



I have never been one to enjoy interruptions. The very nature of the word means a distraction; to stop or break the continuity of an activity. I thrive on a schedule. A routine plan is music to my structured soul. I think it brings comfort and joy to know what is around the corner. It is why 2020 and I have battled on so many days.

2020 has been a whirlwind of change and unexpected chaos on many occasions. Social distancing, quarantines, hybrid schedules, the shortage of toilet paper (which I still do not understand), and the routine usage of face masks have all been experienced. Christmas this year for so many, including our family, has been interrupted by sickness. A carefully formulated plan that had to change. Stephen said it would be the first time in 45 years that Christmas Eve had not been spent with his parents. A time of large family parties have all been replaced with rescheduled dates in the hopes that we will be able to gather again. As I reflect on many years spent with my parents and grandparents, a surge of grief can often render me speechless.

God spoke to me as I was struggling with all of the above. *“Julie, sometimes interruptions are part of my chosen plan. They can be the best part of the season if you are open to receiving something new.”*

Receiving something new. I don't know about you, yet new scares me lately. I'm afraid to look around the corner at what might be next. I have been reading through the book of Luke this month. God reminded me that in the instance of Zechariah and Mary---each experienced a divine interruption to their normal day. One that would prove to be the best of their life.

Zechariah (Luke 1:11-14) - Zechariah was serving God in the temple, just as he had done on many occasions. He was in the sanctuary, when an angel appeared to him. At first, he was *“overwhelmed with fear”* and the angel said to him, *“Don't be afraid, God has heard your prayer. Your wife, Elizabeth, will give you a son and you are to name him John. You will have great joy and gladness and many will rejoice at his birth.”* A senior adult serving The Lord left the Sanctuary that day with news that he was to be a father. Zechariah didn't receive this particular gift without a few doubting questions and ended up losing his voice until his child was born (Luke 1:20). Now, that would have just been awful. To have been visited by the angel of

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The Lord and then unable to shout it from the rooftops, due to unbelief of what had been heard. The times when I have lost my voice, have just been some of my most hated days.

Mary (Luke 1:26-38)- Mary was a young woman excited about her engagement to Joseph. When the angel Gabriel appeared to her, she was confused and unsure of what all was to unfold at his announcement. "Don't be afraid Mary," the angel told her, "for you have found favor with God! You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus." Favor with God. Three powerful words. Mary went on to accept her assignment with these words in verse 38, "*I am the Lord's servant. May everything you have said about me come true.*" When fear and faith collided, Mary chose to trust in what was said. To believe! We see the will and plans of God impact Mary and Joseph on the first Christmas. Although it caught Mary and Joseph by surprise, God had been planning on it for years.

- Although they didn't know where this thing was headed, God had the whole thing planned.
 - Although they couldn't see the future, God did.
 - Although this didn't go according to their plans, it went exactly according to God's plan.
- There are no instances where we feel interrupted when God is surprised.**

So, my oldest daughter and I sat down and made a list of ways to embrace the interruption instead of dwell on it. We attempted to cook our family's entire Christmas Eve dinner, we played "Santa" by delivering some packages to those who are quarantined, made a few batches of ugly sugar cookies, tried a new restaurant that has been on our list for a while, attended our first Christmas Eve candlelight service at Millbrook, and the kids started a new tradition of sleeping on the floor of their big sister's room on the night before Christmas.

2021 is just around the corner. I'm not sure what it will bring, however, I am certain of the one who does know. May joy, peace, and hope fill your home this Christmas. May the Favor of God rest upon us and our children this year. May we reflect on the verses below, knowing that Mary saw these verses come to fruition when she put her total faith in The Lord. When she was absolute, not almost. When she held that precious, baby boy in a stable.

Isaiah 9:6-7, "For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders and he will be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His government and its peace will never end. He will rule with fairness and justice from the throne of his ancestor David for all eternity."