

WHAT IF MARY SAID NO?**Luke 1:26-56****(Read Luke 1:26-56)****INTRO:** We humans can “What if?” ourselves to death.

What if I hadn’t turned down that road on the icy night? The accident wouldn’t have happened and my friend would still be alive!

What if I had gone to college? I could be earning six figures and living in a big house!

What if I hadn’t gone to college? I’d not have any debt, I could be earning six figures, and living in a big house!

What if I had never seen her across the room at the high-school dance? She’d have married a rich doctor and I wouldn’t be the most blessed husband in the world!

What if we’d had 1.93 kids like the national average instead of 7 rug rats? We would never know the joy of the talents and possibilities of the 7 unique souls we brought into the world.

We can what if? What if? What if? Some what ifs are what might have been and others make us marvel at the goodness of God.

What if Mary had said no?

She didn’t, we know that, so it’s a moot point, isn’t it? Yes, but it’s a good thing to consider as we consider how amazing the Birth of Jesus is and what it has meant for humanity. That’s why I jumped at the idea when Keith Dohner sent me the suggestion back in September. It seemed like a good at the time, anyway. And it is, but it’s not an easy question for this message, or any of the other “What if?” sermons we have planned. One thing that complicated it was a COVID brain-fog I suffered from all week. But even through the fog I listened to and read the passage over and over in various translations. It’s an age-old story. Of all the Christmas passages it’s probably one of the most familiar. I’ve also preached it no less than 35 – 40 times. How do you make it new? Well, you listen to the Holy Spirit, and think about “What if?”

Let me clear something up right away:

You can’t say no.

- Oh, you can try. And you can reject his Salvation, because he doesn’t force that on anyone. But when God has a plan for humanity and he includes you in the plan, “No.” is not an acceptable or even possible answer. Notice when the angel appeared, he didn’t leave the door for other options open for Mary as he lays down God’s message, *You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus.* Luke 1:31. Those are aren’t words that could be considered requests. You WILL conceive and give birth to a son. The plan was already underway. And, as you know, she actually said YES! But we know that.
- But here is the sentence that says it all, *For no word from God will ever fail.* Luke 1:37 NIV. You can’t say no to God’s plan coming to fruition because no word from God will EVER fail. That’s the truth. That’s why it happened the way it did. But ...

What if Jesus didn’t come?

- Let’s just ponder that. You see, God the Father didn’t have to send Jesus. Humanity had taken their own path in the Garden of Eden and had wandered far from what God had laid out in Creation. He had also baled us out numerous times through history. Things had gotten so bad so quickly humanity was cleansed by the Flood. But before the ground barely dried, the survivors were showing they would still take the wrong path. Though Holy History God’s patience had been tried, and now, as the Angel Gabriel arrives in front of Mary, humanity had not heard from God in upwards of 400 years. It seemed they’d really done it right this time. God had given up or at least it seemed that way. It seemed hopeless. Thank about that,

What if God left us with no hope?

- We’d have deserved it. And 400 years of silent treatment was really looking more and more hopeless for humanity. Humanity was showing more and more signs of the depravity that would sure prevail if God was not at the wheel of his creation. We’ve seen a bit of that as we’ve looked at Sin City Corinth. Their complete disregard for even the possibility of holiness was obvious to even the most unobservant observer. Humanity was hopeless without a plan. But . . .

What if God didn’t have a plan?

- Well, it's impossible for God not to have a plan. He's God. But just humor me, and think about it. What if he just left us as we were. We'd be like that abandoned houses and barns we see from time to time. It doesn't take but a few years for the neglect to show up as this shutter drops, and that door breaks off it's hinges and the porch ceiling caves in and the roof sags and collapses. That's what happens when no care is provided. When no plan for care and maintenance is carried out. So, it would be for humanity. A lack of a plan would spell collapse. It begs the question . . .

Would we be here 2000 years later?

- Nope. We'd be long gone. We would have imploded as a race a long time ago. Contrary to what atheists will tell you, there is a God and he is not only keeping humanity from mutual destruction, he sent his one and only Son to save humanity.

Mary could have said no – but it wouldn't have changed anything.

- God didn't force it on Mary, and he's just have found a willing participant somewhere else. But May said yes. Because God knew she would. Our text says, *God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary.* Luke 1:26b-27. He knew everything about her. He knew she was extraordinary and she knew the man she was engaged to was extraordinary too. They were two obedient young people who wanted to do God's will.
- That was why *The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."* . . . Luke 1:28. And later he assured her with, *"Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God.* Luke 1:30. Oh to be highly favored! Well, we are. One thing that has never changed, despite all of humanity's unfaithfulness, is that he still favored us by sending his Son to a hopeless race. Mary was favored, yes, but we are too and it is good to be reminded. People of God – you are highly favored! God didn't give up on you.
- Of course, Mary wondered about how – but she never said no. *"How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"* Luke 1:34. And the Angel gives the answer we need to be reminded of time, after time, after time. . . . *No word from God will ever fail.*" Luke 1:37. This is why the church will not fall. This is why Christianity will not fail. This is why . . . *though the wrong seems oft so strong, God is the Ruler yet.* No word from God will EVER fail. Because *This is our Father's world: Why should our heart be sad? The Lord is King: let the heavens ring! Amen?!*
- No, Mary, did not say no – instead she said *I am the Lord's servant, may your word to me be fulfilled.*" Luke 1:38. What would you say?

Conclusion: Well, Mary knew that it was not going to be easy. She had to inform her fiancé, and deal with the judgement and condemnation of those who had no idea about her visit from the Angel Gabriel. She didn't go into hiding. She didn't lock herself in her room and scream NO! at the walls. Instead she sang a song

*My soul glorifies the Lord
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has been mindful
of the humble state of his servant.
From now on all generations will call me blessed,
for the Mighty One has done great things for me—
holy is his name. Luke 1:46-49*

The answer was not NO! It was a jubilant joining with the God of the universe in his plan to save humanity from itself. What if Mary said no? She didn't. She said yes. And today we learn from her example and celebrate her obedience. Amen!