

own faithfulness? What did it feel like to fully put your trust in God? How did God provide for your success? How were you blessed? Write your thoughts here, giving thanks for God's generous faithfulness.

Thursday, December 24

We've talked about Mary's faithfulness to God's plan for her life and how God responds to our faithfulness with His own faithfulness. The big idea, the Central Idea for this message is "You don't always have the power to control, but you always have the power to surrender."

If we're honest, we readily accept the fact that we don't always possess the power to control everything in our lives. The second part of the Central Idea above – you always have the power to surrender – might be more difficult to accept. What do you think when you hear the word "surrender?" What images come to your mind? Remember, your well-being as one who surrenders is dependent on the mercy and concerns of the one to whom you surrender. Contemplate these questions and write your responses here. We hope to see you at our Christmas Eve Services tonight!

Friday, December 25

Merry Christmas!! Pastor Jack often shares the tradition of his family to read the Christmas story from the Bible (Matthew 1:18-25 or Luke 2:1-20) before opening gifts. We've talked about how Mary surrendered her will to God's will in order for Jesus to be born. We need to understand that surrender is never partial and it is not a onetime event but rather a daily decision and discipline. Ponder these ideas as you enjoy your celebration of Christ's birth. Be blessed and be safe! Merry Christmas!

Message Notes – December 20, 2020

Travel Light – Letting Go of Control*

- I. We've been talking about letting go of forces in our lives that put a wedge between us and God's _____ for us, including our _____ with God and each other.
 - A. So what about letting go of control in your life? It's not an _____ thing to do.
 - B. Is there any area of your life – which you absolutely want to control? _____ control?
 1. Unlike influence, control can be _____.
 2. The more we try to control everything in our lives, the more we're _____ of losing control.
 3. The more we're _____ of losing control, the more we _____ to control.
 4. The more we _____ to control, the more we're _____.
 5. It's a vicious circle that leaves us feeling _____, disturbed and confused.
- II. We're told that when the angel, Gabriel, came to Mary saying, "Greetings, _____ one! The Lord is with you!" she was perplexed; another version of scripture says that Mary was disturbed and confused.
 - A. Gabriel said, "And now, you will _____ in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus."
 1. Mary is so incredibly _____, and she responds, "'How can this be, since I am a virgin?'"
 2. Gabriel tells her that the _____ _____ will come upon her and the shadow of the Most High will overcome her.

*Luke 1:26-38

- B. Mary responds, “Here I am, the _____ of the Lord.” Then she quotes the _____: “Let it be.”
1. The other side of Mary’s faithfulness was _____ faithfulness.
 2. The desire to control is rooted in a _____ of faith.
 3. When you overestimate your ability to control, you underestimate the _____ of God.
- III. What are you trying to control that’s _____ of your control?
- A. You don’t always have the power to _____ but you always have the power to _____.
 - B. Now here’s the reality friends; there is no such thing as _____ surrender.
 - C. Another attribute of surrendering: Surrender isn’t an _____ event but rather a _____ choice.
- IV. Nearly everything in our culture invites us to live _____ to these concepts about surrender. That we should take _____.
- A. You can experience one of the most freeing moments in your life and let go of what you cannot change and _____ that your faithfulness will be matched by God’s faithfulness.
 - B. God can do way _____ with our surrender than we can do with our control.
 - C. Remember what Gabriel said to Mary when he first greeted her: “_____ is with you!”

Daily Devotional Guide

The following is a daily devotional and study guide meant to enhance your understanding of the message and grow as a Christian.

It is offered for your personal reflection or to share with others.

Monday, December 21

We’ve been talking throughout this Season of Advent about traveling light and letting go of that which stands between

ourselves and others as well as ourselves and God. So what about letting go of control in your life? Are there elements of your life that you must absolutely control? Are there other people you want to control? Pastor Jack mentioned a message in November where he encouraged us to influence others. This past Sunday he said influence is not control. What do you believe is the difference between influence and control? Think about letting go of control in different areas of your life. Pray for God’s wisdom as you write your thoughts here.

Tuesday, December 22

Read Luke 1:26-38. As we read this scripture, we learn that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was perplexed by the greeting of the angel, Gabriel. Actually, it seems that Mary was very composed considering that an angel was visiting her! Certainly the news that she was going to bear a child before her marriage was finalized and she was a virgin was not necessarily welcomed news. Our desire to control our lives leads to fear when we begin to lose control over our lives. The more afraid we become, the harder we try to maintain control. The harder we try the more desperate and afraid we become. It can be a vicious cycle that leads to our being perplexed, disturbed and confused – like Mary. What emotions do you experience and what thoughts go through your mind when you’re trying to exert control in your life? Meditate upon that question and write your response here.

Wednesday, December 23

Read Luke 1:26-38. Mary responded to Gabriel by surrendering her will to the plan Gabriel shared with her. She quoted the Beatles: “Let it be. Let it be with me according to your word.” On the other side of Mary’s faithfulness was God’s faithfulness. When we trust God, that trust is match by God’s faithfulness to us. When you overestimate your ability to control, you

underestimate the power of God. Can you think of a time in which God responded to your faithfulness by demonstrating His