

JOSEPH AND MARY

PRECEPT

LUKE 1:26-38

²⁶ ... God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, ²⁷ to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." ²⁹ Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. ³⁰ But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. ³¹ You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end." ³⁴ "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"...

PROMISE

Christmas is a season full of love, and spending time with family and friends, but have you ever experienced negative feelings this season? It may be the season of joy, but we are not exempted from experiencing trials or feeling the winter blues. Have you ever wondered what a life favored by God looks like? Many of us have the wrong idea of what is God's favor. Most think that it means, God will immediately answer any of their prayer requests and be exempted from all problems of life. Having the wrong perspective of God's favor, people would be disappointed and discouraged to seek the favor of God.

Luke tells us that in the life of Joseph and Mary, despite being favored by God they also had to go through hardships. Both Joseph and Mary had a strong faith, when Mary was informed that she will be pregnant by God's Holy Spirit, her response is one of obedience (Luke 1:38). The same goes for Joseph; though his first inclination was to be merciful to Mary but end their engagement (Matthew 1:19), Joseph was commanded to keep her, and so he did (Matthew 1:24). Despite knowing that they would suffer and experience shame, heartbreaks, and financial problems they continued to be faithful by aligning their life to God's will, demonstrating their obedience and faith. And because they aligned their will with God by believing and obeying, they overcame their all hardships and played an important role in the story of salvation for all mankind. Mary experienced the miracle of being pregnant from the Holy Spirit and delivered Jesus safely. Joseph had the honor of providing, modeling, and taking care of Jesus, the savior of all mankind. Regardless of how challenging it was for Joseph and Mary, in the end they experienced God's provision, protection, guidance, and all the other favors of God.

For us to find favor in God, we have to be righteous. Psalm 5:12 tells us, "...You bless the righteous; you surround them with your favor as with a shield." And to be righteous means believing in Christ. Genesis 15:5 says, "Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness." In Philippians 3:9 it tells us, "...faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith." And the proof of our faith is by living a life like Christ. 1 John 2:6 says, "Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did." God sees you in your sufferings, heartaches, and struggles because he is always by your side, ready to hug you with open arms, and always hears your prayers. Continue to trust in the Lord for he is a victorious God who will win battles for you, for he knows the winning plan to make all your pain and sufferings into good. God loves you and will give you all his many forms of favor if you align your life to his will.

PRACTICE

1. Finding God's favor. Have you experienced God's favor? Or is there something that's preventing you from finding God's favor?

2. God's Favor. Is there anything that you feel like God is asking you to do/not do in response to His will? How can we encourage and pray for you regarding

PRAYER

I. Disciples

- Let us pray for more disciples and disciples to teach to obey God's commands.

II. Healing

- Thank God that though we face trouble in this world, we can be assured He has overcome it.

III. Marriages

- May God strengthen their commitment to one another and guide them through trials.

IV. Church

- Pray that the church will be an ambassador of God's love, compassion, and grace to all.

V. Lost

- Pray that we will be the source of God's light to those who are lost and in need of Him.

VI. Family

- Pray for loving, and Christ-centered families in our church.

VII. Joy

- May God fill us with His joy and share the joy we have in Him.