

Our theme for today: Favor

In the Gospel of Luke, we hear a startling account of a young woman named Mary. She is a young marriageable girl so much like many other girls her age. Is she really different from anyone else? As you read her story, you'll soon discover her situation is unlike any other. She is met by the angel Gabriel – the angel sent by God. She is favored!

Scripture

'²⁶ In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." ²⁹ But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be.'

Luke 1:26-29

Thought provokers

- Who is Gabriel? He is an angel of God. He appeared in human form to Daniel (Daniel 8:16; 9:21, 22). He appeared to Zechariah (Luke 1:11-20). He appeared to Mary (Luke 1:26-33). He is an angel who comes from heaven to execute God's will on earth.
 - Note: there are two named angels in Scripture: Michael and Gabriel. Michael's specific mission is to suppress enemies of the true Church (hence the military theme associated with him), while Gabriel's is to announce mankind's salvation.
- Who is Mary? Mary was a young Jewish virgin, probably from the tribe of Levi (her relative Elizabeth was a Levite).
 - Mary would likely have known much about God. Given this, what thoughts do you have on this woman who encounters God's messenger?

Reflections

Mary is greeted in the following manner: *"Greetings, favored one. The Lord is with you."* These are words of honor and blessing; she is told she is favored; and, she is told that the Lord is with her. What is the favor that she will have? Why will God need to be with her? She, alone, is chosen in preference to all the women upon earth, to be the mother of the Messiah.

As in any great endeavor of the Lord's, and there are few greater than Mary raising the Savior, God Himself ensures His presence. The promise of Gabriel to Mary reminds us of God's words to Moses at the burning bush, *"I will be with you"* (Exodus 3:12)—and the angel who said to Gideon, *"Yahweh is with you"* (Judges 6:12)—and the Lord's assurance to Jeremiah, *"Don't be afraid because of them; for I am with you to deliver you"* (Jeremiah 1:8).

In the beginning of this devotion we asked: Is she really different from anyone else? We know that her situation is unlike any other. She is met by the angel Gabriel – the angel sent by God. She is favored! But is she different from us? Let's see...

The presence and favor of God do go hand-in-hand. A look at Eph. 1:6 helps us because here we find the same word for favor: "to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved." Eph. 1:6

So, can you see that grace has been bestowed? And upon whom has it been given? To us, too! And the grace we have received? We have been accepted! We may not carry God's only begotten Son, but He delights in giving us other endeavors. And, His grace has also been bestowed upon us to enter into His presence! We are all made for good works (Eph. 2:10) and God's intent is that we be with Him. Greetings favored ones, the Lord is with us!

Prayer and Song

Take time to pray and sing praises to Him. Here is another popular carol.

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

*O come, O come, Immanuel,
and ransom captive Israel
that mourns in lonely exile here
until the Son of God appear.*

Refrain:

*Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel
shall come to you, O Israel.*

*O come, O Wisdom from on high,
who ordered all things mightily;
to us the path of knowledge show
and teach us in its ways to go. Refrain*

*O come, O come, great Lord of might,
who to your tribes on Sinai's height
in ancient times did give the law
in cloud and majesty and awe. Refrain*

*O come, O Branch of Jesse's stem,
unto your own and rescue them!
From depths of hell your people save,
and give them victory o'er the grave. Refrain*

*O come, O Key of David, come
and open wide our heavenly home.
Make safe for us the heavenward road
and bar the way to death's abode. Refrain*

*O come, O Bright and Morning Star,
and bring us comfort from afar!
Dispel the shadows of the night
and turn our darkness into light. Refrain*

*O come, O King of nations, bind
in one the hearts of all mankind.
Bid all our sad divisions cease
and be yourself our King of Peace. Refrain*