

# Mary, The Favored One!

There is a story told about a little boy who was looking for appreciation. He approached his father with a request, “Dad, let’s play darts. I’ll throw them, and you say ‘Wonderful! Wonderful!’” I could not help but think that the little boy really was looking for appreciation. At the Christmas season, we often look for appreciation. Christmas is a warm time for many people, if not everybody. At Christmas time we look for approval. We look for love. We look to be included. We

measure how people feel about us based on the gifts we receive, based upon the friends who invite us over for a meal, invitations we have, and cards we receive. We are looking for the evidence that we are important to someone or to many people. What is our value, what is our worth?

**MARY, THE FAVORED ONE.** In thinking about that, I could not help but think of Mary.

Luke 1:26 says,

Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin’s name was Mary. And coming in, he said to her, “Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.” Luke 1:26-28 (NASB)

ings.” But that is the way it is translated, and I think the Holman Christian Standard Bible, one of the better versions on the market, translates it correctly. It actually says, “Rejoice, favored one.” What it communicates by the word “Rejoice!” is that Mary has a reason to be happy. The reason for her to rejoice is because she is favored. If you look at the Greek tense of the word, “favored,” it is a perfect participle. That means something happened in the past—she has been

favored from the past. That is important to think about. She was not favored just because the angel was showing up. God was not trying to manipulate her. She simply had been favored, and the participle implies that the favor was ongoing. She had been favored in the past and she still is being



favored, so the angel says, “Rejoice! You have a reason to rejoice because you are favored.” I could not help but think that is what happens at Christmas time. We are looking for someone to favor us, someone to say we are good, we are okay. I love you. I care about you. You are important to me! In effect God told Mary, “You are important to me. I love you. There is something special about you.”

Rejoice, favored one, the Lord is with you.

If you look at the Greek text, it actually does not say “greet- I looked up the phrase “The Lord is with you.” It is not

said of everyone in scripture. It is said of only five other people. Mary is in a very special class. It is said of Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Jeremiah, Paul ... and Mary. Maybe it was said to other people, but it is not recorded in scripture. Mary is in a very special class. Have you ever wanted to be favored in your life? Do you want the appreciation and approval of others? Mary had that approval.

**MARY'S SURPRISING RESPONSE.** Verse 29 says,

*But she was very perplexed at this statement, and kept pondering what kind of salutation this was. Luke 1:29 (NASB)*

There are many ways she could have reacted. Had Mary been a very proud person, looking to be affirmed, then when she heard the phrase "favored one," she might have thought, "You sure do have that right!" But scripture says she was perplexed. She was trying to understand why is this being said. It says something about her character. Mary was special. This woman was not just another proud woman. Scripture does not say it, but she may have wondered, "Why is he calling me favored? What is this all about?" The angel then said to her,

*Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. Luke 1:30 (NASB)*

Once again the angel said it. I think the angel was trying to respond to her perplexity. He wanted to affirm her, to let her know that she is favored. Some of us tend to tell people how great they are, how wonderful they are, and how much we approve of them. At times we are guilty of flattery. We can be guilty of manipulation. God does not manipulate. God is not in the business of flattering people just to get them to do what He wants them to do. We are told in scripture that God tells the truth. He does not lie. The Bible says He is not a man that He should lie. God's message to Mary was real.

**MARY THINKS THERE IS A PROBLEM.** Verses 31-33 add,

*And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. He will be great and will be called*

*the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end. Luke 1:31-33 (NASB)*

What a great statement! If I had been Mary, I would have been thrilled just to think about the fact that the Savior is coming. But there was a problem with this plan from Mary's perspective. This is obvious from verse 34 because she said,

*"How can this be, since I am a virgin?" Luke 1:34 (NASB)*

This tells us something else about Mary. She was a virgin and was waiting for marriage to engage in sexual activity. In our culture we would say she was a moral woman. What God said in scripture was that she was a godly woman. That is a different statement because the term moral does not equate with the biblical meaning of godliness. In our culture, we speak of being moral as doing the right thing. God just simply calls it godliness. This woman was a godly woman. When I thought about that, I wondered what else we could learn about this lady.

For example, verse 35 reads,

*The angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God. Luke 1:35 (NASB)*

Wow, this is an awesome statement! This is difficult to comprehend! She is going to receive a gift, and it is not just for her. This is a gift for everyone. It is a gift for you and me. This baby will grow to be the one who will die on a cross for us and be resurrected. At some point in our lives, we will all die - unless the rapture comes first. But Jesus died and rose again. That is the gift we will receive! First a miraculous birth gave Him a sinless life. Then He was willing to give up that sinless life by dying on the cross so that you and I could have our sins forgiven.

