

Luke 1:26-38

December 11, 2011 – ADVENT 4

You Have Found Favor With God

☆ **A humble virgin (vv.26-30)**

☆ **A glorious kingdom (vv.31-38)**

In the name of Jesus, Son of God and Son of Mary, dearly redeemed children of God:

How well do you keep your promises? Do you use common sense? Sometimes dads get hurt trying too hard. Are you dependable? Holding onto your friend hanging out a window is an implied promise because his life depends on you. Do you think before you act? If you've ever worked around heavy machinery, you know it's not just the lift but the load can be dangerous too. Do you make promises you can't keep? I can imagine a fifth grade boy saying, "I double dare ya!" to the kid who got his head stuck in a chair. Be cautious about your promises. Promises can be tough to keep.

But think about this. God is not afraid to make promises beyond our imagination. He thought about His promises from all eternity. When the going gets tough, we might wish people would forget our promises. But God kept repeating His promises through the prophets so that no one could forget them. God always keeps His promises – even at the cost of His only begotten Son. He wanted to make us heirs of His great Advent-Christmas promise: **You Have Found Favor With God**. It came first to...

☆ **A humble virgin (vv.26-30)**

The Holy Spirit is piling on the promises, at least six in the first verse. *"In the sixth month..."* – of the pregnancy of an old woman named Elizabeth who was married to an aged priest named Zechariah. The angel Gabriel had told him about the miraculous birth of their son, but Zechariah did not believe. So dumb he was, i.e., not able to speak for another three months until John the Baptist was born. *"In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth..."* We don't know which prophet(s) said it, but in Matthew's Gospel account the Holy Spirit indicates it was common knowledge about the Jewish Messiah: *"He will be called a Nazarene."* (Matthew 2:23). Nazareth was *"a town in Galilee,"* backwoods, worthless country in a worthless town as far as the Jews were concerned. But God was hiding His majesty under human weakness to confound the wise and lift up the lowly.

That's why God would soon be making this same angelic promise to a carpenter in Nazareth. Joseph would be willing to serve as the stepfather only after the angel explained his fiancé's out-of-wedlock baby was the Son of God. As promised, the *"man named Joseph"* was *"a descendant of David."* 1000 years earlier King David wanted to build a house for the LORD in Jerusalem. But the LORD had a different plan for Solomon to build the temple. Then He promised David: *"The LORD...himself will establish a house for you: When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with the rod of men, with floggings inflicted by men. But my love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever."* (2 Samuel 7:11–16 NIV84) Death and resurrection in Him!

See how intricate God's promises are? How well thought out? How keenly conceived and carefully executed? But nothing tops this. *"The virgin's name was Mary."* Until last Sunday, I thought *"the virgin"* was first promised about 700 B.C. through Isaiah to wicked King Ahaz: *"Therefore the LORD himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel."* (Isaiah 7:14 NIV84) But that's because I need to pay closer attention to God's Word.

One of our more attentive members pointed back to the first Gospel promise and showed me ***“the virgin”*** there! In the very beginning, right after Adam and Eve fell into sin, God did not promise the seed of the man or the offspring of man and woman. Burning into our enemy Satan, the LORD God promised, ***“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he,” the virgin’s*** offspring, ***“will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”*** (Genesis 3:15 NIV84)

Can you see why she was all shook up? Gabriel suddenly appeared to ***the virgin*** Mary and said, ***“Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.”*** ***Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus.”*** If you ever saw an angel, your heart would be pounding too. But humble Mary was mostly disturbed by such a kind greeting for her when she felt so unworthy. ***“Highly favored”?*** ***“The Lord is with you”?*** She was from a tiny town in back country Israel, where no one important ever went. And there she was just a poor virgin, more lowly than the rest. That’s why God chose her. She soon would be singing in her *Magnificat*: ***“And Mary said, “My soul magnifies the Lord...He has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate....”*** (Luke 1:46,52 ESV) The Lord’s promised ***humble virgin*** would have a Son with...

✧ **A glorious kingdom (vv.31-38)**

The angel Gabriel was just getting warmed up with praises for God’s unfolding promise: ***“You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus.”*** That name *Jesus* was pronounced “Joshua” in the Old Testament. Both came from a super Hebrew verb יָשָׁא (YaSHA) which means *to save* or more literally *to make a wide way*. Remember how God *made a wide way* through the Red Sea so His people Israel could escape Pharaoh and his super power army? God sent *Jesus* to save us from far worse enemies of sin, death and hell. That’s why Gabriel also said, ***“He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end.”*** We’re praying for God’s kingdom to come and for Christ to rule in our hearts whenever we pray the prayer He taught us and say, “Thy kingdom come.” His ***glorious kingdom*** lifts up our hearts to God.

Mary thought Gabriel’s greeting was disturbing, but what about this? It raised a serious, personal question for her. Not that Mary disbelieved, but she sure wondered how God would accomplish this. It’s okay to ask humble, faithful questions like hers: ***“How will this be,”*** ***Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?”*** This had never happened before; it has not happened since.

Gabriel explained how: ***“The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.”*** Awesome as it was to have the Son of God as your child, who would believe her? She would be pregnant and unmarried in a land where that was a capital crime. Can’t you hear the neighbors talking? ***“She’s pregnant how?”*** But our gracious God had a kingdom plan for the mother of our Lord. She could go on vacation to stay with someone who fully understood the miracle inside her womb, because she was carrying one of her own. How Mary’s heart must have thrilled to hear Gabriel say, ***“Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month. For nothing is impossible with God.”*** You cannot separate God’s Word from His actions. What He promises, He fulfills. ***“He spoke and it came to be.”*** (Psalm 33:9) The Creator is also our Savior-God.

No matter how lowly your station in life, whether a child or parent or elderly Christian wondering what your life is worth, God puts the value of you at this: God’s own Son. Christ came through the womb of ***the virgin*** to be the perfect Savior to bring you to God. With love like that coursing through His veins our love can echo the faithful submission of that ***humble virgin*** to His ***glorious kingdom***: ***“I am the Lord’s servant. May it be to me as you have said.”*** Amen...and Amen.