

**Luke 1:45 (Fourth Sunday in Advent—Series C)**  
**“Faith to Trust HIS Word”**  
**Lutheran Church of Our Redeemer, Enfield CT**  
**December 19, 2021**

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.  
Amen.

Our text is from the Gospel lesson recorded in Luke 1:

“And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.”

“It was the best of times; it was the worst of times.” So opens Charles Dickens’s 1859 novel *A Tale of Two Cities*. Set in London and Paris before and during the French Revolution, this book depicts the plight of the French peasantry under the demoralization of the French nobility in the years leading up to and including the Revolution as well as a number of unflattering social parallels with life in London during the same time period. This morning we are presented not with a tale of two cities but with a tale of two birth announcements. One announcement was received with faith and trust. The other, however, was not believed as true.

Earlier in Luke chapter 1, the angel Gabriel was sent to a priest named Zechariah. The angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John” (Luke 1:13). Zachariah did not believe the message of the angel from the Lord. He said, “How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years.” The angel answered him, “I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. And behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take

place, because you did not believe my words, which would be fulfilled in their time” (Luke 1:18- 20).

Sometimes God’s Word of promise simply seems too unbelievable. Some of the things God promises to His people seem so extraordinary and so outside the realm of possibility. Such was the case of His promise to Zechariah, that he and Elizabeth would have a son in their old age. It was outside the realm of human possibility. His wife was barren, unable to have children, not to mention the fact that they were both quite elderly, passed child rearing age. Zechariah asked for proof of the truth of God’s Word spoken by the angel Gabriel. The angel’s response shows the Zechariah did not believe the message; he did not have faith in the Word of promise. And so he was unable to speak until the time when John was born.

We should not be too critical of Zechariah, however. If we were placed into his situation, would we have done any better? Would we have showed trusting faith in the words of the seemingly impossible promise? Today we have the words of God’s promises written for us in the Bible. Are we always the first to stand up and say, “I believe?” It is not always easy to trust God’s word, especially when it seems impossible. We sometimes doubt. We might wonder, “What if?” We may ask, “Is this too good to be true?” We want to trust God, but sometimes, we just don't know. We just don't know if God can really do it. We’re often just not sure that the Lord can really work things out for us.

For example, the Lord does promise to be with us always. His Word promises that He works all things together for good for those who love Him. His Word promises that nothing will ever be able to separate us from His love for us in Christ Jesus. Do you and I always trust these promises? When our little worlds are crumbling all around us, do we stand up and say,

"I trust you Lord."? That's not always easy to do, is it? When our reality gets rocked by illness, job loss, depression, or any other trouble we often feel totally abandoned. We feel deserted, not just by other people, but left alone by God too. We end up like Zechariah asking, "How shall I know this?" "How can I know that Your promises are true for me? How can I be certain that You have not abandoned me in my time of need?" It's when we have reached this point that we need to look at the second birth announcement in Luke 1. For in this announcement, we see God's Word of promise received with faith and trust. It gives us an example to follow, and more than an example, because we are given the very same gift as the Virgin Mary.

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, "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. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For

nothing will be impossible with God." And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her. (Luke 1:26-38)

Blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord! Mary's blessedness was the result of an act of divine grace which God gave her as gift. Mary's blessedness is a state of faith that held on to the future promises of God that were already beginning to come to fulfillment for her and in her. She was blessed because of the presence of Christ in her, physically a fetus in her womb, by the power of the Holy Spirit. Mary received the word of the angel in faith. She placed herself in submission to that word. Such is the gift that you and I also have received.

The Child of Mary is true God, begotten of His Father from all eternity, and also true Man, born of the Virgin Mary, just as God's Word promised. Jesus took on human flesh and dwelt among us. He faced all the troubles and temptations that you and I face. We read in the book of Hebrews, "Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise partook of the same things, that for death He might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery . . . for because He Himself has suffered when tempted, He is able to help those who are being tempted" (Hebrews 2:14-18).

Jesus Christ is able to do the impossible in our lives because He is God. As true God and Man, Jesus went to the cross, bearing the burden of our sins in His body on the tree. He suffered our punishment of death and our hell. With His shed blood, He purchased and won our complete forgiveness of sins. We are forgiven for our doubts; we are forgiven for our lack of faith. What's more, we are blessed by the power of the Holy Spirit with saving faith in

Christ Jesus as our Lord and Savior so that we receive His promised forgiveness and the new life of faith that He creates within each one of us through the Gospel.

In Holy Baptism, Christ came to dwell in us, with us. Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ dwells in our hearts through the gift of faith (Ephesians 3:17). This gift of saving faith is the result of God's divine grace. It is our gift from Him that grants us forgiveness of sins, rescue from death and the devil, and eternal salvation. The gift of faith also receives Christ as He comes to us in His Body and Blood in the Lord's Supper. Our Baptismal faith receives at the altar the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. In receiving Christ Himself in His Body and Blood with the bread and wine we also receive the strengthening of our faith so that we can trust more firmly in His Word of promise. God's gift of saving faith enables us to hold on to the past and the future promises of God that are fulfilled in Christ and will come to fulfillment in His Coming Again when He takes us to be with Him forever in a new creation.

This gift of faith, received in Holy Baptism and strengthened in Holy Communion, empowers and enables us to receive Christ and His gifts as He comes to us in His Word and Sacraments. Saving faith enables us to believe God's promises in Christ to be true and so to confess with our mouths, "I believe." The same Holy Spirit that empowered Mary to say with faith and trust, "Let it be to me according to your word," gives us the same faith and trust to speak those words as our own: "Lord Jesus, let things be to me just as you have promised in your Word."

You and I are blessed to be God's Baptized children of faith! Like Mary, we have been gifted faith in the Lord, faith to trust in His Word of promise, and faith to believe in His Son, our Savior Jesus. When it is the best of times and when it is the worst of times, we are

blessed with saving faith in Jesus. In the best of times and in the worst of times you and I can always rely on Christ to love us, to help us, and to bless us with His mercy and grace when we are faced with the impossible. You can depend on Him who called you to saving faith in Baptism. He will surely do it! His Word of promise will never fail you. Amen.