That is ultimately what Christmas is all about — Jesus was born and the purpose of His birth was to eventually die

on a cross so that you and I could have our sins forgiven and be in right relationship with God.

**MARY GIVES HERSELF TO GOD.** Verses 36-38 are very interesting.

*And behold, even your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age; and she who was called barren is now in her sixth month. For nothing will be impossible with God.” And Mary said, “Behold, the bondservant of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her. Luke 1:36-38 (NASB)*

In verse 38 we are told Mary said, “Here I am, do with me as you want.” I am impressed every time I read that she was willing to just give herself. This is a stellar example of self-sacrifice. Most of us do not really aspire to live a life of self sacrifice. When most of us experience conflicts with people, we look out for ourselves. Such behavior reminds me of the little boy who said, “Hey, Dad, I’ll throw the darts and you tell me ‘Wonderful!’” We are always looking for something for ourselves. In contrast Mary said, like the godly woman she was, “Here I am. Do with me as you want.” When was the last time you told the Lord Jesus, “Do with me as you want”? When is the last time that God told you to do something and your response was, “No, I won’t.”

In the years ahead, Mary was going to face ridicule and ultimately she would see the One to whom she would give birth, die on a cross.

What God did with Mary tells us something about our God. The fact that He would even take the time to tell Mary that He favored her, that she was favored among women, tells us that God cared about Mary. Do you realize that just as God loved Mary, He loves you also? Have you realized that Christmas is about God’s love for you, and not just about Mary?

**INSIGHTS INTO OUR GOD.** We know what happened about nine months later. Jesus, that little baby who was born from her womb, entered this life. He lived a human life as you and I live our lives. But He died on a cross. He suffered greatly on our behalf. While on earth, He taught us about God the Father and helped us to gain insights and truth

about ourselves.

He told us in John 3:16 that,

*For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish . . . John 3:16 (NASB)*

Is that the end of Jesus’ statement? Is that the sum total of what He said? No!! The verse continues and says we can have everlasting life. Jesus taught that He came to offer us eternal life. The word for “favor” that the angel used of Mary is found only two times in scripture. The second time the word appears in scripture is Ephesians 1:5-6.

*He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace . . . Ephesians 1:5-6a (NASB)*

Do you see the word “grace”? Now listen to the rest of the verse.

*... which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. Ephesians 1:5b (NASB)*

Who is the Beloved? Jesus! Did you see the phrase, “bestowed on us”? The writer, the Apostle Paul, said God’s grace was freely bestowed on us. That word “bestowed” is the word previously translated as “favored.” So we could change the phrase so that it reads like this: “grace which He, freely favored on us.” Do you realize what that tells us? God has given us grace because He favors us. He does not just give grace to us. He pours grace out on us! If God has done all that for us, what do you think God wants from us?

I was watching a very captivating video this week. The video began by telling us God made the universe, the solar system, the galaxies and the planets. It said that God made seventy sextillion stars. That is a lot of stars. That is more than a billion - more than trillions. It is a lot of stars, seventy sextillion stars. That is a seven with a whole bunch of zeros after it! That is a lot of stars. Then the video raised an interesting question. Why did God make us? The first pos-

sibility the video asked, “Did God make us so that we could give Him something?” The answer to the question was “No! What could we give Him? He has everything.” That was a great response. Question two was, “Did He make us so that we could flatter Him?” Were we made simply to praise Him for creating everything? The answer is that He already knows that. So why did He make us? We cannot give Him anything since He already owns everything. Further, we cannot praise Him enough! What then can we do for Him? What does He want from us? The answer is He wants you. He wanted Mary, He told her she was favored. He wants you. He wants you to believe in Jesus as Savior and Lord. He wants you to escape the lake of fire or eternal condemnation. He wants you! He wants you to believe in Jesus so that He can spend eternity with you.

**THIS IS CHRISTMAS.** What do you think Christmas is all about? Christmas is about the birth of Christ - the miraculous birth that Mary experienced! Remember how the

angel said to the shepherds, “This is good news! This is great news”? The good news is that God has favored believers. He favored Mary, and He favors us. This Christmas season if you are looking for encouragement, for someone to tell you that you are loved and cared about, that you are favored, guess who is proclaiming that to you through the story of that first Christmas? God is! He wants you to know that He favors you. Every believer in Jesus Christ is favored and will spend eternity with Him in Heaven. I want to close with Ephesians 2:6-7. It says,

[And \[He\] raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Ephesians 2:6-7 \(NASB\)](#)

Do you know what Christmas is? Christmas is a sign of God’s favor. Therefore, you can shout and rejoice that we are favored, if you put your faith in Jesus Christ.