

The Festival of the Annunciation of our Lord
St. Luke 1:26-38
April 4th, 2018
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

You Will Bring Forth a Son

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

O Lord, send out Thy Light and Thy Truth, let them lead us. O Lord, open Thou my lips, that my mouth may show forth Thy praise. O Lord, graciously preserve me, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

“Merry Christmas!” is not something you would expect to hear this time of year. Especially considering that we just celebrated the Feast of our Lord’s Resurrection from the dead. But, we are nine months from Christmas. And with the announcement of the angel Gabriel of the baby + Jesus the Christmas cycle begins. However, the proclamation of “Merry Christmas” seems off, and we would wonder what kind of greeting that would be at this time of year. The same is true of the Blessed Virgin Mary when the angel Gabriel comes to her and proclaims that she is the highly favored one of the Lord and will give birth to a son, Who will be the Savior of all mankind. It is strange to her, because she is nobody. She is just a simple handmaiden—a servant girl. Babies who are born to be Saviors should be born to important people, not people like the Blessed Virgin Mary was. So, the greeting sounds off. It doesn’t make sense.

Even more so, she does not understand the mechanics of it. How can she give birth when she has never had sex with a man? It is impossible. However, the Blessed Virgin Mary still believes the message. She is not one to disclaim or forsake a direct word from the Lord. She believes it is going to happen to her, just as the angel said.

The Blessed Virgin Mary even confesses this in verse 38, “*Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word.*” With these words, the Virgin Mary becomes the very first Christian catechumen. She is the very first to learn something about our Lord + Jesus and believe it. And what does she learn? What does she believe and confess? That she will give birth to the Messiah—to Christ.

This is why the angel calls her, “*highly favored.*” Literally the word means, “freely gifted one.” That is what it means to be highly favored, it means that the Virgin Mary has received a free gift; the free gift of a baby boy; the free gift of the Messiah. What that means is that anyone who has the Messiah, the Christ—the Lord + Jesus—is a “highly favored, freely gifted” person. That means we are the “highly favored, freely gifted” ones. We are the ones who have been given the free gift of God’s grace in His Son + Jesus, the Christ.

All those who look to Christ in faith; who look for Christ to be born for us in nine short months, are highly favored of the Lord, that is, loved by Him. And, they are freely gifted with forgiveness of sins,

eternal life, and salvation on account of that faith produced through the work of the Holy Ghost. Now when we talk about free gifts in the Church we are talking about things that we do not deserve, but we get anyway. We do not deserve forgiveness. We do not deserve eternal life. We do not deserve salvation. There is nothing in us that is worthy enough for us to even present to God, and so that we might say “here take this in exchange for my salvation.” In other words, you have no hope in yourself.

According to the Law, and our works according to the Law, we are all equal. When it comes to works, we are no different than pagans and unbelievers, because they try to lead good moral lives just like anybody else. The conscience of an unbeliever works the same as a believer. Either it accuses them of wrongdoing, or it excuses them from wrongdoing. No human is different in that respect, their conscience is either going to tell them that something is wrong to do, or it is okay to do. The only difference that may exist between a believer and an unbeliever is that we fashion our morals after the Ten Commandments, whereas the unbeliever fashions his morals after whatever is popular in society at that particular time and place.

I hear it all the time about how some Christian, on account of the Old Adam dwelling in him, does something contrary to proper moral behavior, and then all of sudden, we hear from the world around us how Christians are not supposed to act that way. “We should know better.” “The person is going against Christian morality.” And then all the judging of that person starts. Yet, such amoral, and immoral behavior is all right whenever an unbeliever does it. I always find it ironic when unbelievers accuse Christians of acting contrary to themselves, when our society is doing it all the time. The hypocrisy is great with this society. Of course, there is nothing wrong with leading a moral life. In fact, perhaps we should lead, good, holy and honorable lives in this world and in this life, just so that society is not offended because of our sinful behavior. However, leading a moral, good life is not what brings us salvation.

We are not going to find our salvation in how good of a life we lead, because Christ will judge us according to our works. Now when the Lord + Jesus comes in power and great glory on the Last Day to judge the quick and the dead, do we really want to place what we do, and what we have not done in His lap? I do not think so! Because, God demands perfect obedience of the Law, and if you have failed in just one, small point, you have failed completely in keeping the whole Law. This is why we present in place of our works, our Lord + Jesus Christ’s perfect works on our behalf. He fulfilled the Law perfectly for us. And then, He went to the cross and the grave to buy us back from the power of death and the devil and give us eternal life with Him. In other words, all of the events which we just observed begin today with the announcement of the angel Gabriel.

The need for a Savior Whose works are sufficient to appease the wrath of God the Father brings us back to where we started. Back to the announcement of the angel Gabriel to the Blessed Virgin Mary. For, on account of what our Lord + Jesus Christ has done for us on the tree of the holy cross, we are the “highly favored, freely gifted ones.” We have been freely gifted with the works of Christ. What that means, is that when we stand before the judgment seat of Christ on the Last Day, we need fear nothing, because Christ has already fulfilled everything necessary for us. When Christ asks us for a list of what we have done, and not done, He is going to exchange our list of works with His list of works. So, because of Him, in the eyes of God the Father, we have fulfilled the Law of God perfectly, without blot or blemish. We are called perfect and holy in our Lord’s eyes through faith. And He will welcome us into Heaven, where we will join with all of the saints and angels and sing the eternal liturgy of the Lamb in His Kingdom, which has no end. There we will be with the whole multitude of Heaven, praising our Lord + Jesus, and singing, “*Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth, Heaven and Earth are full of Your glory.*” Even as we now do every Lord’s Day and whenever we celebrate the Divine Service.

All of this is because of the baby Boy promised to the Virgin Mary by the angel Gabriel. Just listen to what it says about this baby Boy, this + Jesus, “*He will be great, and will be called the Son of*

the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.” There will be no end to His kingdom—the kingdom that He won for us by His death on the cross; the kingdom that He purchased for us by His perfect fulfilling of the Law. But He could not die for us, and fulfill the Law for us, if He did not become a man like one us.

It may be nine months away, and “Merry Christmas” may be a strange greeting at this time of year, but this is the beginning of our waiting every year in eager expectation for the Son of God to come as a Baby in a manger. The Baby who now dwells in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary after the announcement of the Angel Gabriel. This Baby is the Holy One of God, Who is the Son of God. He is God made flesh. He is both true God and true Man for us.

What a great announcement by the angel Gabriel! You can see why the Virgin Mary is “*deeply confused, and dialogued within herself*” over this greeting—she was not worthy in and of herself for such grace. The words did not make sense at first. However, she is the “highly favored, freely gifted” one. She is the first Christian catechumen, who hears that the promised Messiah has come, and believes it. We too, having heard and believed, have been declared by God to be the “highly favored, freely gifted” ones through faith. So that we can join our confession to the Blessed Virgin Mary’s, “*Behold the servant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to Your word.*”

According to His word, we are declared free from sin, death and the devil. According to His word, we have forgiveness, life and salvation. According to His word, we have been Baptized, Absolved, and given to eat of His Body and Blood in bread and wine. And according to His word we have been given a Son, born of the Virgin Mary, Who suffered and died for our salvation. My dear friends, let us join our confession to the Blessed Virgin Mary’s confession and say to our Lord, “*let it be to me according to Your word.*” For, we are the “highly favored, freely gifted” ones of the Lord, Who prepares today to be born for us as one of us. In nine months it will be a very Merry Christmas. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory! I will extol Thee, O Lord, and I will praise Thy Name forever and ever. Amen.

The Votum:

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

Soli Deo gloria!