**Advent 4B Luke 1:26-38 & 1:[46b]47-55**

**Sermon Video Link:** [**https://youtu.be/5t0l-bAgZtI**](https://youtu.be/5t0l-bAgZtI)

Greetings, you who are highly favoured! The Lord is with you. You have found favour with God.

Have you ever been the favourite? Maybe you were one of your parent’s favourites? Maybe a teacher or a coach saw something in you and he or she took a special interest in helping you to do well. Maybe you had a boss or some other person at work who decided to mentor you and help you in your career. Being singled out and supported in this way, and knowing someone has your back, can make a big difference in how your life turns out. Unfortunately, many people go through life without ever being the favourite.

Mary was chosen by God and God showered Mary with his grace and favour.

There is no suggestion that Mary had done anything to deserve God’s favour. When Mary visits her relative Elizabeth, she bursts out in response to what God has done and mentions her lowliness (Luke 1:48). She realises that she does not deserve God’s favour. She knows she is not in any way special. A person of no particular importance. A teenager in a society where relevance only comes with age. A girl in a society that values men. A poor powerless girl living in an insignificant village.

She does not deserve God’s favour, but God has a record of noticing the lowly, the humble and the poor. God had chosen her distant ancestor a lowly shepherd boy called David to be a king. When she was taught the psalms, she may have heard the psalms which reminded her that God looks upon the lowly. Like Psalm 113:5-7,

“Who is like the Lord our God,
    the One who sits enthroned on high,
6who stoops down to look
    on the heavens and the earth?

7He raises the poor from the dust
    and lifts the needy from the ash heap;” (NIV).

Or Psalm 138:6

“Though the Lord is exalted, he looks kindly on the lowly;
    though lofty, he sees them from afar” (NIV).

Even though God is sitting in heaven surrounded by cherubim, and seraphim, and other wonders, God is far more interested in human beings, especially the most lowly. God looks past the wonders around him and with kindness seeks out the lowly and those in need.

God does not merely look kindly on the people he showers with favour, God goes to them and stays with them. This was the other reassuring message for Mary.

“The Lord is with you!”

The Lord was with Mary. Not only while Gabriel visited her, but forever. The Lord was with Mary and in Mary as the Son of God was conceived in her womb. The Lord was with Mary as she contemplated what this would mean for her life. The Lord was with Mary as she wondered how people would react to a young unmarried pregnant woman and how her fiancé Joseph would react to finding out she was pregnant and knowing the child wasn’t his. The Lord was with her when she eventually had her child in a stable.

God was still with her when the shepherds visited her and when Simeon prophesied that a sword would pierce her soul. The Lord was with her as she was forced to flee to Egypt to protect her son. The Lord was with her as Jesus grew and the Lord was with her as she wept over Christ’s body at the foot of the cross.

Mary was showered with God’s favour, God was with Mary and God chose Mary to bear his Son. She realised that all generations would call her blessed. Mary had plenty to be joyful about, so much so that her spirit rejoiced in God, but she also realised that her life would not be easy. By serving God, Mary was choosing sides. She was choosing justice, mercy, and righteousness and this pitted her against all the powers and forces that are against God. The vocation God had chosen Mary for would also bring challenges, danger, suffering and grief.

Despite this Mary was prepared to accept her calling. Elizabeth who had been unable to conceive children had recently fallen pregnant after God had promised her husband Zechariah a child. This confirmed Mary’s belief that nothing is impossible for God and that God’s word never fails. Mary trusted God was with her, would never leave her and God’s word would be fulfilled. This faith in God filled her with the confidence to say, “I am the Lord’s servant, may your word to me be fulfilled” (vs 38).

God has not changed. God still looks down from heaven kindly looking for those in need. God still chooses people to shower with grace and favour. God still sends angels or messengers, to tell people they have been chosen. For you these angels may have been your parents, a Sunday school teacher, a pastor, a friend, or whomever God sent to tell you about the hope they have in Jesus Christ.

God still confirms you have been chosen. For most of you, he did so when you were Baptised and God adopted you as one of his dearly favoured and beloved children. God continues to remind you that you are highly favoured every time you read and hear the good news of Jesus Christ. You taste, smell, touch and see God’s favour and blessing every time you receive the gift of Christ’s body and blood.

As we prepare for Christmas and remember the favour God bestowed on Mary and what that meant for her life, let us also remember that God has bestowed favour on us. With this favour come blessings but also difficulties and challenges. With God’s favour comes the reassurance that God is always with us, God is always merciful, and God will always keep his promises to us.

**Amen**

**Pastor Rolf Lungwitz**