

“The Wonder of God’s Promise”

Text: Luke 1:26-38

Gabriel said to Mary: “For nothing is impossible with God.” Think about it! God formed the world we live in by His word. He parted the Red Sea and provided Manna for the Israelites as they wandered in the wilderness. During the time of Joshua, the walls of Jericho were brought down by a shout.

Jesus turned water into wine at the wedding of Cana. Jesus walked on the water to his disciples and healed the lame, the blind, and the sick. The Holy Spirit enabled timid disciples to speak the message of the Gospel. Nothing is impossible with God!

When we consider these things about our God, is it any wonder that He can do what Gabriel promised to the Virgin Mary? She asked, “How will this be since I am still a virgin?” Gabriel’s answer? “The Holy Spirit will come upon 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.”

God has intervened in our world. He has come to live among us in the person of His own Son Jesus Christ. We are overpowered and covered by His love for us in Jesus that we now are-

THE WONDER OF GOD’S PROMISE

- I. It is accomplished in His way**
- II. It serves His purposes for us**

I.

A.1. St. Luke tells us that Mary was greatly troubled by the appearance of the Angel Gabriel. What could that greeting mean? Gabriel told Mary two important things. The first was that she was highly favored by God. No doubt! Of all the women in history she was chosen as the mother of God's own son. Many Hebrew women thought they would be in this position through history.

Eve, for one, believed her firstborn son was the fulfillment of God's promise in Genesis 3:15. She said, "With the help of the LORD I have brought forth a man." (Genesis 4:1) That was not the case, for her firstborn son was Cain, the first murderer. Mary was not in trouble, but was one favored by God. The angel also told her, "The Lord is with you." She was in the presence of God and He would go with her on this important mission and the difficulties that lay ahead.

2. What would we do in the presence of God? A popular song of the last several years, "I Can Only Imagine" talks about being in the presence of Jesus. Moses, the man of God, "Hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God." (Exodus 3:6) The soldiers who came to arrest Mary's son Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane fell to the ground when they came face to face with Him. (John 18:6) When St. Peter realized who Jesus really was after the miraculous catch of fish he said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" (Luke 5:8)

While the presence of God is indeed awesome. There was no reason to fear for Mary. There is no reason for us to fear either. While we are sinners in the presence of a holy God. God has covered the gap with the life of His own dear Son our Savior Jesus Christ.

B.1. When the prophet Isaiah was confronted with the presence of God, he was very frightened. The angel

removed the guilt of his sin that he could go about his work, and he has done the same for us. He has done it by sending the one who is both God and man into the world as our Savior. Through Jesus' death and resurrection our sin is paid for and God's promise to send a Savior is complete. God would complete what he promised to David in our Old Testament lesson.

2. Gabriel said to Mary: "He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end." At the end of time, this kingdom will be handed over to God the Father, as St. Paul states in I Corinthians 15:24-28. That is not the end, for it is a kingdom that lasts forever. Because of God's gift of a Savior, Mary could be comforted. We can too as God's Son has come into our world.

II.

A.1. Martin Luther said, "These words do not apply to the Virgin only, but also to us. Wherefore, although this saintly Virgin is alone the mother of the child, we too belong under His rule and kingdom. Otherwise we should fear ill. All that is ours passes away and lasts a short while. For what are forty years, or fifty, or even a hundred? But with a man (woman) who belongs to an everlasting kingdom all is well, and it is fitting that he should dance through life for evermore."

The grace of God is the greatest of impossibilities for us to comprehend. How do you take in the grace of God? Our biggest problem is our sinful nature that believes we must do something to earn the favor of God. That cannot happen, it can only be given to us freely in Christ. That is the promise of verse 35. God had made this promise already in the Garden of Eden to Adam and Eve. How would that come about? Now, in our text we see it unfolding.

2. On one occasion the disciples asked Jesus a perplexing question (at least in their minds, and ours too).

A rich young man had asked what he needed to do to get eternal life. Jesus responded by telling him the commandments. The man claimed to have kept them all. Jesus told him to give away his riches and follow Him. This the man could not do. Jesus commented that it was hard for the wealthy to enter God's kingdom. The disciples asked, "Who can be saved?" Jesus answered, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." (Matthew 19:25)

B.1. It has stuck me that Mary and Joseph had great faith. This is a one-time occurrence in history. Yet, Mary in our text simply asks how this will come about. That is it. She follows the words of Gabriel and trusts them. The good news for you is that you can too. The greatest promise of God is to send a Savior into the world. It is something we all need. If God can keep this greatest promise, He can keep the other promises He has made as well. It does not depend on you, but on Him.

2. Mary knew that and followed, covered by the grace of God as we are too. She concludes, "I am the Lord's servant, may it be to me as you have said." In the coming months there would be much for Mary and Joseph to take in. When the shepherds appeared at the first Christmas, St. Luke says of her, "But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart." (Luke 2:19) As a believer, she knew the promises and now she was at the center of them as a key figure in God's plan of salvation as the mother of Jesus. Certainly she was humbled and ready to serve.

We can say the same. God has come to us in His son and called us as His own children. We wonder at how God will work in our lives and use us for His purposes. We know all we need do is to rejoice and believe His promises for we are "Living in the Shadow of God's Grace". Amen.