



**"Favor With God"
Luke 1:26-38 NRSVUE
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26 In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, 27 to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary.

28 And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." 29 But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. 30 The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.

31 And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. 32 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. 33 He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

34 Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" 35 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.

36 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. 37 For nothing will be impossible with God.” 38 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.

These are the familiar words recorded in the Gospel of Luke, where we find the annunciation to Mary - the divine announcement and proclamation to Mary that would have an everlasting impact on the life and course of humankind.

What a marvelous, majestic and mystical thing when God speaks to us; when God sends God’s messenger, an angel to little old us; when God considers us worthy to be visited, even in the midst of our unworthiness. How gracious and loving is God to interrupt natural law and implement supernatural authority and speak to a lowly handmaiden named Mary, and tell her that she is about to be a vessel, an instrument of God’s redemption of the world.

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Favor with God.

Favor implies and means that, even in our human condition and brokenness, there is something about *us* that lets God know that we

are willing to submit, give up our own will, our own agenda, and our own destination, in order to allow *God* to use us according to God's will and God's purpose.

It's easy to get caught up in the world's agenda for us and totally miss the agenda that **God** has for us, isn't it? Someone worshipping online or some youth or young adult needs to understand that we can allow the world and those around us to influence who we *think* we are; and what our purpose is in life, and deny the calling that God has on our lives.

We can think that our sole purpose for living is simply living in order to work, rather than working to make a living and a life. If we're not careful, we can be misled into thinking that we are here just to see how much we can get, how many things we can acquire, and what accolades and praise we can garner from others.

We can lose our focus and purpose and allow the opinion of others and their agenda for us to supersede what and who God created us to be. In other words, we can allow the voices of others and what they think we ought to be doing and what jobs they think we ought to have, and what their definition of success is, to drown out the voice of *Christ in* us; that says, "If you're going to follow me then, deny yourself, your will; take up my cross daily and follow me."

When we get to that point in our faith walk that we truly allow God to order our steps in God's word; when we get to *that* point that we're not trying to impress others but are living to please God; when we get

to *that* point, where God *sees* our humility and availability to be used by God, then just maybe, **we**, *too*, will find favor with God.

When we receive God's favor, we receive 3 things: Assurance, Promise and Blessings.

First, favor **with** God means **Assurance**: "Fear not Mary, for you have found favor with God." You have the assurance that there is nothing to fear. You don't have to fear what you cannot see because you have found favor with God. You don't have to be afraid of the unknown nor of what tomorrow's journey may bring; because you have found *favor* with God, thanks to God's love and grace.

You don't have to fear life's storms and struggles, because you have found favor with God, "who moves in a mysterious way, God's wonders to perform; God plants God's footsteps in the sea and rides upon the storm."

Secondly, favor with God means **Promise**. We have the assurance and can take comfort in the knowledge and fact that God is with us. "Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with you." We have the assurance and promise that God *knows* all about us, our down sitting and our uprising. God *knows* our going out and our coming in. God *knows* that we stand in the need of prayer, blessings, and divine favor. Yes, favor with God means **promise**; the promise that God is God Immanuel, God with us. God is present, even when it seems that God is absent. God is with us in our joys *and* in our sorrows. God is with us in our ups *and* in our downs. God is with us in good times *and* bad times. God says to us, "Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be

afraid, for I am your God; I will strengthen you; I will help you; I will uphold you with my victorious right hand."

Thirdly and finally, favor with God means **blessings**. "Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb." When we find favor with God; when God's grace looks upon *unworthy* you and me and sees our openness to enter into relationship with God. Favor means blessings; abundant blessings and gifts of love and comfort.

Blessings of life, health and strength, blessings of talents and resources, even beyond what we are able to think of asking for. Blessings that are more valuable than material things. The blessings of assurance. Blessings of hope. Blessings of peace. Blessings of joy. Blessings of comfort. Blessings of deliverance. Blessings of restoration. Blessings of healing. Blessings of eternal life.

Favor with God means Assurance; that's what Advent means.
Favor with God means Promise; that's what Christmas means.
Favor with God means blessings; that's what a Christian life means.

"Fear not, Mary. Fear not Central; fear not online worshippers; fear not widow; fear not widower; fear not single parent; fear not child of pain and of woe, for you have found favor with God." The Lord is with you and you are blessed, among others. Favor with God.

Let the Church say, "Amen."