**4 Advent, Dec. 21, 2014, 2 Sam 7:1-11,16; Cant 3, Rom 16:25-27; Luke 1:26-38; Rev Mary Trainor**

*(shorter sermon because of Children's Program)*

My daughter was unhappy when we moved (to a different church) when she was in college, because she did not have **her** room to come home to...to her it felt like home was gone, as the new town we lived in did not have the traditions, the people; the new town was not a place of significance for her. Oh she was grown, but still - she wanted a place to call home. We all want a place to call home. A home is a place that has a special sense of place for us because of family - we associate home with love. We speak of home at Christmastime because it is a time of year when everyone wants to be home. Remember that Bing Crosby song, "I'll be home for Christmas, You can plan on me. Please have snow and mistletoe and presents on the tree." That 1943 song was written to honor soldiers oversees who longed to be home for Christmas, and it has been a Christmas standard ever since.....because of home and Christmas!

Today, our Gospel reading is all home too. Specifically, it is about Mary making a home for Jesus, God made man. This is the annunciation, when the Angel Gabriel came to Mary and told her "***you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great...and of his kingdom there will be no end***." This was shocking information to her, so she asked how this would be possible. The angel replied "***nothing will be impossible with God."*** And Mary then said, ***"Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be..."*** Mary didn't say, "Let me get back to you." Mary did not say, "come back again next year and ask me again, when I might feel more like it." Mary said unequivocally, unconditionally yes....and it sure is a good thing that she did, because her child is our redeemer. A former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams said: "Mary stands on the frontier between promise and fulfillment, between earth and heaven....her identity is caught up leading us to Jesus."

St. Paul, in today's reading from Romans, said "***Now to God, who is able to strengthen you according to...the proclamation of Jesus Christ..."*** This is how Mary was able to say yes, in the midst of uncertainty in this whole situation that seemed totally impossible. Because she turned to the Lord for her strength, she was able to trust in the Lord to take care of her and to work things out, even though she did not have a clue how.

This morning, we too are invited to make a home in our hearts for Jesus. Today, each of us is challenged with the question "***Will you allow Christ to make His home in you?***" Because, oh my, Christ wants to live in you. These words are simple, but saying "yes" is not so easy for us -- because we like our control, we like being in charge, and we don't like uncertainty, we don't like to be vulnerable. We like to say "maybe" or "a little bit," but this is not God's way. Can you imagine if Mary had said this? Jesus is not about doing things half-way or part-time. If you are a part-time Christian, you won't get to know the full time God.

So, this morning, how do you answer God? I hope you will answer: "***Here am I, the servant of the Lord***." Amen.