

13TH DECEMBER 2020

FERINTOSH PARISH CHURCH

WORSHIP AT HOME



www.ferintoshparishchurch.org.uk

Though creation may be a majestic organ of praise, it cannot reach the compass of the golden canticle—Incarnation! There is more in that than in creation, more melody in Jesus in the manger, than there is in worlds on worlds rolling their grandeur round the throne of the Most High. (C. H. Spurgeon)

HYMN

O come, O come, Emmanuel
And ransom captive Israel
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel

O come, Thou Day-Spring, come and cheer
Our spirits by Thine advent here
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night
And death's dark shadows put to flight

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel

PRAYER

O Lord our God, we pray that you would open our eyes and ears to see and understand your truth. Give us your Holy Spirit and anoint us with the Holy One that we may understand all things. Father, we pray that by Your grace that You would enable us not to become weary in well doing, but rather that our eyes might be upon Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. To His praise and glory we pray. Amen.

SCRIPTURE READING LUKE 1: 26 - 38 (NKJV)

26 Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by 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. The virgin's name was Mary.

28 And having come in, the angel said to her, "Rejoice, highly favoured one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!"

29 But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was.

30 Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God.

31 And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus.

32 He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give 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 Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?"

35 And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.

36 Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren.

37 For with God nothing will be impossible."

38 Then Mary said, "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

LORD'S PRAYER

*Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
as we forgive our debtors
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.*

SERMON

We notice in v26 Mary's low condition. If God was looking for a woman of earthly prestige, power and prominence, then Nazareth would be the last place to find her! We remember that John 1:46 even mentions this fact that nothing good comes out of Nazareth. And yet it is in lowly Nazareth that the Lord chooses lowly Mary to be the mother-to-bear His eternal Son, our Saviour. The mother-to-be, to whom the promise of the incarnation of the world's Saviour has come, is living where? In Rome? No! Well, surely, she must be living in Jerusalem, but No! She lives in little Nazareth, the little Galilean town, so insignificant that it doesn't even appear once in the lists of towns, villages, and cities, that are given in the Old Testament.

Here she is then, a nobody, living in a nothing town, in the middle of nowhere; and yet Mary was given the greatest honour that any woman has ever been given, she was chosen to be the mother of Jesus and her lowly estate was all part of God's plan. When God sent the archangel Gabriel to Nazareth and to Mary it was for this astounding reason, that God's plan of salvation is for the lowly and the unworthy. And it was by this grace that Mary was chosen where the angel Gabriel announces v28 'Rejoice highly favoured one, for the Lord is with you.' Mary was unworthy and she was lowly. It's worth highlighting again that Mary is not the source of grace and she was certainly not full of grace, but she was a recipient of grace. Mary was not full of grace, she was in need of grace! That's exactly what Favoured one means; it means one in whom grace is bestowed.

Martin Luther said, "God has surely promised His grace to the humbled: that is, to those who mourn over and despair of themselves. But a man cannot be thoroughly humbled till he realises that his salvation is utterly beyond his own powers, counsels, efforts, will and works, and depends absolutely on the will, counsel, pleasure and work of Another — God alone"

The bible makes the particular point that God gives grace to the unworthy; any religion that teaches that Mary had to deserve her grace will inevitably teach that we must do the same. That would present a massive problem, because none of us are worthy of the grace of God, none of us deserve this unmerited favour! The biblical message brought by Gabriel to Mary was that she was chosen by grace, a grace she did not deserve, a grace given freely from the love of God! And it is also true for those whom God's Son came to save; they too are chosen by grace alone as those themselves lowly and unworthy and in need of this unmerited favour.

Now this message is repeated throughout the New Testament, Paul says in Romans 9:16, for this reason salvation depends, not on human will or exertion, not on our achievements but on God who has mercy. And again, in Romans 4:5 Paul emphasised that when a sinner believes in Jesus, God justifies the ungodly.

In other words, we are clearly told that it is grace to those who do not deserve it; Mary was chosen by grace to receive God's grace because God's Son to be born through her brought grace to His people who are the lowly and unworthy one's. What blessing there is in the greeting to Mary 'O favoured one, you on whom grace has come.'

As we move on in the text, we see that Mary from Nazareth in her lowliness was the ideal choice for God's purposes simply because of her condition to receive God's grace. But we also notice that she was also well positioned by God's providence for the work that He gave her to do. Luke 1:27 highlights two features that positioned her to give birth to the Saviour. The first was that she was a virgin, the second was that the man she was betrothed to belonged to the house of David. We also see how Luke describes Mary's reaction to the appearance and proclamation of the Archangel Gabriel when he wrote that 'Mary was greatly troubled'. If you like she was surprised by grace as the angel said to her that she was to be comforted by this grace from God. Again, Mary is pictured here in the Gospel of Luke as receiving grace or receiving this unmerited favour!

