

Morrison Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

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December 18, 2005
4th Sunday of Advent
Luke 1:26-38
Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: 2 Samuel 7:8-11,16
Psalm of the Day: Psalm 89
Second Lesson: Romans 16:25-27
Gospel: Luke 1:26-38

Highly Favored by Grace

If you are in school now or if you ever went to school, think about the times you were in school. Did you have a classmate who was highly favored? Someone who every time the teacher left the room, they were the one put in charge. Or they were the first one to run up to the teacher and say, “Johnny did this. Susie did that” as soon as the teacher got back? Someone that was highly favored by your teacher—we had a name for it, I’m sure you had the same name—teacher’s pet, right? Because the teacher highly favored that person, singled them out above the others, gave them treatment above the others, how did you respond? We didn’t like our teacher’s pet. I’m betting you didn’t like your teacher’s pet.

It sounds a little bit the same when the angel comes to Mary, but it is completely different. Mary wasn’t chosen, singled out, because of something she had done or because of her willingness to snitch on her classmates. Mary was singled out because of God’s grace—because of his love that wasn’t deserved and wasn’t earned. But God, in his undeserved love, had chosen Mary to complete his greatest act of love—which was to send a Savior. In the same, in doing this, God, in grace, highly favored David by keeping his promise to David that there would be someone that would reign on David’s throne forever because there was no one reigning on David’s throne. David’s throne had long sat empty by the time Jesus was born. Yet in grace, God kept this promise to David—that he would put a king on the throne that would rule forever and would rule everywhere. That kingdom is Jesus’ kingdom of grace that takes away our sins.

As we come together this morning, we see that not only are Mary and David highly favored by grace, but God makes this personal promise to you and I—that we are highly favored by God’s grace. Because his grace is not exclusive, it is not limited, it covers all and it covers all sin. So this morning we can rejoice that we are highly favored by grace.

Mary was chosen by grace. David was chosen by grace. David would have this descendent, the Son of Mary, that would be fathered by the Holy Spirit, that would reign on the kingdom forever. The Lord God would give him the throne of his father David and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever. His kingdom will never end. That’s a promise God had spoken a thousand years earlier. Why did God make and keep this promise to David? Was it because he was such a wonderful man and had done so many wonderful things? Was it because of his adultery with Bathsheba or his killing of Uriah or his pride in taking a census of the people? David is no different than you and I. He was full of sin just like you and I are. He had a sinful nature. God made this

promise to David out of his grace and his love and God kept it and favored Mary and favored David and favored us because of his grace and love. But the thing you have to remember is that it took over a thousand years for that promise to be kept. For a time it looked as though the promise wasn't being kept, because no one was on the throne.

We have to remember that because sometimes we seem to think that God doesn't act over thousands and thousands of years. We think the pin prick of our life on God's timeline of eternity is the only time that God has ever acted and ever works. So when God isn't doing things the way we think he should in our lives, we get upset. We get worried. As we learned in Bible study this morning, we test the Lord by saying, "Lord prove you love me. Don't let these things keep going the way they are." When things don't go the way that we want, our sinful nature starts grumbling and complaining, pouting and pointing fingers as though God views us individually as his "pet" and he should do everything exactly the way we think it should be done.

This is what makes grace so amazing. God knows just how rotten each one of us is in our thoughts at various times in our lives and yet he still acted and kept the promise to David and the promise that is made to us personally that Jesus would come and live perfectly—no pointing fingers, no pouting, no holding his breath until he got his way—but living perfectly under God's law and focused on his heavenly Father at all times, living perfectly because you and I can't and because you and I don't because you and I won't. Then he walked the walk that took him to the cross so that this kingdom promised to David would be established forever because through his perfect life and his death, he buys the world as blood-bought souls that are forgiven and loved by God that can never be challenged or doubted. And through the Spirit working through Word and Sacrament, he works in our hearts to extend that kingdom so that it will reign forever from sea to sea. As he tells us, "Yes, you are a filthy rotten sinner, but yes, I kept my promise and took away every last one of your sins."

The promise made to David was kept by God and God has made that personal to us, just like he did to Mary. Mary said, "*May it be to me as you have said.*" You and I say that in faith—not because we have made a decision to say it, but because God's Spirit works through Word and Sacrament to lead us to believe the incredible—a virgin gave birth to a son. That son was true God and true man—true man so that he could be under the law and keep the law perfectly in our place—true God so that his death on the cross would pay for every last one of our sins. He made that personal to us through our baptism. He continues to make it personal to us each and every time we come to the Lord's Supper and he says, "This is my body for you. This is my blood for you".

God makes personal promises to us—not because we have deserved it, not because we are his "pet" and have served him faithfully. He does it because he is the God of grace. And then because he is the God of grace, his Spirit moves you and me to serve him, focusing upon him and not all the peripherals, focusing upon him and his love and his forgiveness and the things that are certainties, that are unchanging and that are eternal. That is his grace in Christ Jesus that highly favored Mary, that highly favored David and that continues to highly favor us and those we share it with.