

Isaiah 7:10-17

Luke 1:26-38

A long time ago in a galaxy far away a young director named George Lucas released Star Wars — Little did he know that this movie would become a cultural phenomenon. Star Wars - A New Hope was released in theaters in 1977 and became the highest - grossing film of all time.

More than 35 years and five additional films later a new chapter is being written in the Star Wars story — many of you may that the latest installment of Star Wars will be released on December 18th.

As a star fan I am for one very excited about the upcoming movie and yes Katie and I already have tickets to see A Force Awakens on December 18th.

During the season of Advent we will be exploring traditional Biblical advent themes along side Star Wars movies.

Now don't worry, if you have not seen Star Wars, you won't feel left out. Perhaps you will be inspired to see the movies after the series is done.

We begin with the beginning — A New Hope == The premise of the movie is simple — A young farm boy longs to leave home. He sets off on a quest to save a princess. He is aided by a wise old wizard, one of the last of his kind. He is also helped by a lovable rogue named Chewy, and an outlaw named Han Solo.

He has to fight the darkest villain around. This young farm boy named Luke Skywalker is chosen for this mission because his old wizard friend - Obi one Knobie — has heard that the one is coming, the one who will bring balance back to the force. Obi one promises to show Luke the ways of the force — to prepare him for all that he needs to become a Jedi knight.

Sound familiar?

This morning's Gospel recounts God's announcement to Mary that she was to become the Mother of the Savior. It describes Mary's initial reaction of fear and confusion, and Joseph's reaction to the fact that his fiancée was about to have a child that wasn't his.

But then they hear the promises from God — A promise that everything is going to be okay, that God is with them and that God has chosen Mary for something special. Because of God's actions Mary knows that this baby that is inside of her will change the world forever.

How many times have you felt this in your life? That there was a calling from God that you felt so strongly that the world was going to be different because of your actions.

It could be because of the relationships you have made, because of the people you have helped, because of the career you chose, or any number of things you have done over the years. What you do, matters — it matters to your family, to your friends, to your church and to God.

So Mary and Joseph are charged with the care of Jesus, with showing Jesus the ways of God — they are preparing him for all that he needs to be the savior of the world. This is their calling.

It begins when the Angel says to Mary ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. God is trusting you with the responsibility to give birth to a son — and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God. He will be Christ the King — but his kingdom will have no end. Your world, and the world around you will change forever. The promises of God will come to this world and walk among you.’”

The promise to Mary and Joseph that God is going to be with them, that Jesus will be someone special who will change the world — is an amazing promise that did not happen overnight.

We read in the first lesson the prophecy from Isaiah that “a young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel” This promise from God has been carried through the years and into our lives today. Because of Jesus we know that there is nothing we have to do to earn God’s love, there is nothing that we have to do to earn our salvation. That has already been given to us. God’s presence is in our lives.

This story does not happen the way we expect. Jesus come into the world through an unwed, pregnant teenager who gave birth in a stable. Not the way we would expect from the savior of the world to come into the world.

When Mary becomes pregnant with Jesus she knows that she is trouble, not because of any wrong she has done. But the reality is that she is that her life has turned upside down. Her life could be at risk. She doesn’t know what she is going to do next — but the Holy Spirit is with her — and God will ensure that she will be okay.

Like Mary we each receive a calling — even Luke Skywalker - even when we try and run from that calling — it is bound to come back to us and find us because each of us has found favor with God, the Holy Spirit comes upon us and there is a new creation born into our spirit- into our souls.

And if we are like Mary at first when we hear God’s call to us we may find ourselves troubled by it. We want to resist it, we run from it and make excuses — We may say to God that we are not good enough, that we don’t have the time, energy or money to follow Gods call to us — but eventually we find the truth and it is so overwhelming and so compelling that we can do nothing but say, like Mary, "... let it be to me according to your word."

So Mary hears this promise from God — that she has been favored and she will give birth to a son who will be the savior of the world. She accepts this call from God and then she leaves to tell her cousin Elizabeth who found out that she too conceived and will bear a son. Now Elizabeth is older and she and her husband did not think they could have a child. But that does not stop God.

This tells me that nothing, absolutely nothing, is impossible with God.

You see these women who were a part of something very special. But they were ordinary women — There was nothing special about them. They were ordinary people like you and me called to do extraordinary things — Like you and me.

But that's not the messages that we receive from the world -We are told by the world that we need to be the smartest, prettiest, most athletic or young in order to make a difference in this world. That we have to be some kind of Jedi Knight.

One of the things that sets a part Jedi knights from everyone else is this thing called the force. Some compare the Force with God. But the Force is what gives a Jedi his power. It's an energy field created by all living things. It surrounds us and penetrates them; it gives them abilities to move objects, to have super natural powers.

The thing about the force is that it is only for the elite. Only a few are able to have the force you have to have the right biological makeup--receive the power of the Force.

But Gods love, promises, grace and favor is given to everyone. It doesn't matter who you are God tells each of us that we are special, that we all are loved, and forgiven. God gives each of us a calling and gives us the ability to do extraordinary things in our lives that will change the world.

We know this is true because we see the power, influence and effect one ordinary woman had on the world. When God went to Mary — to tell her the news that She is going to give birth to a child — not just any child but to a child named Jesus who will be the king of kings -to the savior of the world.

So we begin this advent season with a new hope — that we have all been given favor and love from God and that we are called to do extraordinary things in this world that will forever change the world and bring people closer to God as we respond to the amazing love that God has for every one of us. Amen.