

WEEK FOUR Fr. Mike's message Dec. 20 2020 FINAL VERSION

We're counting down the days left in 2020 -

a year I don't think anyone will be sad to see end.

And every year about this time, certain organizations

try to come up with one word

to describe what the whole year was about.

The people at Dictionary.com named "pandemic" its Word of the Year.

No surprise there!

But when they asked their users to vote,

they selected another word over pandemic.

They chose the word "unprecedented" as 2020's Word of the Year.

And here's their definition of the word "unprecedented":

Something never before known or experienced; something unparalleled.

I agree 100% with the people's choice.

'Unprecedented' definitely describes 2020 for me!

SCREEN: Special Delivery main screen

We've come to the final week of our Advent message series titled, Special Delivery.

We are preparing to celebrate Christmas when God sent his Son as the most special delivery of all time.

A delivery that was so unprecedented that it confounded all the religious experts.

To figure out why, let's turn to the readings we just heard.

We'll start with the Old Testament reading about David.

Now, you're probably familiar with the story of David and Goliath - how an insignificant, runt of kid, did something completely unexpected.

He killed the mighty warrior Goliath armed only with a slingshot.

But you may not know the rest of David's story.

He went on to become king.

Today we heard that after being chosen by God to lead His Chosen People, David decided to show his thanks by building God a temple, a house.

And the scene we heard today has always struck me as funny.

David decided to construct this house, a temple for God to live in, and God's reply was basically,

"Thanks but no thanks."

God reminded David of all he did for him, saying,

I raised you up from being a lowly shepherd boy,

made you a great commander, defeated all your enemies.

I don't really need you to make me a house.

Instead, God proposed this to David:

SCREEN: "I will raise up your heir after you....

I will be a father to him and he shall be a son to me.

Your house and your kingdom shall endure

forever before me;

your throne shall stand firm forever."

So God was promising David that his "house", his line would endure forever!

For the Jewish people, this was a prophecy that when the messiah came,

he would be a descendant of David -

he would come from the House of David.

It would take a thousand years for God's prophecy to be fulfilled,

and today's Gospel described the moment when it happened.

SCREEN: The angel Gabriel was sent from God

to a town of Galilee called Nazareth,

to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph,

of the house of David,

and the virgin's name was Mary.

The angel told Mary that God had chosen her to be

the mother of the messiah, and Mary said 'yes'.

This encounter was 'unprecedented' in so many ways.

And it begins with Mary - an unlikely candidate for such great news.

After all, she was a young peasant girl,

probably no more than 12 or 13 years old,

living in a small village in a tiny country.

And yet God chose her to give birth to the savior of the world.

It was so unexpected that Mary herself asked the angel,

SCREEN: How can this be?

She wasn't so much asking, '*why me?*' as,

how it would happen, since she wasn't married.

The angel Gabriel told her that it would be accomplished by the Holy Spirit.

And hearing that, Mary responded with perfect faith and trust, she surrendered her doubts and concerns to God.

If God could accomplish this with Mary and if she could have faith and trust in his plan, then we need to be like Mary.

We must have faith and trust that '*nothing will be impossible for God*'.

And, let's be honest, this is not an easy thing to do or believe, especially right now.

The readers at Dictionary.com are right - this has been an unprecedented year.

And it's not just the pandemic, it's the economic fallout, the political uncertainty, the racial division - it's everything.

If we ever needed to hear the message of Mary, it's now.

Because it is so easy to look at everything we're facing and decide it's impossible, hopeless, can't be fixed, won't get better.

What are you struggling with right now that has you feeling hopeless?

Is it an emotional or mental issue that persists?

This year has created so many concerns -

for your own well being or that of your loved ones.

Or is it the health of a family member that keeps deteriorating.

Maybe a relationship problem with no end in sight.

Or a job or financial difficulty that keeps you up at night.

Maybe it's wondering how you will make it through several more months of this pandemic.

From all my conversations with family, friends and parishioners
I can honestly say that every person I know is facing something really serious.
And it has them doubting themselves and even questioning their faith -
asking God, *'Where are you? What's your plan?'*

If this is how you are feeling, you are not alone.

And if you're asking what you can do about it,
today's Gospel gave the answer: be like Mary.

Be like Mary; have faith and trust and believe the words of
the Angel Gabriel who reassured her,

SCREEN: Nothing will be impossible for God

Nothing will be impossible for God.

So often, our tendency when we're facing a major crisis
is to turn to God only as a last resort.

I have to confess, I've been guilty of this.

And I wonder, why?

Why do we turn to God last instead of first?

Is it pride or arrogance, thinking:

"I can fix this, I don't need to ask God for help!"

It could be that sense of hopelessness I spoke about:

"My problem is unfixable, I give up!"

Perhaps it's fear or doubt, thinking,

God doesn't care about me or my problem.

Today's readings shatter all our excuses!

They show us that God loves us, God is in control, and God has a plan.

Because if God could raise up David - a runt of a shepherd boy

and make him a mighty king and

if God could raise up Mary of Nazareth to be the Mother of Jesus,

and if her son could bring healing and forgiveness to a broken world,

then God can fix anything you and I struggle with.

All God asks is that we turn to him,

turn our problems over to him and

then trust and have hope that God can fix it.

Nothing will be impossible for God!

So here is how we do it.

Every day, every time we pray, we need to surrender our lives and our problems to God.

Every day.

No matter how impossible you've decided your struggle is, give it to God who assures us nothing is impossible.

I want to end this message and this series with something a little bit different.

I want to invite you to join me in making an act of spiritual surrender, just like Mary made in today's Gospel.

If you have a personal struggle that's weighing heavy on your heart right now, surrender it - give it to God.

Even if you don't have a specific worry or struggle, join me in making an act of spiritual surrender, offering your life to God.

I am going to pause now for 30 seconds so you call to mind whatever is on your heart.

(pause for 30 seconds)

Now, I invite you to join me in praying this prayer out loud:

SCREEN: Lord, I know that you love me.

I trust that you are listening.

I have hope that you will answer my prayer.

SCREEN: Like Mary, I surrender my life and struggles to you.

Every day, help me to imitate her example:

to believe that with you,

nothing will be impossible. Amen. +