

The Annunciation of Christ – Vicar Anderson sermon
St. Luke 1:26-38 “God Announces His Promise for All.”
March 25/26, 2023 | Saude, Jerico, & Redeemer Lutheran Churches

In Nomine Iesu

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Heavenly Father, we thank and praise you who sent your only Son, the Word made flesh to dwell among us. Out of all people you chose a humble virgin to conceive the Christ child. We are not worthy of your presence. We do not deserve to have you take on our flesh because of the things that we have done. Yet in your mercy, you came down from Heaven for us, to live a life specifically to die for us. We pray that as this Lenten season ends, we ask that we are reminded and recognize all you have done for us. That the suffering and death we put you through happened for our salvation. We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. (Rom. 1:7, etc.)

The sermon text for today is taken from the 1st chapter of the Gospel according to St. Luke. We read selected verses in Jesus’ name:

And Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?” And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God...For nothing will be impossible with God.”

These are Your words, heavenly Father. Sanctify us by Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen. (Joh. 17:17)

In Christ Jesus, where at the end of the season of Lent we get this taste of Christmas, an announcement of why your Savior was born for you, dear fellow redeemed:

There are many ways in which you can find information. Many surf social media. Some watch the news on the TV. What I have learned living in New Hampton is: You must read the newspaper. If you want to be in the know, you just read it. How else will you know what is happening with the county? Now the newspaper can be used for many different announcements. It can be used to announce weddings, funerals, anniversaries, and the like. How about using an angel? Now that would be a statement! And what kind of announcement comes from an angel? Well, it must be something special. When God wants to announce something important, He sends His messengers. Today we celebrate a special announcement. The time has come! God announces His promise for all, the promise of a Savior—true God and true Man.

This special announcement of the Christ's coming is always celebrated on March 25th. There are a few reasons why that is. This is the day of Jesus’ conception in Mary's womb. He was conceived at God’s command. A great miracle. Then do some simple math and add nine months to the date. Nine months from now we are celebrating the birth of our Savior. The date of Christmas came later, though, and this is not why the early Christians settled on March 25th. They were looking at the incarnation for a different reason. In Jewish tradition, it was thought that the great prophets died on the same calendar day that they had been conceived. The early

Christian church identified the date of Jesus' death as March 25th. That is one of the first things they celebrated and held as important. We see that important connection too. The reason that Jesus is born is so that He can die.

That reason was even tied up in His name. Mary is told the name she is supposed to give her son. She is to give Him the name Jesus. Jesus means God saves. The prophet Isaiah also prophesied the importance of today. *"Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel"* (Isaiah 7:14.) Immanuel means God with us, and today we see it so clearly. The closest God can be with us is when He comes in the flesh. Gabriel announces God's plan, His promise to send His son down from heaven and it is happening. *"But she [Mary] was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be."*

Like Mary, we would be afraid to see the power of God. The Power of God means He sees and knows all our sins. The world depicts angels as gentle people or even tender babies. But Scripture describes them differently. When angels appear, people are often terrified. God is called the LORD of Armies. This angel is bringing a message directly from God. Would we want to hear that message? We would be troubled seeing their power as we are sinful creatures. They dwell in God's presence.

But Gabriel told Mary not to be afraid, because she had found favor with God. Found with favor, yet she was still troubled. That is what we want to have, favor with God. The question is how do we find it? Do we look at God's favor as something we earn, or something we are freely given? Our sinful nature likes to think that we can find favor with God by our efforts. Our pride works hard to earn His favor. Whether we are trying to move up the corporate ladder or be accepted by our friends, our ambitions might not be in the right place. As we look to serve ourselves, we forget that everything we do should be in service to God. We forget the very first commandment of what we are to do. We are to love God with all our heart, soul, and mind. Because we have failed to do this, there is no favor found here.

In our sins, it is impossible to find favor with God. We can't have favor with the world and favor with God at the same time. We like to be of the world. We want to find favor in the world. Doing so causes us to sin in ways for us to find that favor. The world wants us to be more accepting. It wants us to accept everyone's sins. When we give into that pressure, usually we do it because we might be engaged in those same sins. We might not realize it before it is too late. Do we give up our sins when they are brought out into the light? Do we double down to try and get our way? To find favor in the world, we find our own destruction.

When God sent Gabriel to Mary, He was announcing the keeping of His promise. This promise is THE promise made in the Garden of Eden. The promise was repeated to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The promise was prophesied about by the prophets. King David heard directly that, *"your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever"* (2 Samuel 7:16.) Years and years go by, building up to this important moment. It is time for God to keep His promise, which means the child that Mary had, that she conceived, His job was to grow up, suffer and die for you.

Jesus is the promised Savior. He is conceived at the speaking of God's Word, and then He is born. This miracle shows that all things are possible with God. We never have to doubt God. This singular date brings together both holidays that the Christian church loves. We have the joy of Christmas knowing that the somberness of Good Friday is around the corner. Jesus' birth is only one step of His humiliation. He must be born to die for you. His death on the cross cleanses you of your sins and with His rising from the grave, another miracle assures you that your sins are gone. Your favor is found in Christ death and resurrection.

Thankfully our favor with God is not up to us. There is only one person who can have perfect favor with God. That person not only is man, but He is also God. That is who Jesus is, true God and true man. He perfectly finds favor with His Heavenly Father. We hear the Father say how much favor Jesus has. He says, *"This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased"* (Matthew 3:17.) Jesus does His Father's will. He knew that this is why He was sent here. Only He can willingly obey the law in our place. Only He can willingly die in our place. Jesus' death and resurrection saves everyone because when God the Father looks at us, He sees the life that Christ lived.

We now have favor with God because Jesus lived the life that we couldn't. This announcement comes directly to you every day. As we fall flat on our faces and the world looks to convince us that we must find favor with it in order to live, this announcement comes to you with forgiveness because you hear the Son of God comes to save you.

God announces His promise for all to hear. First Mary hears it announced directly to her. That she was picked to be the bearer of the Christ child. You hold onto this announcement by faith in the Savior. Faith that is from the work of the Holy Spirit in you. This announcement comes to you through the hearing and reading of the Word. You hear the Words of God as He announces His coming Son to save all of mankind. He is born to die for the sins of the world. He is the Word made flesh. This is the joy that you have. God keeps his promises. He says nothing is impossible with Him. Since we were condemned because of our sins, God sent a Savior. Mary conceives Jesus by the Holy Spirit. Your Salvation came down from heaven.

The angel tells you what Jesus' job is here on earth. *"He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to 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."* He will reign forever, and you inherit His kingdom because of what He did for you. You couldn't earn God's favor but you have God's favor because Christ earned it for you. God announces His promise for you.

An announcement for the ages. It wasn't found online or in the newspaper. This announcement came from a special messenger directly from God. Mary heard the ultimate news. Her Savior was sent for her, and she would be the one to give birth to Him. We see abundantly clear that God keeps His promises. This was the ultimate promise. Eve was promised that her seed would crush Satan's head. Jesus is the promised seed. His mission was simple. He lived a perfect life to die. Today we celebrate Jesus' incarnation. In less than two weeks we remember His death. As one of our Christmas hymns says: *"Nails, spear shall pierce Him through, The cross be borne for me, for you; Hail, hail the Word made flesh, The Babe, the Son of Mary!"* (145:2 Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary). Amen.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, forevermore. Amen.

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