

Luke 1:26-38

26 In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, 27 to 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. 30 The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31 And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him 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 ancestor David. 33 He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." 34 Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" 35 The angel said to 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 holy; he will be called Son of God. 36 And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. 37 For nothing will be impossible with God." 38 Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

This is the 2nd Sunday of Advent and as we prepare for the birth of Christ it is important for us to understand just how significant this special child is. This is a beautiful part of the Christmas story and our minds can't help but marvel at the imagery of the angel, the status of the virgin, and her humility. We are in awe at the magnificence of the story. In today's Scripture the significance of the identity of the child is an important detail that often does not get the attention that it deserves. Luke tells us who this child actually is. This past year we have looked into the identity of Jesus. We have seen him through the eyes of the people that were eye witnesses to the events. Jesus was known as a great teacher, miracle worker, the Messiah, and the Son of God. Here in the beginning of Luke the significant details of his identity are emphasized. In the beginning of the Gospel of Luke, Jesus is identified as the Messiah - God will give him the throne of David, he will reign over the house of Jacob forever. This is Old Testament prophecy of the Messiah. But there is something much more significant. From the beginning of the Gospel of Luke, Jesus is also identified as the Son of God - he will be called the Son of the Most High, the Son of God. Luke provides emphatic details to verify this by stating that Mary is a virgin that is conceived by the Holy Spirit.

The angel Gabriel tells Mary "the Lord is with you" because she has found favor with God. *The Lord is with you* is a really good thing. If you can think of all the good things that are possible *the Lord is with you* is by far the best case scenario. I want you to take the time to think about this concept and process it. The Lord is with you because you have found favor with God. I will repeat that for emphasis. The Lord is with you because you have found favor with God. Now as you journey through life and walk down the streets you see all kinds of people around you. Some are proud, some are angry, some are stressed out. For all of them life is a matter of competition and struggle. But as you journey through life, as you walk down the street, as you encounter their frustration and anxiety, things are different for you because you have a totally different perspective. You

have peace and happiness. You do not need the competition and struggle because you go through life knowing *the Lord is with you*. While others are stuck in the rat race and see the world through the eyes of competition, you have the kind of joy and satisfaction that they would love to be able to buy. Your life is full of happiness, peace, satisfaction, and a whole lot less anxiety.

I ask you to take the time to imagine the most peaceful and serene thought that you can think of. Now imagine living your whole life like this - stress free, worry free, anxieties and frustration are minimal, and you are never in a hurry. When you actually realize who you are in your relationship with God it is a life changing experience. It is a matter of your identity as a child of God and your favored status. Most of the other people around you struggle to find what you have and they waste a lot of effort, time, and money in a futile attempt to find it in the rat race. Meanwhile, you get to go walking down the street the happiest and most satisfied of all knowing that the Lord is with you.

The Lord is with you right here and right now and in your darkest of dark days. Holidays are depressing for some of us and for really good reasons. People are fighting addiction, live alone, lost loved ones, have health problems, and financial difficulties. Human emotions go in their own particular direction but you can focus on your difficulties or you can focus on the blessing. The Lord is with you in illness, grief, anxiety, and broken relationships. The Lord is with you in the storms of life and offers to you calmness and guidance. You can go through life focused on bad stuff or you can look at the good and realize that no matter where you are, or what is going on in your life, the Lord is with you.