

WHEN GOD CHANGES YOUR PLANS

Hillsboro Presbyterian Church

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What do you do when God changes your plans? The Christmas story is a story of everybody's plans getting changed. Like our sermon title...and the Rose Bowl plans of some of you.

Mary and Joseph certainly had their plans changed. They were just a young couple engaged to be married. All they wanted to do was get married and settle down. In the middle of all their preparation an angel says, "By the way, God has a new plan for you. And there are three parts to this plan and it's kind of big. #1 - you're going to get pregnant before the wedding and it's not going to be Joseph's. #2 - this will be a miracle called virgin birth. And #3, the baby is God's Son. Our lesson - **Luke 1:26-38**.

Has God ever changed your plans? Let me be clear: Everything that happens to you in your life is not necessarily God's will. Most problems we have we bring on ourselves. We make dumb decisions and stupid mistakes that God didn't have anything to do with. Sometimes other people cause our problems. And because we live on a broken planet...nobody is perfect...we all have sinned. That means we hurt each other...sometimes intentionally, sometimes unintentionally. Sometimes people hurt us, intentionally or unintentionally. Abuse is not God's will. Cancer is not God's will. Prejudice is not God's will. All the evil on this planet is not God's will. This is why we pray ***"Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."*** God's will is done in heaven...not so much on earth because we choose to do our own thing...so does everybody else. So we don't blame God for all the problems in the world. Sometimes God intervenes and changes our plans because God wants to do something in your life. **Proverbs 19:21** says ***"Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails."*** So what do we do when God changes our plans? 3 things from the Christmas story...

1. When God changes your plans God is trying to get your attention.

Luke 1:26 ***"God sent the Angel Gabriel to Nazareth..."***

God's plan for Mary and Joseph was so out of the ordinary that God had to do something extraordinary to convince them that it was really going to happen. So God sent an angel, because what was going to happen in their life had never been done before...or since. For us, God doesn't have to send an angel. We have the Holy Spirit. We just have to listen. But we're not very good listeners when it comes to listening to God. Instead of listening to God we're talking all the time. Or we're so busy God can't get through. Does God ever get call waiting when he calls you? Does he get a busy signal? The answer is actually yes. In **Psalms 81**, God says ***"I wish my people would listen to me."*** When it comes to listening we've all got spiritual ADD - attention deficit disorder. Why does God want us to listen? To save us from a lot of problems. God has perspective that we don't. We can't see the big picture that God sees. God can see everything that's going to happen in your life in 2010 right now...because God is not limited by space and time. God doesn't live on a twenty-four hour planet that circles the sun. When you were a child your parents had a perspective that you didn't have. And they probably told you, "The stove looks red and inviting, but *don't touch the stove.*" Why? They had the perspective and experience. We need to remember that when God says to us "Here are some things you need to do and here is some stuff you need not to do." God has perspective and experience. But we think we know better. "I know God says don't do that but I'm going to do it anyway." God says, "You are just going to get burned." And all the hurt and pain and difficulties we bring on our selves because we would not listen to God our Father in Heaven.

2. When God changes your plans it means God has a better plan.

Luke 1:28,31 ***"Greetings, you who are highly favored!...You will be with child..."***

Mary and Joseph's plan was let's just get married, have babies, settle down. God said, No, I'm going to use you as a couple to bless the entire world. God's plan was a whole lot bigger for their life than they ever imagined. And God's plan for your life is bigger than you ever imagined. If you go with your plan instead of God's plan for your life you're going to limit your life. God says I've got a bigger plan for your life than you do. **Jeremiah 29:11** says ***"For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.'"'*** God's plan is also more rewarding. It's the key to significance and satisfaction. But God's plan is at times harder. Sometimes when you're going with God's plan it seems more confusing. Like, "why is this happening to me?" Sometimes it's even painful. God's plan to use Mary to bless the whole world wasn't an easy plan. Nine months of criticism and gossip. That was painful. Then before she delivers this baby, they have to go to Bethlehem for the census so she has to ride a donkey for a long journey. Would any woman like to give a testimony about that? That was painful. Then it was painful and difficult for her to deliver her very first baby, by herself, in a stable with nothing but cows and chickens and donkeys. When she would have rather been home with her mother and aunts delivering that first child. So the plan was difficult but it was a plan of promise. Mary didn't understand it and I'm sure she asked a thousand times, "Why, God?" There are some things that are happening in your life right now that you're going, "Why, God? Why?" Jesus said, ***"You don't understand now what I'm doing but you will understand later."*** We will too.

3. When God changes your plans God wants you to learn to trust Him more.

Luke 1:38 ***"I am the Lord's servant. May it be to me as you have said."***

When your plans fall through God is saying, trust me. Imagine how this whole Christmas thing tested Joseph's faith. Your fiancée comes to you and says, "Honey, I'm pregnant." And you know it wasn't you. You're saying "It's God, right?" Imagine the test of faith for Joseph to be told that by his fiancée. Imagine Mary, how many times she was tested by this whole thing. God's plan for their lives was so different all they could do was trust. There was nothing else they could do. The Bible says there is only one way to please God. **Hebrews 11:6** ***"Without faith it is impossible to please God."*** How do you please God? Not by religion or rituals or rules or regulations. But simply by trusting God. It pleases God when we trust Him. You trust that God knows what He's doing, that God cares for you, and that God is going to see you through the situation. **Romans 8:28** tells us ***"We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose."*** We know. We're not guessing. We know for certain. It doesn't say God causes everything. It says God causes everything to work for good...IF we love God and we're living according to His plan.

When plans get changed we need to understand, *this is a test*. All of life is a gift...and a test. The test is this: Am I going to trust God or am I going to trust me? Just last Sunday I called a friend who house had just burnt down...he had lost all of his possessions. His words to me? "This is just a test. God is growing my faith and making space in my life for more blessings." That is faith that pleases God.

Nobody knows what the future holds. But we do know for certain, certain things. We do know that God has a plan and purpose for your life. We know that. We know that God is going to change your plans sometime to grow your faith. We know that. We know that God will always be with you no matter what you go through. And we know that cooperating with God is the only way to really live.