

“Highly Favored, the Lord is With You!”

2022 Christmas Eve Services

Luke 1:26-38

In the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, ²⁷ to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. ²⁸ The angel went to her and said, **“Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.”**

²⁹ Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. ³⁰ But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. ³¹ You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.”

³⁴ “How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?” ³⁵ The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born to you will be called the Son of God... “I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May your word to me be fulfilled.” Then the angel left her.

“Highly Favored, the Lord is With You”

- **Almost Divorced and Abandoned By the Man She Loved Most**

Matthew 1:18-19

Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet ^[e] did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

- **Highly Favored, But Not Spared Being a Juicy Story in Bethlehem’s Gossip Chain**
- **Highly Favored, But She Had to Give Birth to Her Child on a Cold, Filthy Livestock Floor**
- **Highly Favored, But Had to Flee to a Foreign Land in the Dead of Winter Because Murderer’s Were Sent Out to Kill Her Newborn Son**

Matthew 2:13-16

An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. “Get up,” he said, “take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.”...So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, ¹⁵ where he stayed until the death of Herod. When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi.

- **Highly Favored, But Suffered Deeply and Often Carrying the Pain of Her Son’s Rejection, Betrayal, and Watching Helplessly His Public Execution**

Luke 2:34-35

Simeon blessed them, and he said to Mary, the baby’s mother, “This child is destined to cause many in Israel to fall, and many others to rise. He has been sent as a sign from God, but many will oppose him. As a result, the deepest thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And **a sword will pierce your very soul.**”

“You Are Highly Favored...the Lord is With You”

- Sometimes It’s hard to feel highly favored...Sometimes if feels the Lord has forgotten me...Favor often doesn’t look like what we expect it to look like.

He came to experience Life the same way we do...

He gave up preferential treatment...

He chose not to walk the easy road.

John 16:33

“Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.”

Favor is not going to look like what you think...But I’ll be with you every step of the way...

For the Child of God, Struggle, loss, heartbreak...It’s part of the journey.

Because He knows it’s the only way to arrive at our final destination, whole, healed, and complete.

“I will never leave you...I will never forsake you...to the end of time!”