

*GREETINGS FAVORED ONE**PSALM 89:1-4, 19 NRSV // LUKE 1:26-38 NRSV***MONDAY 12/25/23**

Psalm 89:1-4, 19/// 89:1 I will sing of your steadfast love, O LORD, forever; with my mouth I will proclaim your faithfulness to all generations.

Luke 1:26-38/// 1:26 In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, 1:27 to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary.

**REFLECTION** The beauty of this mystery is almost too good to believe. For humans who are trapped “in a state of total darkness” it is impossible to accept. This text is a central passage for the entire Bible. The God of holy’s, of all holy’s is coming to earth. He is in the flesh and personally showing himself to us. The angel Gabriel is telling a young 14 year old virgin the time for Isaiah’s prophecy is coming to fulfillment. Isaiah 40: 11 “He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young.” (NIV) God proposed a new means of guardianship for his children. This is one of the most astounding realities of God’s grace. Let’s face the truth, people reluctantly submit to God because of pride and ego. The angel says, please do not be ashamed to receive this instruction. You are carrying in your womb Christ the eternal “wisdom of God.” 1 Cor.1:24 “24 But to those called by God to salvation, both Jews and Gentiles, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God.” John Calvin writes, “There is nothing which we should more carefully avoid than the proud contempt that would deprive us of the knowledge of the inestimable secret. God has purposely “hid from the wise and prudent, and revealed to the humble and “to babes,”. Luke 10:21 “ 21 At that same time Jesus was filled with the joy of the Holy Spirit, and he said, “O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, thank you for hiding these things from those who think themselves wise and clever, and for revealing them to the childlike. Yes, Father, it pleased you to do it this way” (NLT)

**PRAYER** I thank you O ‘God for revealing the truth of Christmas to me. I will continue to sing of your steadfast love for me and with my mouth profess Jesus is my Lord and Savior. In Jesus Name Amen.

**TUESDAY 12/26/23**

Psalm 89:1-4, 19/// 89:2 I declare that your steadfast love is established forever; your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens.

Luke 1:26-38///28 And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you. The Lord is with you." 1:29 But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be.

**REFLECTION** The angel announces an astonishing and incredible description of God’s grace. The immeasurable greatness of God’s works are to lift our hearts and minds towards heaven by meditating on his boundless love given to Mary. John Calvin writes. “A conviction of the Divine goodness is the entrance of faith. The angel properly observes this order, by preparing the heart of the virgin by meditation on the grace of God. He may enlarge it to receive an incomprehensible mystery.” This message is not only for Mary but for us too. St Paul writes, Eph. 1:5-6 5 God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure. 6 So we praise God for the glorious grace he has poured out on us who belong to his dear Son”. (NLT) Christmas is about being united once again with our creator, God. The angel says “Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.”(Vs. 28). .Psalm 103:4 “He redeems me from death and crowns me with love and tender mercies.” (NLT) This Divine kindness gives more than just joy; it grants eternal life.

**PRAYER** From now on Lord Jesus I will boast of your steadfast love that is eternal. For you have established faithfulness in my heart by your Holy Spirit. In Jesus Name Amen.

### **WEDNESDAY 12/27/23**

Psalm 89:1-4, 19/// 89:3 You said, "I have made a covenant with my chosen one, I have sworn to my servant David:

Luke 1:26-38/// 1:30 The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 1:31 And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus.

**REFLECTION** When we read God's Word it has a power to overwhelm us with fear. Our flesh is weak when it comes to understanding spiritual things of God. But following this fear comes an opening of our minds. John Calvin writes "whenever the feeblest ray of the Divine glory bursts upon us, we cannot avoid being alarmed." When the truth of the Gospel becomes a reality for us, we find ourselves in the serious presence of God. Our minds and hearts cannot readily grasp its effect. As we respond to God's righteousness we first give way to this truth. Just like the holy virgin Mary experienced, we too sense our un-holiness and crimes against God. We too have a good reason to be afraid of punishment. But notice here the angel immediately responded by giving Mary an immeasurable blessing to



calm her. He says "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. God has been merciful to you". That is likened to being "reborn" from above. When we accept Christ as our Savior we too have been granted the gift of faith. We too find favor with God. Romans 3:22 "We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are. 23 For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. 24 Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins. 25 For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin." (NLT) That is the true meaning of Christmas.

**PRAYER** Lord Jesus thank you for being born and providing me with a way back to my Father, my God. Blessed is your name above all names. I pray your glory will be heard and seen during this holy season. In Jesus Name, Amen.

