

The Festival of the Annunciation of our Lord (Transferred)
St. Luke 1:26-38
March 27th, 2019
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

You Have Found Favor with God

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.

It is now in the sixth month after the conception of St. John the Baptist. His father had been offering incense in the temple which was customary for the descendants of Aaron, as priests, to do. The Angel Gabriel had appeared to him at that time and proclaimed to him the good news that the desire of him and his wife to give birth to a child would be granted. But not only would they have a baby boy, but this baby boy would be the forerunner of the Christ, the Messiah, the One Who was to come into the world to redeem mankind from all their sins.

Six months later the Angel Gabriel returns to a young maid, a virgin, whose name was Mary. She was betrothed to Joseph. Both of them were of the house and lineage of King David. Mary is a handmaiden, and Joseph is a poor carpenter. We see from this just how far the line of King David has fallen. They were no longer a family of rulers and kings. They were a family of paupers and servants. This is a direct result of their disobedience and faithlessness to the Word of God. Instead of leading people into the way of truth through the Word of God, the descendants of King David, forsook the Lord and were exiled into Babylon. From this they never recovered.

And so, the Angel Gabriel finds Mary from the house and lineage of King David, who is betrothed to Joseph, sufficiently humbled by her circumstances. The house of King David, which once forsook the Lord and His Word, is now humbled to the point where they are devout and righteous in God's sight. They are faithful to the Word of God. The faithfulness of Mary is shown in that she accepts her unworthiness. The faithfulness of Joseph is shown in that he heeds the words of the Angel Gabriel in his dream and takes Mary to be his wife, so that her honor would be protected from those who might accuse her of fornication in her three months with her relative Elizabeth and Zacharias.

Her faithfulness and devotion to the Word of God is met by the Angel Gabriel with the words of good news, "*Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.*" Her faithfulness and devotion to the Word of God have merited her "*favor with God.*" Faith justifies. We are merited with favor on account of our faith. We are credited with righteousness on account of our faith. Since we believe the promises of the Lord God, and we believe the promise of salvation in Christ alone; that His perfect obedience to the Law and will of the Father, and His suffering and death in our place pays the price of our sins, we have favor, that is, grace, with God. Faith clings to the promises of Christ, and through it we have the Lord's grace and mercy.

And, as we hear quite often, faith is not some work inside of ourselves that we have to pull to the forefront through our own striving and working. It is given to us freely through the work of the Holy Ghost, for Christ's sake. Through the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments, the Holy Ghost creates and sustains faith in us. He directs our eyes to our salvation; He directs our hearts to the Christ, and to His work of redemption for us.

The Blessed Virgin Mary's faith also clings to the promise of a Savior. Before the Angel Gabriel comes to her, her faith was grounded in the promise given to her ancestor of old—King David—that the Messiah would be born and bring salvation and redemption to all, especially to them that believed on Him. But the Virgin Mary is given an even greater gift than she ever hoped or dreamed, for the Messiah was not only to be born in her time, but she was the one through whom the Messiah would be born. Therefore, the Angel Gabriel rightly begins his greeting with the words, "*Rejoice, highly favored one.*" Rejoice, be glad, be happy. Hear the good news. The promise is fulfilled. The Messiah is to be born. The Christ is to be born through you. The wait is over. Such good news!

The wait is over for us as well. This promise has been fulfilled for over two thousand years. We have redemption from our sins. We have favor with the Lord God, because the Virgin Mary gave birth to our Savior on Christmas Day.

Christmas Day is nine months away. We are in the middle of Lent. The season when we reflect upon the Ten Commandments and our constant breaking of the Law of God. The season when we reflect upon our unfaithfulness, our doubt, our sin, our rebellion against God's Word. It is a season to humble ourselves as remember our sinfulness, and soon begin to look the consequences of our sin, as we see our Lord + Jesus suffer our punishment on the tree of the holy cross. It is a season where we humble ourselves like the house and lineage of King David whose unfaithfulness to the Word of God led to them being exiled into Babylon, and from which they never recovered.

But there is also good news for us poor, miserable sinners, for just as the outward lowliness of the handmaiden Mary our Lord does not consider, He does not consider our sins, but our faith in Him, and He grants us grace and every blessing for His sake.

It seems odd to begin the Christmas cycle in the middle of Lent almost every year. But we who have beheld our Lord's Incarnation at Christmas, are now reminded what He was conceived and made flesh. Our Lord + Jesus Christ became man; He Who is God humbled Himself to be born of our flesh, for the purpose of redemption from sin, death and the power of the devil. So that, just as we beheld His Incarnation at Christmas, we will now behold His suffering and death for us on the tree of the holy cross. We will see His purpose fulfilled in the coming weeks. We will see the reason that He was born of the Virgin Mary. He was born to suffer and die for us.

This is why the Festival of the Annunciation falls many times during the Lenten season, so that we see this connection between Christmas and Good Friday; so that we see the connection between Christmas and Easter. He was born to suffer and die, and then rise again on the third day for our justification; so that our faith has something real and tangible upon which to rely. His resurrection proves that the Lord God heavenly Father accepted His sacrifice for us. We now can cling to the cross for our atonement has been finished. We are one with God.

And now we who are the spiritual heirs of King David's kingdom, on account of our kingly Brother, our Lord + Jesus Christ, can enjoy the gifts that He won for us on the cross. We have forgiveness of sins, eternal life and salvation. We have an eternal home in Heaven, free from sin, free from death, free from the devil and his demons. We are highly favored. For we have found favor with God, not because of anything we did, but because we have trusted in the works and merits of our Brother + Jesus Christ. Therefore, let us cling to Him in all times of doubt and despair, and when we are getting "too big for our

britches," let us humbly repent of our pride and come before the cross and remember the suffering that the Lord + Jesus did for us, so that we do not have to endure it.

You have found favor, that is, grace, with God. Rejoice, you highly favored ones, for the Lord is with you. 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!