

Midweek Advent Vespers #2
St. Luke 1:26-35
December 11th, 2024
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

The Most High Shall Overshadow Thee

In Nomine Iesu!

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

Sermon Text:

“And Mary said unto the angel, ‘How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?’ And the angel answered and said unto her, ‘The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee: wherefore also the holy thing which is begotten shall be called the Son of God.’”

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.

My dear friends, last Wednesday we heard about the disbelief of Zacharias when the angel Gabriel visited him while he was offering incense in the temple at the time of prayer. The angel Gabriel told him that he and his wife would be parents in their old age. They would be the parents of St. John the Baptist, the forerunner of the Christ. Zacharias did not believe the angel Gabriel and so he was struck dumb until the day when St. John the Baptist received his name John. The disbelief of Zacharias last week is contrasted with the faith of the Blessed Virgin Mary in today’s reading from the Evangelist St. Luke. For when one hears the good news of the birth of a Savior for mankind there can be only one of two reactions: either they believe it, or they do not. Zacharias, priest of the Lord God, did not believe the angel Gabriel. Today, a handmaiden, a virgin of low estate, hears the message of the angel Gabriel and believes the word that is spoken to her.

One may wonder why when both question the angel Gabriel about these events, Zacharias’ question is deemed a question of unbelief, and yet St. Mary’s question is not considered an unbelieving question. The angel Gabriel tells us, through St. Luke, that Zacharias’ question is an unbelieving question. This is why he is struck mute. His question shows his unbelief. The question of the Blessed Virgin, however, is a question of mechanics. It is not “this cannot be, because...” but it is a question of “what is the process of this happening?”

In short, the Blessed Virgin Mary understood the science of procreation. It takes both a man and a woman to make a baby. A man can wish as much as he wills to give birth to a baby, but he does not have the physical equipment to do so. A woman can wish as much as she wills to give birth to a baby without the seed of a man, but she too needs a man to impregnate her. St. Mary understood that this is how babies are made; that this is the way that babies have been made since the beginning of the creation of mankind. She knew that she had not known a man, and therefore, wondered how she was to become pregnant.

The angel Gabriel tells her that this Baby would be specially born. "The power of the Most High shall overshadow thee" the angel tells the Blessed Virgin. In the womb of the Virgin Mary the Holy Ghost would make the Lord + Jesus, the Second Person of the Trinity, Who is fully the Lord God, into a human Baby Boy. He would be both fully the Lord God and fully Man. He would be the Son of God, begotten before the foundation of the world, and the Son of Man, born of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The Child conceived in her womb would be both God and man. The Baby conceived by the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost in her womb would be the Lord God bearing the flesh of mankind. But because He had not been conceived of the union of one man and one woman, He would be without the inherited sin of Adam. He would be fully man but without our sin.

Therefore, this Child, this Son of God, who was the Father of Adam, and of all mankind, will be able on man's behalf to fulfill perfectly the Law of the Lord God, which we are unable to keep. Further, the Lord + Jesus, the Savior of mankind, would offer up His innocent life as a ransom for the sins of all mankind, so that all those who cling to Him in faith may have forgiveness from their sins.

This innocent sacrifice, this offering up His Body and His Blood on the tree of the holy cross would secure the Lord + Jesus victory over all of our enemies. All those evil powers and dominions that seek our eternal harm and destruction, our Lord would defeat once and for all upon the tree of the holy cross, so that they can harm us no more. His suffering and death, and His resurrection from the same, would secure for Him the throne of His father King David. The heavenly Father would give His Son + Jesus this throne. But this would not be an earthly throne, but an eternal heavenly throne. This eternal heavenly throne would rule an eternal Kingdom.

The Kingdom that our Lord + Jesus reigns over is the company of all the saints and faithful angels. All those who cling in faith to Him and His works and merits. We have been gifted this Kingdom through faith. And faith has been gifted to us through the means of grace. The gifts that our Lord + Jesus won on the tree of the holy cross are graciously given to us through the Blessed Word and Sacraments. Wherever the Word of God is preached in its truth and purity, and the Sacraments are rightly administered according to Christ's institution, there the Holy Ghost is overshadowing us with faith and life. Faith and life are created, and sustained and preserved, in us whenever we gather in this place to receive our Lord's gifts of Holy Baptism, Holy Absolution, the Holy Supper, and when we gladly and willingly come to hear His pure Word preached to from this pulpit.

For wherever two or three are gathered together in the Name of the Lord + Jesus, there He is in our midst. Here in this place, we can gather together and share our faith in the Lord + Jesus with one another thereby strengthening the faith which the Holy Ghost has created in us. We can therefore be like the Blessed Virgin Mary, who gladly and willingly received the greeting and message of the angel Gabriel.

She was called by the angel, "Thou that art highly favored." She is highly favored, because she is a maiden of faith in the Lord God. She is praised because of her belief. She was righteous and devout, clinging in faith to the Lord God even before the angel Gabriel appeared to her and gave her the good news that she would be the Mother of the Lord God. We too, are highly favored, because the Holy Ghost has been imparted to us through the means of grace, and we have not rejected the faith that He has created in us. We have heard the Word of God, and not rejected that message of salvation found alone in the works and merits of the Son of God.

Therefore, my dear friends, let us give thanks that the prophecy long foretold that a Messiah would be born in our flesh has been fulfilled in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary. And let us give thanks that in His grace and mercy, He has called us out of unbelief to cling to Him in faith, so that we may receive eternal life and salvation from Him. He has offered up His life as a ransom for ours. He has paid the penalty of our sins. Therefore, we can give Him thanks and praise that He has opened up

for us a place in His eternal Kingdom. We will join Him in that Kingdom someday. We will bow before His throne, the throne of His father David, and we will sing His praises forever and ever. May that great eternal Day come quickly. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus, the Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Almighty God, be pleased to accompany Thy Word with Thy Holy Spirit and grant that Thy Word would increase faith in us; bring into the Way of Truth all such as have erred; turn the hearts of the unrepentant; and for sake of Thy Name grant succor to all heavy hearts and those who are heavy-laden, that they may through the mercy of the Lord + Jesus Christ be relieved and preserved so that they succumb not to the temptation of despair but rather that they gain the victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil; through the same + Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with the Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

The Votum:

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

Soli Deo Gloria!