

Luke 1:26-38 – The Lord Favors You!

The giggling girls and boys of middle school whisper to one another “he likes you” or “she likes you.” “The boss likes you,” says the seasoned veteran to the new employee. See how many Facebook friends I have, we preen. “He loves you,” says the friend to the woman blushing with desire. “She wants you,” pushes the voice to his shy friend. We spend our lives in pursuit of love, of like, of the favor of others. We want to be known, to be respected, to be admired, but most of all loved. Now, the last Sunday in Advent, we hear words of God’s gracious favor but these are not like the love we tend to seek after.

The words, spoken through an angel, a messenger, whom the Lord sent, were the message to transform history. God’s messenger speaks to calm doubting and fearful hearts today – just as He spoke once to the Virgin long ago. This is the communication not of the affection of a moment but love that is eternal. It was first spoken to Mary by an angel entrusted with God’s Word but in Christ it is the Word for the world, for you and me.

The Blessed Virgin was not chosen because of her perfection or her holiness, but the Lord did have high regard for her faith. That is the same plane on which God meets us. It is faith that counts us righteous before the Lord according to Romans. Faith in God. Faith in God’s promise. Faith in God’s mercy. Faith in God’s purpose. Faith in God’s plan.

The curse of Eve whose desire brought the bitter taste of sin and death for all her descendants, now is undone by the Virgin Mary who trusts in the Word and plan of the Lord to save us. The old creation, once lost to sin and evil by the rebellious act of Adam and Eve in the Garden, is now undone by the consent of the Virgin to the saving will and purpose of God. And with this act of consent, a whole new creation is born that death can’t touch and sin cannot stain.

It was a Word spoken once to Blessed Mary, but it is also a word spoken to you and to me. We also have found favor in the sight of God – not because we are special or holy or righteous or good. We are none of these things. But we heard and saw God’s Word in His Son, we believe in the Savior whom God has sent, and we have confidence that the Word of the Lord will deliver to us what it says. We live in God’s favor by living out our baptismal faith as the children of God.

In our confession we admitted that we are the children of Eve, we have sinned in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and left undone. But we are the children of Mary as much as we are the children of Eve. We are the children of Mary who ponder, trust, and consent to the saving will of God just as Mary did in order that a whole world might be saved. She has taught us what faith is. It is not keen intellect. It is not pure virtue. It is not

deep understanding. It is not mighty initiative. It is trust. Childlike trust in the will of our Heavenly Father revealed through His one and only Son.

We are the humble who have been raised from our low estates, the hungry who have been fed, those who have seen the strength of His arm stretched out in suffering on the cross, who has remembered His mercy but forgiven and forgotten our sins, and who has declared us blessed as the verdict of pure grace.

Favor is not the verdict rendered upon the inspection of our hearts and lives found pure but the declaration of the God whose Word makes happen what it declares. You have found favor with God. In your guilt, God has made you clean. In your death, God has given you eternal life. In your good works, God has declared them holy. In your believing, God has judged you righteous.

Mary said, **“Let it be to me as God has said ...”** This is what we say today as we gather in the name of the Lord. This is what we struggle to believe amid the upsets, disappointments, and dead ends of this mortal life. This is what we cling to when our feelings dry up, our hearts bleed, and life seems too hard to go on. **“Let it be to me as God has said.”** We meet the Lord not on the ground of our goodness but on the ground of His promise.

It is enough. You do not have to understand God’s ways or agree with them. You do not have to act as if your life is perfect. You do not have to give up your tears of longing and loss. God is present and His favor rests upon us even when things go wrong. Just trust in Him, in His timing, and in His purpose. **“Let it be to me as God has said ...”**

This favor is not the stuff of adolescent fancy or adult lust but the love willing to suffer to save us, to exchange righteousness for sin, to die that we might live, and to live to bring us with Him eternally. This is the favor of God that we celebrate today.

The favor of the Lord rests upon you. Do not be afraid. Do not give up. Do not grow weary. God has done the impossible. He has come to us as our Savior. He has been born of the Virgin’s womb to suffer and die upon our cross. That is enough. It is enough to carry us through, to sustain us, to enable us to endure. And this we trust when nothing else is left. The favor of the Lord rests upon you. All that is left is to rejoice in faith's answer: **Let it be to me as God has said.** And it will be enough, for today, for tomorrow, and for eternal life.