

Series: Frozen

Sermon: Do You Want to Build a Snowman?

Luke 1:26-33

In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, 27 to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. 28 The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

29 Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. 30 But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. 31 You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. 32 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, 33 and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

Sermon

In 1937, Walt Disney was in the works to create a movie off of an old Hans Christian Andersen story about a snow queen. Snow White was about to be released, and Disney was trying to figure out their follow up - the encore production. They worked at it for a while, but couldn't get the story to seem relatable. How do you make a snow queen likable? They decided to shelve the project in favor of another Hans C. Andersen story, the puppet that came to life and the cricket it talked to...which WAS...(Finocchio). After that blockbuster, they could go back to the Snow Queen and other ideas. World War II came about, and all projects were put on hold to make cartoons for the war effort. Not joking. Look up Donald Duck fighting the Japanese, you'll find some violent and racist stuff. They did finish a movie they were already working on, and Bambi came out at the same time as the Battle of Guadalcanal, and Stalingrad. Anyway. In 1952, they resumed with the project, but the project manager, a guy named Goldwyn, (the G in MGM) left Disney partway thru and stole the idea for a live action film, that won 6 academy awards, a movie called Hans Christian Andersen. Disney kept their ideas in their studios, however. In the late 90's, Disney had a renaissance of movies again and they put up the cash for Snow Queen, only to have it dashed when its director bailed for another film. The idea was pitched 6-7 more times since then, but all fell on deaf ears. Pixar tried to pick it up, Director John Lassiter was blown away by the decades worth of artwork on file of trying to make this film, but even they had problems making the Snow Queen likable - and this is Pixar. They eventually gave it back to Disney. Then a director picked up this now four score and seven year ago project and thought he would change it up. Too many times, the princess kisses the prince and all live happily ever after. What if the prince doesn't get the girl? What if two sisters face the world and win? Disney loved it, gave it the green light with limited funding. They went back to Lassiter at Pixar, and they helped produce it, and in 2013, 75 years after they began the project, Frozen came out. They spent 150 million making it. And so far, the first movie has grossed 1.2 Billion. That's billion. And they made just as much in merchandise. I know, I swear our family accounts for around 10% of Disney's total profits, I believe some days.

A movie that was 75 years in the making, twists and turns, and inviting others to jump in and take a shot. In the end, it was a collaborative effort that made it all happen. Do you want to make a movie??? Do you want to make some dough?

This Advent season, we are going to use the movie Frozen as a springboard into the Christmas story. We are just going to take a few of the song titles as the sermon titles. And for this First Sunday of Advent, we will use the song, Do You Want to Build a Snowman. In short, here's the backdrop. Elsa and Anna are sisters. Elsa has

special powers, but also has the power to hurt others until she learns to control said powers, and the parents have her spend her days locked in her room, away from her sister. And Anna misses her sister as they grow up. In the tear jerker of a song, Do You Want to Build a Snowman, Anna is sitting at Elsa's closed door singing through the cracks to her sister, Do you want to Build a snowman? In other words, come out. I want to play. I want to know my sister again. Why won't you be with me? The whole song is an invitation.

"Do You" are powerful words. When you use the words "Do You", it is an invite to others to be with you for a while. Do you want to go to the movies? Togetherness. Do you want to sit by me at lunch? Awww. Do you, groom, take this bride to be your wife. Relationship. Do you is almost always a relationship building endeavor. You never hear it in the negative - do you want to get out of my life? Do you want the door to hit you on the way out? Sounds wrong. You'd say, Get out! Don't let the door hit you. But the phrase Do you implies the question, leaving the answer to the other person. Some of the happiest times in my life have been when I have been invited into the lives of others, whether it was a social group, a party, an organization, a marriage. Some of the hardest times in my life is when I realized I was not invited, or even disinvited from a social group, an activity, a relationship. Most of us have had break ups in the past, where you essentially tell someone, or had someone tell you, the invitation that was open is now closed. An invitation is powerful - it means that you matter to someone else, and that they matter to you.