In v30, we read how this grace calls her to be the one through whom God's saving grace will become incarnate in Jesus Christ. This announcement in these verses foretell the greatest event in human history; the coming of God's own Son into the world through the lowly grace-receiving, Mary. Gabriel's announcement to Mary meant that though a virgin, Mary would conceive and bear a son and she would call his name Jesus. In Hebrew, Jesus name is Yeshua and the meaning of Yeshua is 'The Lord is Salvation.' In other words, God was coming to be the Saviour of His people. But then we also learn in v32, that this child to be born to Mary will be great. We might think that this wasn't really necessary for Gabriel to say, 'that Jesus will be great'? But it was absolutely necessary for Gabriel to make this significant point. Remember how Gabriel just six months earlier said to Elizabeth that John the Baptist would be 'great before the Lord'. But this child born to Mary is the Lord and His greatness is without qualification.

In the Old Testament, great is an attribute of God, His works are great, His wisdom is great, His power is great, His mercy is great.

And as Psalm 74 says, 'may those who love your salvation say forevermore, God is great'. The bible tells us that it was by Jesus that all things were made (John 1:3) and then in (Hebrews 1:3) we read that He upholds all things by the word of His power. This child shall be great! In fact, when we consider the lowliness into which Jesus was born and the greatness for which He was destined, we can say that here, meekness and majesty met wonderfully in a way that characterised our Saviour!

We see something else that is really important in these verses. This child born to Mary will be called the Son of the most High. In this day and age, this truth about Christ must be proclaimed; it must be said that this child was and is the Son of God. With reference to the deity of God - Jesus is called 'the Son'. This is the central message of Christmas which we declare; that Jesus Christ is the very Son of the most High God. Our best carols highlight this Good News, remember the words from Hark the herald angels sing, 'veiled in flesh the Godhead see, hail the incarnate deity...' The deity of Christ is the emphasise of the bible's account, John 1:14 says that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us and we have seen His glory (that's with reference to the deity of this child born). Then Peter confessed the faith (Matt 16:16) saying, 'you are the Christ the Son of the living God.'

Well, because of what this means for our salvation, because of the glory of Christ's deity, we proclaim His kingship in our worship at Christmas. In fact, we sing the hymn every Christmas; joy to the world the Lord has come, let earth receive her king. What a glorious message Gabriel brought to Mary, starting with the word 'Rejoice or Greetings', favoured one. This child to be born would not belong to Mary alone, He belongs to everyone who receives Him in faith. But this is not only true about the child but it's also true of the very words spoken to Mary that day. Just as Mary was chosen by grace to bear God's Son, so all who believe in Jesus are chosen by grace to be saved through Him. In fact 1 Peter 1:12 tells us that the angels marvel at the redemption of sinners. It means that one day when Christians meet with the angels in glory that we may expect to hear these very same words, 'Rejoice, highly favoured one.'

This is what it means to be a Christian, that we have received God's grace for the lowly and unworthy through the great Saviour who is God's Son and our forever King.

So, what do you give to the God who possesses all grace? Well, the simple answer is that we give Him all that we are, and all that we have. That's what Mary shows us in v38, behold I am the servant of the Lord, let it be to me according to your word. May that be our offering to the God of amazing Grace this Christmas. First of all, that we would believe in the promised Saviour in the word of God that is given; and that we would offer our service to the reign of grace that has come through this Royal Son that came to save the lowly, the unworthy, the sinners in need of this grace which is God's unmerited favour.

HYMN

Come, thou long expected Jesus
Born to set thy people free
From our fears and sins release us
Let us find our rest in thee

Israel's strength and consolation
Hope of all the earth thou art
Dear desire of every nation
Joy of every longing heart

Born thy people to deliver
Born a child and yet a king
Born to reign in us forever
Now thy gracious kingdom bring

By thine own eternal spirit
Rule in all our hearts alone
By thine own sufficient merit
Raise us to thy glorious throne

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, how marvellous our Lord Jesus Christ appears in our eyes as you point us to His grace in His own word in the Scriptures. We pray that as we worship that something of the sheer grandeur and completeness of our Saviour will deeply minister to us. Hear us, bless us, we pray, in Jesus our Saviour's name. Amen.

BENEDICTION

And now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all this day and forevermore, Amen.



WORSHIP UPDATE

Depending on demand there will be two Sunday services, at 11am and 12.15pm. The services will run initially on a trial basis, and seating is limited to comply with guidelines. To attend you must contact the Session Clerk, Martin McLauchlan, by Friday at 5pm prior to the service to book a place.

To book, either visit the church website, and complete and submit the online booking form at: ferintoshparishchurch.org.uk/booking or email the Session Clerk at

SessionClerk@ferintoshparishchurch.org.uk

and he will send you a link to the Booking Form for you to complete and submit. If you do not have access to the Internet, phone him on 01349 830303 and leave your name and phone number and he will get back to you as soon as he can to take your details.

Martin McLauchlan, Session Clerk

LADIES BIBLE STUDY

We are holding weekly meetings until 16th December at 9.45am each Wednesday. If anyone wants to join in the Zoom meetings please email: jintys@btinternet.com so that an invitation to join will be sent.