

## “Highly Favored” Luke 1:28

### I. INTRODUCTION

#### A. RR = Luke 1:26-28

#### B. Best & Worst

1. To borrow a well known line:

It was the best of times, It was the worst of times.

2. It was a time of both oppressive despair & bright hope.
  - a. The despair came from the presence of the Romans who held a tight grip on the nation.
  - b. The *hope* lay in the strong expectation that the Messiah was at the door.
    - 1) The signs of His arrival, given by the prophets, were ripe.
    - 2) So many looked for His appearing.
  - c. This hope & despair produced a *tension* that marked daily life in Israel; the people swinging back & forth in an endless cycle of emotion.

#### C. The Messiah

1. Most believed Messiah would come as a dynamic Deliverer -
2. Either descending from the skies in glory leading the angelic armies, like the cavalry riding to the rescue,
3. *Or* that He would just suddenly appear on the scene as a powerful ruler Who would lead the armies of Israel against her oppressors.
4. Those who believed Messiah would appear *this* way thought He would come in the way of all men.
5. Born as a baby, He would then mature into adulthood.
6. So while the *men* of Israel hoped in the Messiah’s glorious arrival to set them free from oppression,
7. The *women* of Israel *each* hoped *she* would be the one through whom Messiah would come.
8. They *all* wanted to be mothers – but to a *very special child* whose destiny was to rule the nations.
9. It’s with the background of this national expectation that we read .

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### II. TEXT

#### A. Vs. 26-33

**26** Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, **27** to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. **28** And having come in, the angel said to her, "Rejoice, highly favored *one*, the Lord *is* with you; blessed *are* you among women!" **29** But when she saw *him*, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. **30** Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. **31** And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. **32** He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. **33** And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end."

1. Mary then went on to ask how this would take place, seeing as to how she was a virgin.
2. Was Joseph, her betrothed, to be the father?
3. Gabriel told her the conception would be miraculous, a work of the Holy Spirit.

**35 • And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.**

4. A short time before Gabriel appeared Mary, he'd visited the father of John the Baptist to announce his birth; but Mary hadn't heard.
5. As far as she knew, Gabriel's visit was the *first time* in over 400 years God had spoken.
  - a. From Malachi's time till this was 4 centuries of divine silence.
  - b. For Mary, that silence was broken with the announcement that she was the one chosen to bear the Son of God.
6. I wonder, how many times did she roll the idea over in her mind that *she* was the one, all the women of Israel longed to be.

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### **B. Mrs. Carpenter**

1. For generations, young women in love with some guy have contemplated the day their name would change.

2. They say it out loud to see how it will sound.
  - a. “Mrs. John SMith”
  - b. They try different variations; “Mrs. Mary Smith. Mr. & Mrs. John Smith. John & Mary Smith.”
3. They *write* it out; dozens of times, filling whole pages with it; trying to make it automatic so it’s easier to sign checks.
4. No doubt, prior to Gabriel’s visit, Mary had done that as she contemplated her coming marriage to Joseph.
  - a. According to the customs of that time, Mary was in her early to mid teens.
  - b. And her whole focus would have been on the next big event of her life – *marriage*.
  - c. But with Gabriel’s announcement, the scenario that kept playing over & over in her mind wasn’t “Mrs. Joseph Carpenter.”
  - d. It was “Mary, Mother of Messiah.”

### **C. Favored**

1. Mary knew she’d been shown very special, highly unique favor by God.
2. In fact, Gabe made that quite clear in v. 28 –  
**And having come in, the angel said to her, “Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!”**
3. The angel’s first word was a bit of a surprise.
  - a. “Rejoice” was close to, but not quite the typical word for *greeting*.
  - b. In fact, some Bibles translate it that way in English. They have Gabe saying, “Greetings, highly-favored one.”
  - c. But the word was a bit *different* from the usual greeting they gave.
  - d. The usual word meant, “May joy be yours!”
    - 1) It was an expression of good will.
    - 2) You’d meet someone and say, “I *wish* good for you.” “I hope life is a delight.”
  - e. Gabriel’s greeting was *more* than a wish; it was an *announcement!*
    - 1) It was a *call* for Mary to *do something* because the ability to do it comes with the call.

- 2) As when Jesus told the paralytic to take up his bed and walk home –
- 3) With the command came the ability to do it.
- f. God never tells us to do a thing He doesn't also enable us to do.
- g. So Gabriel told Mary to express delight because at that moment God was giving her the cause & ability to.
- h. He was fulfilling her wildest dreams!
- 4. That's made clear by the next words = **“Rejoice, highly favored one.”**
- 5. The word translated “highly favored one” is used only twice in scripture.
  - a. The root is usually translated in the NT as “grace” = Unmerited favor.
  - b. It's a favor that produces something real & significant in the one it's shown to.
  - c. Actually, in everyday Greek, grace referred to the favor a benefactor bestowed on another that ***changed their circumstances***. . .
    - 1) from loss to gain
    - 2) from poverty to plenty
    - 3) from pain to pleasure
    - 4) from evil to good
    - 5) from ugliness to beauty
    - 6) from sorrow to joy
  - d. The one who's been “graced” can truly enjoy life.
  - e. Grace brings a person **INTO** joy.
- 6. But here's the key – such grace, such favor, finds its origin, its ***cause***, solely in the giver, apart from anything in the recipient other than need.
- 7. The word here in v. 28 **“highly favored”** refers to a grace that is of the highest order!
- 8. This is ***SUPER***-grace; a favor so rich & full it brings a beauty & blessing that beggars description.
  - a. There are no words invented by man that can plumb the depths of this grace.
  - b. No golden tongued-orator could do justice describing it.
- 9. This isn't the favor of some wealthy & powerful human benefactor.

