

ADVENT MIDWEEK 2
DECEMBER 9, 2009
SERMON
THE ANNOUNCEMENT

This was no ordinary word. Of course, words from God never are. The announcement came from Gabriel into the Virgin's ear: **"Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus"** (Luke 1:30–31). This was no ordinary word.

The power of the God's Word creates what it says. Just as the Word at creation brought all things into being, now the voice of Gabriel, sent from God, joins this Word to the flesh of Mary's womb.

**Not by human flesh and blood,
By the Spirit of our God,
Was the Word of God made flesh—
Woman's offspring, pure and fresh.** (*LSB 332:2*)

Not by human flesh and blood, yet He, the eternal Word, is flesh and blood. The one who will do extraordinary things appears completely ordinary while His divinity is quietly veiled under human flesh. The joining of the divine and human in the person of Jesus is a profound mystery, yet it is the very heart of our faith.

At the center of it, we find the blessed Virgin Mary, the mother of our Lord, the mother of the Son of God, who is begotten of His Father before all worlds—God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God—yet who is also now true man, who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary. As He is of one divine nature with God the Father from all eternity, so is He now of the same human nature as you and me, because He was conceived and born of this woman, this daughter of Adam and Eve.

The season of Advent hinges upon these things. You take away Mary of Nazareth, and you no longer have the Gospel. Oh, yes, surely God could have done it some other way. He might have chosen some other young virgin from the house and lineage of David to conceive and bear His only-begotten Son in the flesh, but there is really no such thing as **"what might have been."** There is only that which the Lord has said and done.

Now, it must be remembered that Mary has not merited any of this. She, like you and me, was a poor, miserable sinner, who deserved nothing but punishment. But she also, like you and me, has been the recipient of the mercy of the Lord. And it is especially in that capacity, as a recipient of the mercy and grace of God in Christ, that Mary teaches us so beautifully the meaning of faith.

She does nothing to bring it on, nothing to earn or deserve it. But the Lord is with her, as He is with you, here in His Church, in His Gospel. He favors her with His grace; He blesses her with His Word and Spirit, uniquely so, of course; and yet, He also favors you and blesses you within your own vocations and stations in life. Most glorious of all, He speaks to Mary His Word, and He gives to her His own dear Son. He also speaks His Word to you, and through that Word He gives to you the same Son who was conceived and born of Mary.

Oh, the power and the glory of that Word of God! That holy and almighty Word, which was in the beginning with God; that Word by which all things were made; that Word which becomes flesh and comes to dwell among us, full of grace and truth! That Word of life, which is Spirit and Truth. That Word which, when He says, “**Let there be,**” then “**it is so,**” and “**it is very good!**”

This fleshly Jesus has won your salvation. His sinless flesh becomes sin for you. His spotless flesh without blemish is raised up on the wicked stick. The one who speaks all things into being cries out in dereliction to the Father. He who is life and light is brought low in the darkness of death. Hell and the devil do their very worst to Him.

But the coldness of death could not hold His immortal flesh. He dies to kill death, and He rises to bright life and immortality to light. He lives that we might have true life in Him.

**By Your mighty pow’r make whole
All our ills of flesh and soul.** (*LSB 332:6*)

He speaks to you, sinner, and He declares that He is with you. He has favored you with His gracious Word of forgiveness, and He has blessed you with His Holy Spirit.

In the washing of Holy Baptism He has given you His holy name! He has anointed you with His Holy Spirit, the same Holy Spirit that over-shadowed the Virgin Mary and conceived the Son of God in her womb. So you are a child of the Father in heaven.

The Word proclaims sins forgiven. The Word invites: “**Take, eat; this is My body. Take, drink; this is My blood.**” And the Word of life makes it so.

This is the Word spoken to you. It is no less certain than the Word that was spoken to Mary. This is the Word that creates and sustains us in all things. Amen.