

**Luke 1: 26-45; "Mary's Blessedness", A Christmas Season Sermon prepared
by Pastor Paul Rendall for December 17th, 2006,
in the Afternoon Service.**

The event which these verses describes is most certainly unique in all of human history. It had never taken place before and it will not take place with any woman again. Mary was and is, and ever shall be blessed among women because of all the privileges and blessings which were bestowed upon her in particular as a woman, and as a believer in the Lord's word to her. In the history of the church and especially in the Roman Catholic tradition we find Mary being exalted to the position of being the mother of God, and worship and veneration being given to her. She has become, amongst them, the Mediatrix between God and man when Christ Jesus, her Son, will not receive or hear the requests of His people. But such blasphemy is not found in the Word of God itself. Mary was not sinless, neither was she immaculately conceived, and all of her requests to our Lord Jesus, made in her own person and name when she was here upon the earth, were refused or even rebuked by the Lord Himself, and so it is not this kind of blessedness that we are to examine this afternoon. What I want to assert this afternoon and attempt to prove is that even though Mary is blessed among women in a unique sense; she is also blessed in a sense that even the least of believers can identify with. I want to show you the 3 blessings and privileges that Mary holds in common with all believers in Jesus Christ: Blessed is anyone who believes that there will be a fulfillment of those things which are told them from the Lord's Word.

1st- Mary was highly favored by God to become the mother of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Verses 26-33)

I don't know about you but I consider it sacrilegious when people put out shows on TV which show people familiarly conversing with angels, if they know them to be angels. Perhaps people would like it to be so; they would like to think of having a personal angel and being protected and helped by such a being, and perhaps it is so in the world unseen by us. But, any time that there is an entrance of an angel in to the life and experience of a person, so that they know it is an angel and are having a conversation with an angel, it is a rare and profound thing. The Bible shows us that it is a rare and profound thing in this age. It is not common and it is not random with anyone of our fallen race. Angels are those who are perfectly holy beings who perform God's will and speak His message just as He directs them to. They do not act or speak independently to men apart from the permission and direction of the Almighty. The angel of our text, Gabriel, was sent by God in the sixth month (a specific time) to a betrothed virgin- Mary, who lived in Nazareth. Angels are ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation. In this case, this angel has the most important message of all time given to any woman in any generation.

His first words to Mary were not, "Hail Mary, mother of God," but rather, "Hail highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women." Mary was shown grace and favor, Mary was chosen by God. Mary had God's love and favor placed upon her in this special way to be the mother of our Lord. She was chosen for this great role; not only to salvation, but also to this high privilege. We believe this; that Mary who was a virgin, who had never known a man, conceived in her womb and brought forth the

Son of God. It was a privilege because there is only one God-man, only one Savior of the World, only one perfectly righteous and holy baby, only one King of Kings and Lord of Lords; only one worthy of worship! There is only one who was to be this great, He is the only one to be the Son of the Highest, the only one to receive the throne of His Father David; the only one to reign over the house of Jacob forever, the only one whose kingdom will never end! He is the child who was to be born of Mary.

And yet, you too are highly favored of God if you have come to believe in Jesus Christ. You too, have been chosen by God, you too have been shown favor. Like Mary, you were poor and needy and sinful. And like Mary, the Lord Jesus is given to you, His life, the life of Christ is being formed in your heart by the power of the Holy Spirit. You who believe are not less important to God and to the Lord Jesus Christ than Mary was. You will see this if you turn over with me to Matthew 12: 46-50. Here we find Jesus speaking to the multitudes and conveying to them many important truths about repentance and faith in Himself as the only Savior of men, and it says in verse 46, "While He was still talking to the multitudes, behold, His mother and brothers stood outside, seeking to speak with Him." "Then one said to Him, 'Look, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside seeking to speak with You.'" "But He answered and said to the one who told Him, 'Who is My mother and who are My brothers?'" "And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, 'Here are My mother and My brothers!'" "For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother." You see here that the Lord Jesus places those who believe in Him, those who hear the word of God and do it, on the same level of importance as his own immediate physical relations. You are highly favored if you have been chosen and given grace by God to believe in Him. In fact, it may be that He favors you and all believers more than his relatives in their physical relationship to him. It could just be that his relatives had come to him to tell him that he was crazy to teach and preach, and to be carrying on as He had been doing, so many people wanting to be taught and healed. You can see this if you turn over to Mark 3: 20. It says there, "Then the multitude came together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread." "But when His own people heard about this, they went out to lay hold of Him, for they said, 'He is out of His mind.'" "And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, 'He has Beelzebub,' and 'By the ruler of the demons He casts out demons.'" It is right after this in Mark's record that in verses 31-35 that He says the same words which we have already quoted from Matthew 12. Here He says, "Who is my mother, or My brothers?" "And He looked around in a circle at those who sat about Him, and said, 'Here are My mother and My brothers!'" It is possible, at this Christmas season that your relatives may think that you are crazy for living the way that you do as a Christian. Our Lord's own relatives evidently thought of Him that way. But rejoice, highly favored one, it is a truly blessed thing to have God, as it says in 2 Thessalonians 2: 13, "from the beginning, choose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief of the truth; to come to understand the truth of the gospel so that you may bring glory to God in your speech and your conduct, bearing fruit in every good work and word. He has "called you by the gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ." What a great privilege of inestimable value! How highly favored is even the least of believers. How it ought to cause us to treasure the grace and knowledge of His Word that has been given to us, and study to do what we can for the nurturing of that life within us, and to promote Christ's glory by the way that we live.

