

Luke 1:26-38
Fourth Sunday in Advent
Our Savior Comes
“May Your Word to Me Be Fulfilled!”

Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church
Winchester, VA
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²⁶ In the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, ²⁷ to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. ²⁸ The angel went to her and said, “Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.”

²⁹ Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. ³⁰ But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. ³¹ You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. ³² 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, ³³ and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.”

³⁴ “How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?”

³⁵ The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come on 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. ³⁶ Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. ³⁷ For no word from God will ever fail.”

³⁸ “I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May your word to me be fulfilled.” Then the angel left her.

What kind of reactions do we have when we receive inconceivable, one hundred-percent unexpected news? Have you ever seen someone win the Publisher’s Clearing House millions? Most people start out confused and they might even look a little scared as they think to themselves, “What’s going on? What’s with all the balloons and the cameras?” Eventually as the reality that they’ve just won a million dollars sets in, things start to go in just about any direction. Some people cry, some people laugh, others may break out into hysterics and some of them might even faint. Others simply straighten up a bit and try to make themselves look more presentable.

A few minutes ago, we heard St. Luke’s account of a young woman named Mary who received some pretty unexpected news. As the angel Gabriel appears to her the first words he says are **Rejoice! You who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.** We’re told that Mary was troubled, I would imagine a little dazed and confused. Why is this happening? Who is this, an angel? What does he mean “highly favored?” She didn’t have to wonder long though because the angel spoke again: **Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You are going to conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. 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 Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.**

I’m going to have a son? The Son of the Most High? Reigning on David’s throne? Never-ending kingdoms? Maybe this further illumination from Gabriel didn’t help all that much to relieve the confusion Mary was experiencing. Of all the questions racing through her mind one comes out, **How will this be,”** Mary asked the angel, **“since I am a virgin?”**

“God will make it happen,” the answer came back. **The Holy Spirit will come on 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. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. For no word from God will ever fail.**

I am the Lord’s servant, Mary answers. **May your word to me be fulfilled.** It’s incredible news, but she takes it in stride. “Can I wrap my mind around everything this angel just said to me? No. But if this message is from God, then I accept it and I am ready to dutifully carry out my role.

It’s difficult to consider ourselves in Mary’s place. We haven’t had angels appear to us with messages from God, we haven’t been told that we are the ones God has chosen to bring His Savior into the world. Mary had an experience that is truly unique. We can hardly imagine exactly what was going through her mind. But I would imagine you have been in situations in your life where, like Mary, you did not fully understand what was going on. And maybe God has sent a message or two to you in His holy Word that were difficult for you to accept. Perhaps there are some promises that God has made which you have questioned at times. “How can that be possible?” How do we react when faced with the unexpected or the inconceivable? When times like those come along, how often is our answer, **Lord, I’m Your servant, may Your word to me be fulfilled?**

Whether your health is deteriorating or you’re sick or in pain and God comes to you in His Word and says, **I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand** (Isaiah 41:10), you wonder if His hands are busy with someone else. When sinful habits just won’t seem to die and feelings of shame and guilt and brokenness start crushing you, you hear, **Repent and be baptized...for the forgiveness of your sins** (Acts 2:38), but you wonder if that sacrament can really be so cleansing. When the car breaks down, or you lose your job, the person you love leaves you, or the bills just keep stacking up, and then God promises, **I am faithful; and I will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear** (1 Cor. 10:13), do you find it hard to believe that this is God being faithful when it seems so difficult to bear?

When we start to second guess God’s decisions or question His promises, we are giving up our trust in Him. It’s as though we’re saying, **May Your words to me be fulfilled** (if you can actually even do it.) Who are we to question the care of our Creator God? Who am I to question the saving grace of our Redeemer? Who are you to question the Sanctifying power of the Spirit of God? We are rebellious sinners, prone to mistrust and unfaithfulness.

Mary was too, she had her own moments of doubt and questioning, her own times even of mistrust in the Lord. But that didn’t stop God from sending His messenger Gabriel to her to let her know that she was highly favored in His eyes. It didn’t stop God from sending a Savior through the miraculous conception He worked in her own womb to bring her forgiveness from her sins.

And that same grace God poured out to Mary He wants to extend to you too. Thanks to that child Jesus whom Mary gave birth to, I am able today to say to you just as Gabriel did to Mary, **“Rejoice, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.”** Are you favored because you are more special than others? Are you favored because you are more righteous than most? Are you favored because you’re so incredibly humble? No. You are favored because the same gift that Mary received has now come to you as well. The Holy Spirit did the inconceivable and conceived God in the womb of a virgin human mother. Jesus became the impossible blend of 100% God and 100% man. He accomplished the incredible goal of living all His days without sin. He succeeded in making the fantastic sacrifice; God dying to make

payment for the sins of men and women. He fulfilled the impossible promise of rising from the grave to grant everlasting life. So His favor of forgiveness comes to you, for every day of doubt, every quiet time of questioning, and every moment of mistrust. You can trust in that forgiveness. You can believe it, because nothing is impossible with God.

Knowing all this, then, what other attitude could we have toward God than, **May Your Word to me be fulfilled?** With such impossible things already having been accomplished, how could God ever go wrong? With such amazing love having been showered upon us, there is no way he would do anything but what is best? So we go forth with confidence in everything—in every danger, in every trial, in every struggle that we face—because we live every day with the favor of the Most High.

When life kicks us in the shins or has us down on our knees we can hear from Scripture, **God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in His holiness** (Hebrews 12:10). And knowing the miracle conceived for us we say, **May Your Word to me be fulfilled.** When terrors threaten us on every side, fears of death or pain, angst or strife, we hear Jesus speak, **Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom** (Luke 12:32), and knowing what love was born for you and me in Bethlehem we say, **May Your Word to me be fulfilled.** When Satan tries to destroy us with his accusations and we start feeling the noose of guilt and despair growing tighter and tighter around our necks, we hear the voice of God's Son saying, **Take, eat, and drink. This is truly my body and blood given to release you from your sins,** and knowing that nothing is impossible with God we say, **May Your Word to me be fulfilled.**

How do we react when we hear the incredible news of God's Word? That's what makes Christmas so special. Today and tomorrow we have an opportunity to acknowledge yet again the amazing things that God Most High did for our salvation, proving that our trust in Him has not been misplaced. Seeing God sending His Son into this world to rescue us from our sins, allows us to then live every day with confidence and hope in all of God's promises and actions.

Lord, we are your servants. May Your Word to us be fulfilled.

Amen.