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### **THURSDAY 12/28/23**

Psalm 89:1-4, 19/// 89:4 'I will establish your descendants forever, and build your throne for all generations.

Luke 1:26-38/// 1:32 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 ancestor David. 1:33 He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

**REFLECTION** The angel now proclaims the greatness of Christ. He raises Jesus' name above all creatures ever created. He is to be called the Son of God. Hebrews 1:2-5: 2 "but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. 3 He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, 4 having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs." (ESV) John Calvin writes, "Even angels have no right to this distinction, except on account of their high rank among creatures, in subordination to the Great Head.

**PRAYER** Heavenly Father I am in awe of the position of your Son. I praise you for you have sent him into the world to save me from the evil one and bring me home to your eternal home. Praise glory to you O' God. In Jesus Name, Amen.

## **FRIDAY 12/29/23**

Psalm 89:1-4, 19/// 89:19 Then you spoke in a vision to your faithful one, and said: "I have set the crown on one who is mighty, I have exalted one chosen from the people.

Luke 1:26-38/// 1:34 Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" 1:35 The angel said to 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 holy; he will be called Son of God.

**REFLECTION** Now we find Mary being captivated by the power of God. She asks, "How can this be?" In her mind this situation is absolutely impossible! She has reason to suspect something is abnormal. She knows she has had no relations with Joseph, her fiancé. She has been a good Jew, who obeys the Law. Mary responds by saying, "How then can I believe what you say?" We see that Mary is not thinking of heavenly things, but only how children are naturally born. In effect, she is like us when we are confronted by the power of God and his Word. Her question, is meant to lower the power of God to her level and senses. John Calvin writes, "If she had formed her opinion of the matter according to the judgment of the flesh, she would have treated it as a fable" There is no doubt she found herself in an incredible position! She has received the message of giving birth to the Son of God. As a Jew she would be very familiar with the passage taken from Isaiah 7:14:14 "All right then, the Lord himself will give you the sign. Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel (which means 'God is with us')." (NLT) Now she is bearing this message in her heart. She is the chosen one to give birth to the Son of God. The angel's words lead Mary to embrace the power of the Holy Spirit. She has been invited to surrender herself silently and calmly to his council. Calvin writes, "There is an elegant metaphor in the word, overshadow. The power of God, by which he guards and protects his own people, is frequently compared in Scripture to a shadow."

**PRAYER** God of mercy and kindness cast your gracious shadow upon my friends and family this Christmas. Give them the gift of true faith in your Son. Set them free to live a new life "born anew" by your Holy power. In Jesus Name, Amen

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## **SATURDAY 12/30/23**

Psalm 89:1-4, 19/// 89:19 Then you spoke in a vision to your faithful one, and said: "I have set the crown on one who is mighty, I have exalted one chosen from the people.

Luke 1:26-38/// 1:36 And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren.1:37 For nothing will be impossible with God." 1:38 Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her

**REFLECTION** Notice the word "impossible" in vs. 37. John Calvin writes, "We ought always to contemplate his boundless power, that it may strengthen our hope and confidence." The role of the angel was to confirm God's promises. Mary accepts God's blessing by saying "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." This is a wonderful example of Mary's faith being compared to the faith of Abraham. God first gave this promise of a Savior to Abraham. Romans 4:1"Abraham was, humanly speaking, the founder of our Jewish nation. What did he discover about being made right with God? 2 If his good deeds had made him acceptable to God, he would have had something to boast about. But that was not God's way. 3 For the Scriptures tell us, "Abraham believed God, and God counted him as righteous because of his faith."(NLT) By accepting Jesus Christ as the one true Son of God, we too are to embrace the overshadowing power of the Holy Spirit. It is by faith alone in Christ we have "new life." The real proof of faith comes to us when we restrain our minds from worldly reason and dare be captive to the power of God's Word. Mary devotes herself without reservation to God. But unbelievers withdraw from God's hand by making a conscious effort to deny Christ at Christmas. So, when the "gift of faith" is presented to you before God, be ready to yield in obedience. Calvin's final words on these verses are: "Mary yields and surrender herself to God. She is convinced of the power of God, follows cheerfully where he calls, trusts also to his promise, and eagerly desires to accomplish the task." When we accept Christ at Christmas, we too are examples of Abraham's and Mary's faith, for we too become a part of God's redemptive plan to make all things new. Merry Christmas.

**PRAYER** Lord God of heaven and earth you have crowned your Son with glory and given him all authority over the living and the dead. I will continue to praise you for keeping your promises, first to Abraham, then to Mary, and now to me. In Jesus Name Amen.