Let us do so in these days before time gets away from us and we find that we have only lived for this world.

2ndly- The 2nd blessing and privilege that Mary had which all believers have is that she was touched by the Holy Spirit. (Verses 34-38)

"How can I as a virgin conceive?" is Mary's question. Her question is not one of unbelief like Zacharias' question, "How shall I know this?" It is a question very legitimate in its nature because she had never known a man. She was betrothed to Joseph, but the marriage had not been consummated yet and so she did not know what the angel could mean. She could hardly know that this was to be a supernatural conception. God the Holy Spirit would come upon her and the power of the Highest would overshadow her, and the Holy One of God would be formed in her womb. The Son of God who would be fully God and fully man would grow there in her womb and come forth from her body. This would be a child of the Holy Spirit's good working, formed by the designation of the Father as it says in Hebrews 10: 5 - "A body Thou hast prepared for me." It would be the voluntary assumption of human nature in a human body with a sinless soul as it says in Hebrews 2: 14 - "Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same," that through His eventual death He might destroy the power and the works of the devil. But His conception and His formation in Mary's womb are especially the work of the Holy Spirit of God. "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you." Truly, this was an extraordinary work of the Spirit.

But think now of what it takes to make you a child of God- a Christian. It takes a work of similarly immense proportions in a supernatural way. Light must shine into your dark soul, the Holy Spirit must come sweeping into your heart which must dispel the darkness of unbelief and remove all resistance to the beauty and glory and desirability of Christ. You are dead in your trespasses and sins and He must make you alive, and bring life to your dead and resisting soul to convince you of your need of Him. You must be born again, born from above. You must have Christ formed in you.

"How silently, How silently, the wondrous gift is given, so God imparts to human hearts the blessings of His heaven. No ear may hear His coming, but in this world of sin, where meek souls will receive Him still, the dear Christ enters in."

Have you Christ in the womb of your heart, so that He is formed there, grows there, and comes forth from your life in sound doctrine and fruitful works; good works and righteous? Will you not say as Mary did so many years ago - "Behold your maidservant;" "Let it be done to me according to Your Word?" Perhaps you have lost all sense of the wonder of God doing something in your heart. You have walked with Him for many years and you are doing your duty in service for Him, obeying Him faithfully, walking in His precepts, but you sense that the life and power are gone from that service and the joy of the Lord which you ought to exhibit, you seem to have lost. Perhaps you have need for me to say to you even as the apostle Paul said to the Galatians, "My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you." Perhaps each of us needs to pray the words of the hymn that we sing at this season,

"Oh holy child of Bethlehem, descend to us we pray, cast out our sin and enter in, be born in us today. We hear the Christmas angels, the great glad tidings tell. Oh come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel."

3rdly and finally- Mary was blessed with sweet fellowship over the great things done for herself and for Elizabeth. (Verses 39-45)

It was the angel who directed Mary toward Elizabeth. He says, "Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren." This must have been a great encouragement for Mary to learn. The angel also says, "For with God nothing will be impossible." Sometimes we think that we are all alone and that we will not be able to find a friend who will understand what we are going through. But nothing is impossible for God whether it be the conception in the womb which is above and beyond the normal means or whether it is someone to talk to about the difficulties of what we are presently going through. Do you realize that it is God Himself who gives us the sweetest joys, the sweetest fellowship that we have with other believers in this life? He knows and often does give just the right friend or companion when we go about to do his will. Mary knew that many would never understand her virgin pregnancy or her virgin birth if she were to try to explain; but Elizabeth would. She had been given good spiritual discernment and she who was called barren would be able to fully sympathize with Mary's burden and rejoice over Mary's joyful privilege. The Lord moved in Elizabeth to exclaim, "Blessed are you among women; blessed is the fruit of your womb!" And Elizabeth herself was encouraged by Mary's coming to be with her. She says, "But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" This was something she says was "granted" her. The Lord gave to both of them an encouraging time of fellowship- 3 months together and what a blessing and a privilege it was. Both would be strengthened as the path of obedience would be more difficult in future months, especially for Mary. I hope that you will believe that the Lord will do this same thing for all of his dear people. Whenever we go about to obey the Lord; the Lord will look out for our greatest spiritual needs. He knows how to strengthen our faith and establish our sincere obedience. If we do not have this kind of fellowship taking place in our life and we long for it; we should pray fervently that the Lord will let us come into contact with just the right person. We don't need to fall into the doubting kind of thinking that God would do this for Mary but that he would not do this for us. We may think that Mary was blessed more than other women, and in the sense that she was the mother of our Lord, it is true. But if you look over at Luke 11: 27, you will read of a certain woman who said to Jesus - "Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts which nursed you!" "But Jesus said, 'More than that, blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it.'" You see that our privileges and our blessings are right up alongside of Mary's-- forever! May each of us see the great privileges and blessings which are ours just as much as Mary's.