What can happen with an invitation? Think back to how Jesus found the 12 disciples. It was by invitation. Did he get resumes? Was their an interview process? Was their a Discipleship test? Nope. A careful review of the Bible and history reveals that most of Jesus disciples were invited to join by another disciple. It was Jesus walking by the Sea of Galilee and calling out to fishermen who were in boats. He said to them, follow me. Do you want to be Disciples? Do you want to fish for men? He has two Disciples. Then the next day, John the Baptist walks on by with two of his disciples, and says, "Behold the Lamb of God. And John's two disciples bail and John and go to Jesus. Not quite like that, but that's the end result. Andrew was one of them. And Andrew goes on a membership drive. He invites others to see Jesus, including his brother Peter. Yeah, that Peter. And Philip and Bartholomew, Bart invited Nathaniel. And so on and so on. Andrew is called the Usher because he ushered people to Jesus. Look at all of the invites in this story: John the Baptist invited Andrew and John, Andrew invited Peter and Philip, Phillip invited Nathaniel, John invites his brother James. The ripple effect. Each of us are networked with other people. We never know what God's plan is for a person when we invite them to church or invite them to meet Jesus. Andrew invites his brother Peter to come and meet Jesus. Look what happens as a result of that one invite: Peter becomes one of Jesus closest disciples. Years later, he preaches the sermon on the day of Pentecost and 3000 were converted. He becomes the first Bishop of Rome. After the death and resurrection of Jesus, Peter and Andrew become an evangelistic team. This team of brothers left Galilee and began seeking the lost tribes of Israel. They would go to a part of the world that we now call Great Britain, Greece and also Bulgaria. They established churches and started Christianity among a group called the Anglos and Saxons who lived along the Black Sea. Fast Forward 400 years, Britain was settled by hundreds of thousands of new people named the Anglos and Saxons. They brought the gospel with them to Britain which eventually became 80% Christian. This is where the Pilgrims trace their roots of Christianity. We have Christianity in America today because of pilgrims and other colonists - we talked about them for the past two weeks. You and I have the gospel today because Andrew invited Peter to Christ.

In the Christmas narrative, we say that the people of Israel were waiting for a Messiah. For hundreds of years, they were waiting for a deliverer from the oppressive empires that held them down. And we can imagine the nation of Israel, at the closed doorstep of God, pleading through the cracks. "Do you want to come now, do you want to kick them out.? We hate the Romans Every Day, What do you say? Why you take so long?" And in the fullness of time, we get an invitation. The Angel Gabriel goes to see Mary. Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you. And Gabriel makes the invitation. You will have a child, they will name him Jesus, for he will save people from their sins, yadda, yadda, yadda. The pitch was made. The invitation sent.

One of the troubling interpretations of this narrative is that some may believe that Mary doesn't have a choice here. God picked her, and Mary's feelings don't matter. This will, without a doubt, happen - you are a pawn in this cosmic game of good and evil. It is disturbing to think that Mary has no free will in this exercise. But that is not how God works. There is always free will. We always have a choice. There is always a choice. Adam and Eve had a choice with the apple. Abram had a choice to go when God said go. Moses had a choice when we went back to free the slaves. David had a choice when he decided to go face Goliath. Daniel had a choice to recant before the lions den, but he chose different. Joseph stuck around after finding out Mary was pregnant. The shepherds went to check things out. Wise men from the east. They all had choices. Think about it, if none of our biblical heroes had free choice, if what they were doing was set in stone, then why should they be celebrated? If their actions weren't their choice, then they shouldn't be venerated like they are. We learn from them because of the choice they made. Same with Mary. Mary had a choice. The invite was sent - and what was Mary's answer? It came right after what was read today, but many of you know it. "May it be to me as you have said." This was her consent to being part of this beautiful plan of redemption. Who knows, maybe there were other "Mary's" who were asked before, but turned down the offer. That's just me wondering out loud. Sort of a midrash experiment. The point is this: God's message by the mouth of the angel was not a command. It was an invitation. It only remained, therefore, for Mary to consent to the consequences of the Divine offer. Now, we could talk about power dynamics, that it was an offer that Mary couldn't refuse, but that's not how God works. We always have a choice.

Maybe we are the ones behind the closed door. Afraid. Ashamed. And we only let God speak to us through the closed door, God calls out to us through the cracks. Do you want to have a relationship with me? Do you want to live life abundantly? And we don't open the door because we're afraid that to say yes to Discipleship we would have to say no to other parts of our life that we know are not compatible with the Christian life. Or that we're scared of what God wants us to do. We might have to forgive. We might have to care. We might have to, woah, do something. I know that God continues to call out to us, asking us to help bring in the Kingdom of God on this side. We have a choice. We can open the door. Do you want to follow Christ? Do you want to know his love? We always have a choice. If Disney can have the patience of 75 years to make a blockbuster of a movie, just imagine the Patience that God has for us. And whatever God is saying to you, may our answer be "May it be as you have said." And the family of God said, AMEN.