

Wednesday of Gaudete, A ✕ D 2008

Luke 1:26-56 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. ³⁹ In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, ⁴⁰ and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹ And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, ⁴² and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! ⁴³ And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴ For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵ And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord." ⁴⁶ And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, ⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, ⁴⁸ for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; ⁴⁹ for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. ⁵⁰ And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. ⁵¹ He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; ⁵² he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; ⁵³ he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent empty away. ⁵⁴ He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, ⁵⁵ as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever." ⁵⁶ And Mary remained with her about three months and returned to her home.

In the name of the Father and of the ✕ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

1 Remember, repent, rejoice. The cadence of Advent continues. In the face of your tendency to forget what the Lord has done for you and continues to do for you, He causes you to remember His gracious activity toward you. In light of your failure to grieve over your sinfulness, God gives you his generous gift of repentance and godly sorrow over sins. And given your persistent inability to rejoice except in yourself, God delivers to you the holy joy of sins forgiven. Remember, repent, rejoice. It's the cadence of Advent, but it's also the cadence of your whole life: remember, repent, rejoice.

2 What will bring you Christmas joy this season? The perfect gift under the tree? Gathering around the table with all your family? Seeing the smiles on your kids faces

when they open all the gifts you bought? What's the critical component that, if absent, would make you downright depressed for the duration of the season? What tradition is guaranteed to bring you joy year after year? And how long does the joy last? Until next Christmas? Definitely not. Even 'til the twelfth day of Christmas? Doubtful. Even until the end of December 25th? All earthly joy is fleeting. Why try so hard to obtain it? Repent. All your striving is for nothing, for false joy.

3 Learn what true joy is from the one, according to the hymn, higher than the cherubim, more glorious than the seraphim, who leads their praises, the bearer of the Eternal Word. She'll tell you what true joy is: "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent empty away. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever."

4 So, as the bearer of the Eternal Word, the Divine Word of God in her womb, Mary tells you your source of true rejoicing: the mercy of the Lord, constant through every generation, that He would bring down the mighty and exalt the lowly. That God would reverse all of what seems normal, that He would humble Himself so that those made low by their sinfulness might be exalted in His place, gives true joy. That God did not damn you for your lack of righteous works but satisfies your hunger and thirst for righteousness by filling you with His mercy, gives true joy. True joy flows directly from godly grief over your sins. In fact, the joy of sins forgiven is the only true source of joy.

6 So Mary confesses that her joy is in God her Savior, who has brought down the Almighty from His throne, in order to exalt the lowly, those otherwise condemned by their sinfulness. Her Son is the Savior crucified for you. Rejoice, calls the Virgin. The Child I bore is the Savior of sinners. His name means exactly that. Rejoice, calls the Church. The Child born of the Virgin is the Groom who gave His life for His Bride the Church. Rejoice, calls Advent. The Lord who gave His life for His Church is coming again. He will gather to Himself all those who belong to Him. Rejoice. Remember, repent, rejoice.

In the name of the Father and of the ☩ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria
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