



SERIES: A Season of Hope
SPEAKER: NAT CRAWFORD
Friday, 12/11/20
Scripture: Luke 1:26-33
TITLE: Receiving Grace, with Grace

A number of Christmases ago, we had bought our son a toy that we were quite proud of, and sure he would really enjoy. Well, Christmas morning came, and we went through the packages, and finally got to this one box. He opened up the box, looked at the toy, said, “Ah, that's really cool”, put the toy aside, and immediately started playing in the empty cardboard box.

His response shocked me. Here, he had this brand new toy, but he didn't do anything with it. Many of us can do the same thing with our gifts from God. We receive God's grace, but we kind of put it aside, and miss out on God's greatest blessings - but not Mary.

Here we are in the month of December, and every Friday, we're taking a moment to remember The Christmas Story - To remember God's faithfulness to His people in very surprising ways.

Let's look at Luke Chapter One, because we see God's favor on Mary, but her response is what makes the difference:

In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a village in Galilee, ²⁷ to a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David. ²⁸ Gabriel appeared to her and said, “Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you!”

²⁹ Confused and disturbed, Mary tried to think what the angel could mean. ³⁰ “Don't be afraid, Mary,” the angel told her, “for you have found favor with God! ³¹ You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³² He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. ³³ And he will reign over Israel forever; his Kingdom will never end!” (Luke 1:26-33, NLT)

I love the Bible. It doesn't sugarcoat anything. It doesn't try to hide anything. It records it exactly as it happened. Well, here is a familiar story, The Virgin Mary is betrothed or engaged to Joseph. But one day, the Angel Gabriel appears to her. The text tells us that Mary is confused and she's also disturbed. We'll come to understand that she's actually afraid. And who wouldn't be? If someone appeared to you out of nowhere, likely looking quite different than you and me, and then identifies himself as a Messenger of the Lord - an Angel - we think we're going nuts. And so does she – she is shocked and scared.

But the Angel says, “Mary, do not be afraid. You have found favor with God.”

I want to pause here, because if we're not careful, we can look at Mary, and say she was something special. God chose her to become the carrier of the Messiah, because she was set apart. Now I would believe that she believed in God, like Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, believed in God - That she was declared righteous by her faith. But that's it.

She wasn't favored because of her good looks, or because of the donkey she rode. God chose her purely by grace. The same is true for you and me. We are saved by grace. The Bible tells us that God shows mercy to whom he wants to show mercy. The same is true for His grace. We can't earn His grace, and we cannot buy His grace. It is purely a gift. God said, "Mary, you are favored - not because of who you are, but because of who I am." The same is true for us today.

But now, what I really want us to see, is Mary's response to this news about becoming the mother of the Messiah. She says in Luke 1:38 (NLT):

Mary responded, "I am the Lord's servant. May everything you have said about me come true." And then the angel left her.

Now there was nothing morally wrong with my son wanting to play in a cardboard box versus playing with the toy we bought him. He was a child. But many of us receive God's grace, and we do not say, "I am the Lord's servant." Instead, we say, "Thanks God - I'll use it when I want, how I want, and if I want it."

Friend, God saved you on purpose and for a purpose. God pours out grace upon grace to His children.

Today, my challenge to you is to receive God's grace in whatever fashion He desires to show you. Look at it; acknowledge it, thank God for it. You may not have as much as the person down the street. You may not have as much as your relatives or siblings. But God will never give you more than you can handle. And when you've been faithful with the smaller, He will make you faithful with the mighty. Today, receive God's grace, thank Him for it, and use it to glorify Him.

Today I say, "I am the Lord's servant." Will you?