

Middle/High School Sunday School Lessons by

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Year 4: Session 4 – Advent and Jesus

Class 10: Luke 1:26 - 44 – Mary and Juno are pregnant

CONCEPTS that will be covered in the lesson

- Quick introduction to Advent
- Explain / share how unwedded pregnancy was treated / viewed by the society Mary lived in
- Highlight how God cares for Mary regarding this threatening/dangerous situation

Materials needed:

1. Movie clip (available on rfour.org) from *Juno*
2. Electronics that show the video clip
3. For activity
 - 5 pieces of gum for each student
 - Some sort of plate for the student to put their chewed gum on
 - and something to clean their hands with

THE LESSON

OPENING PRAYER

OPENING QUESTION

- One of the things we do every class is ask and answer the opening question at the beginning of class – because it helps us 1. Learn more about each other and 2. Helps “warm us up” for some of the ideas in the upcoming lesson. So we’re going to do that now.
- So here’s the opening question for today’s class. I [the teacher] will ask the question and then to give you some time to think of an answer, I will answer first.
- Once I answer the question, we’ll go around the circle and each of us will answer.
- When it’s your turn, start with your name and then answer the question to the best of your ability.
- *Here’s this week’s question:* What is something that you’ve received that you’re happy to have, but has also created problems due to its arrival in your life? (Note: This might be a hard one to answer – if the students get stuck, start to ask about smart phones or video games that are exciting but then either 1. There’s not enough time to use it or 2. They no longer have time for other things)

TRANSITION TO ACTIVITY

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- We're starting a new session this week that's about Advent and Jesus
- Advent simply means "to prepare" and it is the season before Christmas (4 weeks before Christmas).
- The idea is that we prepare to both celebrate the birth of Jesus as well as prepare to live into what the birth of Jesus represents: That God is at work in us and through us (*note: feel free to add more about Advent here, but beware that this lesson takes a lot of time as is*)
- So to get started with today's lesson and the session – we're going to read the story of Mary being told that she's pregnant with Jesus.
- And to help us think about what this announcement means to Mary – we're going to do the following activity.

EXPLAIN ACTIVITY

- I'm going to give each of you 5 pieces of gum.
- In just a moment, I want you to take all five pieces and put them in your mouth.
- And then chew away.
- Once you've got all five pieces in your mouth and nicely chewed, it will be time to take the gum out and put it on the Styrofoam/paper plate in front of you.
- Then, take your lump of gum and mold it into a sculpture of something that we might be able to guess!
- I'll give you 5 minutes to make the sculpture
- Don't tell anyone what you are making because we'll guess what it is after everyone's done
- Ready? Set? Chew!

DO ACTIVITY

Note: If you haven't guessed it by now, this is a gross activity. And though the students will complain about it, they'll talk about it for the rest of the year. Sometimes gagging (not because of too much gum, but because of seeing the chewed gum on a place) is a thing. Have paper towels ready to cover up the gum if some students are having trouble with the gagging thing.

ASK

- [*go around the circle and have students guess what each statue is supposed to be and then have the student artist say what it was actually supposed to be – do this quickly, though*] – **Note:** *This is a time-consuming exercise; you might want to save it until the end of the lesson – or just have students share what they made*)
- What did the gum look like before you put it in your mouth? (answers will vary based on what gum was bought, but the most universal answer that you want to point out is that *the gum was nicely colored and uniform in shape*)
- And what did the gum look like AFTER you had chewed it? (*no longer uniform in shape, no longer attractively colored – looked kind of gross*)
- Did it look like a golden calf when it came out of your mouth? (*this is a joke question and pokes fun at Aaron from the Golden Calf story a number of weeks back where he told Moses that the gold came out of the fire looking like a cow*)
- Did it look like what you made it into? (*most likely not*)
- And...what do you think – does the gum look better now than when you first took it out of your mouth? (*maybe! Hopefully?*)

TELL / TRANSITION to Scripture Story

- So we're going to fast-forward from when Moses and the Israelites were in the wilderness to 1400 years later when Jesus is born
- That's a big gap in time!
- But there's some interesting parallels between Jesus and Moses
- They both invite people and help people experience a better way of life
- And both Jesus and Moses have to deal with some of the people who respond very negatively to their invitations
- In today's scripture story, we're going to read about Jesus' mom, Mary, receiving the news that she is pregnant with Jesus.
- Let's see what happens

READ Luke 1:26 - 44 (*recommend class reads it out loud; one person per verse*)

26In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, 27to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. 28And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." 29But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. 30The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. 32He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. 33He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

34Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" 35The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. 36And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son;

and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. 37For nothing will be impossible with God." 38Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

39In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, 40where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. 41When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit 42and exclaimed with a loud cry,

"Blessed are you among women,
and blessed is the fruit of your womb.
43And why has this happened to me,
that the mother of my Lord comes to me?
44For as soon as I heard
the sound of your greeting,
the child in my womb leaped for joy.