10. This is the favor of the One Who *defines* beauty, power, & treasure.
11. This is the favor of God.

#### **D. Us**

1. It's what Gabe says here in v. 28 that moved the RC church to accord Mary a special place as the Madonna.
2. She was, as it says, **“Blessed among women!”**
3. But take note; I said this word translated “highly-favored” appears *twice*; here & in Ephesians 1.
  - a. This is one of the Apostle Paul's longest run-on sentences.
  - b. In this passage, he does the very thing Gabriel told Mary to do – Rejoice!

**<sup>3</sup> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ, <sup>4</sup> just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, <sup>5</sup> having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will . . .**

- c. Paul is so stoked he can't stop celebrating.
- d. The cause of his joy flows from all he says here, *summed up* in v. 6 –

**to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.**

4. See that word “accepted”? It's the same word translated as “highly favored” in Luke 1:28.
  5. Paul says God's grace has *highly favored* us in Christ.
    - a. vs. 3-5 *unpack* that favor and tell us what it's done to & for us.
    - b. V. 3 – We have been given *every spiritual blessing*.
    - c. v. 4 – We are God's *chosen ones*, picked to be on the winning team of all history.
    - d. V. 4 – We are *special* to God, set apart from all others to enjoy His perfection by *participating* in it.
    - e. V. 5 – We have been adopted as God's own children who bring Him delight.
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6. Please do not miss this – Gabriel declared Mary highly favored because of one thing: She was picked by God to carry Christ.

7. In Ephesians 1:6, Paul says *we* are shown the very same favor for the same reason: God has set His Son in us!
8. Just as Mary could rejoice because of God's favor, so can we!
9. The *richest people* on earth are not Tycoons who amass earthly fortunes.  
They are those who possess the Bread of Life, the Fount of Living Water, the Pearl of Greatest Price. In Christ, we are *Spiritual Tycoons*.
10. The most beautiful people on earth aren't found on fashion runways or the silver screen.  
They are those who possess the Morning Star, the Rose of Sharon, the Lily of the Valley.
11. The most powerful aren't those who enjoy political position, economic advantage, or social influence.  
The most powerful are those who are indwelt by the Creator & Sustainer of the universe.

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12. I belong to a gym – try to be a good steward of this dirt-suit God has given.
    - a. But every time I go, I'm reminded what a *runt* I am.
    - b. Some of the guys have muscles on their muscles.
    - c. I wonder; where do they find clothes that fit them? Certainly not at any of the stores I shop.
    - d. Their arms are as big as my waist & they have a body fat of 1%.
    - e. They are jacked! Cut! They're not just strong, they're *scary*!
    - f. When I see them, I'm reminded of the words of the spies who returned with report on Canaanites – “They were giants, and we were like grass-hoppers in their sight.”
    - g. Then I'm reminded, I'm way stronger than they could ever hope to be because living inside me is El Shaddai – God Almighty!
    - h. Even if they were to workout 24/7, take all the pills & drink all the protein, they still would not come close to the strength we enjoy in Jesus.
    - i. So what if they can move 500 lbs.? In Christ, we can move mountains without breaking a sweat!

### III. CONCLUSION

## **A. American Idol**

1. Personally, I don't watch *American Idol*, but I'm familiar with the format.
2. Tens of thousands of people show up at various places around the country to perform in front of judges who either approve or reject them.
3. This process of performance & evaluation goes on for weeks until there are a couple dozen contestants left.
4. Then the judges' evaluation is replaced by the voting of the American public who dial in on their phones to cast their votes.
5. Really it's a national **popularity contest** with each contestant hoping to find favor.
6. And as the season draws to a close, each week sees another contestant rejected.
7. In the end, there's only one on whom all the favor falls.
8. What's the prize they win? Well, by looking back at previous seasons, not a whole lot.
9. The favor the world bestows is a pretty weak & pathetic thing.

## **B. God's Favor**

1. God's favor, on the other hand, is eternal & strong.
2. It's the only thing that allows us to enjoy life as He designed it.
3. Unlike *American Idol*, we don't enter a contest to gain God's favor.
4. There **was** a contest, but it was performed by another on our behalf.
5. It was the contest of the Cross where Jesus conquered sin & death.
6. And now God's grace is a gift given to all who simply believe in Jesus.
7. I don't know about you, but I am **so** thankful Randy Jackson, Paula Abdul, & Simon Cowell are not my judges, deciding if my performance merits eternal life.
8. Those who believe in Jesus have **passed** from judgment to life.

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9. Mary was indeed a special woman, blessed to be the mother of Jesus.
10. But what **made** her special was something each & every believer shares – the incredible privilege of carrying Christ.