

# Advent Through the Lens of Hollywood

*Week 1: It IS a Wonderful Life*

## Scripture

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### **Isaiah 7:10-17**

Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz, saying, Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven. But Ahaz said, I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test. Then Isaiah said: "Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals, that you weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel. He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. For before the child knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land before whose two kings you are in dread will be deserted.

The LORD will bring on you and on your people and on your ancestral house such days as have not come since the day that Ephraim departed from Judah—the king of Assyria."

### **Luke 1:26-38**

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear 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 will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God." Then Mary said, "Here

am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

## Questions

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- 1.) The premise of the film "It's a Wonderful Life" is that George Bailey of Bedford Falls wonders if the world would've been a better place without his existence. Christmas come in the heart of winter. George had so many people in the town dependent on his business that a setback caused him some serious depression. Seattle has short, dark days that seem to affect everyone. Can you recall a particular winter that was hard for you? How did you survive it?
- 2.) The angel Gabriel seemed to trigger a shock and fear response to the humans he encountered. Clarence the angel was a gentle, bumbling fellow in the film. Other pop culture references see angels as naked babies with wings or Michael Landon. Why do you think Mary was afraid? Is the current image of angels too sanitized? Are angels even relevant to post-Christian Seattle? Do they exist and if so what is their purpose?
- 3.) Gabriel brought Mary the message that she is to carry within her body the Messiah. God will take on solidarity with humans and it starts with her womb. She is to bring a Light in the midst of darkness. Clarence brought the message to George Bailey that without George's existence, there would be a domino effect of a lack of light. How have we experienced light in the midst of darkness? How are we messengers of light to the darkness?

*Prayer: God, thank you for showing favor to that young woman Mary and coming to us in our world. In these dark Seattle days, shine your light to us. Help us to shine the light of your love to others. In Christ, Amen.*