ASK

- In verse 26, who visits Mary (the angel Gabriel)
- In verse 27, who is Mary engaged to? (Joseph)
- So – is Mary married? (No)
- Verse 28 – how does Gabriel greet Mary? (graciously)
- Verse 29 – What effect does Gabriel's greeting have on Mary? (confuses her)
- Verse 31 – What does Gabriel tell Mary is going to happen? (She's going to have a baby boy named Jesus and he's going to do things)
- Verse 34 – Does Mary believe Gabriel? (no, she doesn't)
- Does she sound happy at this point? (not really)
- Verse 36 – Who does Gabriel tell Mary to visit? (her relative, Elizabeth)
- Verse 38 – Now what is Mary's response to Gabriel? (she says she'll be God's servant)
- Verse 39 – Does Mary go visit Elizabeth? (Yes)
- Verse 41-44 – Is Mary well-received? (very much so)

TELL

- First, I want to point out that Mary was probably 12 to 13 years old in this story
- In Jesus' time, the idea was that you got married once you could have kids.
- So the fact that she's not actually married to Joseph says that she's still pretty young
- Second, I just want to point out that the word "angel" does not necessarily mean that Gabriel is tall, shining white, and has wings.
- Instead, the Hebrew word of angel simply means "Messenger of God."
- So God sent a message to Mary. Actually, God sent a number of messages to Mary through Gabriel.
- The first message is one of blessing
- But this blessing, this child she's going to have, is not all good news
 - Just imagine the conversation Mary has to have with her parents and then with Joseph. Do you think her parents would believe her?
 - Do you think Joseph believed her right away? If not, Joseph could become really upset (he might not believe her) and call off the wedding.
 - And if he did that, to be pregnant and not married at that time was an offense that was, at its worst, punishable by death!
- So this message of blessing is actually a potential message of isolation, fear, and even death
- In fact, if Mary were to answer our opening question, she'd probably answer with one word, "Jesus."
- This why the second message that God sends to Mary through Gabriel, is important to note
- The second message is that she's not going to go through this by herself.
- There's someone else who is also unexpectedly pregnant (Elizabeth – who is old which also means stable and established)
- We then see that Mary takes that message and uses it to her advantage. She goes and stays with Elizabeth.
- Typically this story is told in kind of a happy way – Mary is pregnant with baby Jesus! Yay!
- But that's not actually what is happening here because of the cultural context
- And even today, it wouldn't be a super-happy announcement either. Sure, there would be some excitement, but also concern, worry, stress, etc.
- To help us think about all of those conflicting emotions, let's watch the following movie clip, from the movie *Juno*
- In it, Juno, who is 17 and pregnant, is about to tell her dad and step-mom that she's pregnant
- In some ways, this is probably the same conversation Mary had with her parents and in all sorts of other ways, not at all the same conversation
- Just a warning, there's one mild swear word in the clip – and overall, I think, the clip is a little bit stressful -- which, again, helps us better think about what Mary actually went through
- Let's see what happens

WATCH VIDEO

ASK

- What did you think of Juno's dad and step-mom's response?
- Did you think they were too angry or too easy on Juno? Why?
- Did you think Juno felt supported by her parents? Why?

- Do you think what Juno’s parents offered to help her with (multi-vitamin pills; going to see the possible adoptive parents) was at all comforting to Juno? (probably)
- But was everything happy and joyful? (nope!)

TELL

- Thinking back to our opening activity...what did we start out with? (pristine pieces of gum)
- And what did we then do to those pristine pieces of gum? (we chewed them into a big ol’ ugly lumps)
- And when we pulled that lump out of our mouths, did it resemble much of anything? (No, not really).
- In some ways, I think this is what we see in today’s story
- Mary’s life was probably ok – maybe not great, but probably ok
- But then, suddenly, something got added and even though that thing was a good thing, Mary probably felt like her life just got chewed up
- Mary being pregnant with Jesus, then, reminds us that even when our lives get all chewed up, God is with us.
- That God is sending us messages and people who can help us make that chewed up lump into something new – like – to think back to our activity – a creative sculpture.
- But, as we also see in today’s story, for God to be able to really help us, we have to be open to what God is offering – which is why Mary’s response of “Here I am, Lord” can be seen as quite heroic and inspiring.
- And that’s “it” for today
- Thank you for your patience and maturity!

Optional

- Let’s return to our gum sculptures and guess what they are and then hear what they actually are (if not done earlier in lesson)

CLOSING PRAYER