully aware of it with crystal clarity. He had to experience first-hand the consequences of all our sins. He knows what’s in your “spiritual closet” – he knows how you fail to give God the best and make Him the priority, fail to love your neighbour, fail to let God’s Word really sink in, fail to really take to heart what the Lord says to you.

He knows you – but He still loves you. And he has **incredible NEWS for you.** That sweet, innocent Christ-child, born to Mary, took ALL YOUR sins away. “**The Blood of his [God’s] Son purifies us from ALL sin**” (1 John 1:7).

So God looks at you, through HIM, and says, “**Greetings, you who are highly favored (really blessed) – the Lord is with you.**”

I hope you agree – the Gospel is incredible news! It *is* better than \$10 million! God proclaims it to us personally in His Word – it’s no different than if the Angel Gabriele himself announced this news to us. The Lord steps right into our lives with incredible news: your sins are forgiven and heaven is your home. Let THAT message **sink in!**

As His humble servants, may we *accept* the Word of God just as Mary did. Human nature (and even common sense) tells us that we must pay somehow for the wrongs we have done – yet, the Gospel clearly proclaims – *Go in peace and joy, God is with you, and smiles upon you.* Simply accept the incredible things the Lord has done for you.

Most lottery winners would tell you that life is actually HARDER once they win – now they have to deal with all that cash.

After receiving this incredible news from the angel, **Mary’s** life would be HARDER.

- How was she going to explain things to people, when it seemed too incredible to believe?
- How would she manage the journey to Bethlehem being so pregnant? Ladies – would you like a donkey ride to Montreal being 9 months pregnant? (*There’s not a lot of back support there!*)
- How would she get through the escape to Egypt with the small child that Herod was trying to kill?
- No more staying out of the spotlight for this lady. Think of the attention she would have to deal with.
- How could she stand to see her innocent child hang on that cross, and suffer the torment of hell – because of her sins, and yours and mine?

Her life WAS very **hard**, but as God’s servant – she accepted it.

Being a member of God’s family through faith certainly means OUR lives will be HARDER too. May we as God’s servants humbly accept it saying, “**May it be to us as God wants it.**”

- We now have more RESPONSIBILITY. We’re responsible to God, our Heavenly Father – we’re now called upon to worship and to support our church and sacrifice for the world-wide ministry of proclaiming the Gospel with others. We have to share what God has given us. “**May it be to us as God wants it.**”
- He wants to be the new FOCUS of our lives and involved in our daily routine. He wants to effect a real and lasting change in our hearts and in our lives as we grow in our faith and Christian living. “**May it be to us as God wants it.**”

God accomplished his BIG, world changing plans through Mary. He has big plans for you too. How are you going to deal with that incredible news? You are righteous, forgiven, and exceedingly rich – inside and out, forever and ever – because of Mary’s child. **Let THAT sink in!** Be overwhelmed by what God has given you and how he sees you and what he expects of you. May we accept it humbly as God’s servants – just like Mary did.