



Free Evangelical  
Lutheran Synod  
in South Africa

## Sermon for the Fourth Sunday of Advent (Proper B) 2017

*Let it be to me according to Your Word!*



St. John's Lutheran Parish  
Shelly Beach

### • **The Word of God for this Sermon is written in Lk 1, 26-38:**

- <sup>ESV</sup> **26** In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth,
- **27** to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary.
- **28** And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!"
- **29** But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be.
- **30** And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.
- **31** And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.
- **32** He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David,
- **33** and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."
- **34** And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"
- **35** And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy- the Son of God.
- **36** And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren.
- **37** For nothing will be impossible with God."
- **38** And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

• **Let us pray:** *Come Holy Spirit, open our ears, enlighten our minds and let Your kingdom come to us. Amen.*

### • **Dear Favoured of the LORD!**

• When King David *"lived in his house and the Lord had given him rest from all his surrounding enemies,"* he piously supposed that he would build a house for God (2 Sam. 7:1-2). He realised that God had always dwelt in the tent of the meeting. David thought, let me built a more appropriate temple for the Lord. But the Lord would turn it around: He would establish a house for David, and an everlasting throne. This He has done, not only for David, but also for all His people, in the Son of David, Jesus Christ, *"conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary"*

(Apostles' Creed). God is building His temple! He was shifting His place of presence from the temple of stones to the Body of Christ. The Lord would literally be with Mary, as the greeting said by the angel Gabriel.

• But, let us go back to the beginning to understand what is God's temple about.

• In the beginning Adam and Eve lived in God's temple. Its was called a garden God had provided for them. God dwelt amongst them. Adam and Eve trusted God fully and God trusted Adam and Eve fully. Adam and Eve were eating of all the fruit from all the trees, except from the tree of knowledge. They were eating from the tree of Life, but not from the forbidden tree of knowledge. Life was good. Relationships were sorted. They had no knowledge of evil!

• But, then satan came and deceived first Eve and then also Adam, to make a grab at the tree of knowledge. By doing that, they basically forfeited the access to the tree of Life. They had tasted knowledge of good and bad, but Life and Love were cut-off, because they hid themselves from God's presence and He decided to put them outside the garden, outside the temple, so that this rebellious creature would not live forever.

• But, God wanted to save this fallen, corrupted humankind from being separated from Him forever. Therefore, He started with Abram. He called Himself a nation amongst whom He would dwell under very special and specified circumstances, namely in the tent of the meeting, never without sacrifices. Later on God allowed king Solomon to build a proper building for meeting with His nation. But this was still only a fore-shadow. It was never going to be the final place, the replacement of paradise, the substitute for the garden of Eden. It was only a preliminary solution. King Solomon knew this.

• We also know that after King Solomon Israel split in Judah and Israel. God is Love, but His own nation split and at times fiercely battled against one another! After many ups and downs in the history of God's nation, there came a time when no prophet was heard any more. A time of silence for about 400 years. Some people

never gave up hope, because they knew, one day God's prophecies will come true, as they always had come true in the past.

• Then, first came the announcement of the birth of John, the forerunner of Christ! And then six months into the pregnancy of John, the angel Gabriel came to Mary to announce to her that she had found favour with God, and she will conceive in her womb, and bear a son and she shall call His name JESUS. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High! He will receive the throne of David. He will reign over the house of Jacob, that is, God's Israel, forever.

• All of this was only possible, because the Holy Spirit would come upon her! She was a virgin and yet she would fall pregnant! John the Baptist's birth was a miracle of God. This birth of Jesus was a miraculous birth too! These two births followed a number of miraculous births in the line of Israel. Isaac was born when his mother Sarah was ninety-nine years old. Esau and Jacob were born after Isaac prayed for Rebecca, who was barren. Now Rachel, the one wife of Jacob, who should carry forward the line of the promise, she also was barren and only through God's Grace did she bear Joseph.

• Now the mother of John the Baptiser fits better into this pattern, because she also was barren, and like Sarah, she too, only in her old age did she conceive John the forerunner of Christ. Although all these children were born by the explicit intervention of God's Grace, they were born by the seed of man.

• With Mary things were very different! She was not barren. She was a young healthy woman, but she was still a virgin! She would give birth, a miraculous birth, namely *without* the seed of Jacob. And yet, she would fall pregnant and give birth to a real baby boy after carrying Him in her womb for nine months. In other words, a normal pregnancy! Take note: This was not mythology! This is the opposite of myth! The Son of the Most High was going to be born into history by a real birth, through a real pregnancy, because with God all things are possible.

• Note, *where* God uses His power to make possible the impossible, namely to save

us. He did not use His power to make things easier for little baby Jesus. He had to go through a normal birth. He stayed in Mary's womb for nine months. God makes use of His special powers, when it benefits us! He never misused His power to make things more convenient for Himself, whilst saving us.

• And so, after all those many years, God's tent of the meeting was now growing in the womb of Mary, for nine months. God's place of meeting with His people would henceforth be a person, not a specific stone building or special zoned of place on earth.

• Its a reversal of the Fall. Mary listened to the angel of the Lord, not to the angel of death. God was present with her, in reality, spiritually and physically! Jesus' presence is God's presence of Grace.

• The door to paradise would open in the person Christ, and would stay open with His death. Access to the tree of Life, in the middle of God's Garden, would become available, to the poor in the Spirit.

• And we know, that this has happened. We have access to eternal Life by coming into the gathering of the Body of Christ, where we receive the forgiveness of the Fall, where confession of sin is turned into the gift of paradise! The Holy Spirit opens our hearts and minds to hear what He says and to believe the Word of Christ. Here we find favour with the Lord, where His messenger speaks to us His Word of truth, so that we can say together with Mary today:

• *"Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to Your Word". Amen.*

***The Lord Jesus Christ says: "Surely I am coming soon.'Amen. Come. Lord Jesus! The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all of you." Amen.***