

A rich text

- Chock full of allusions to the Old Testament
- We'll touch on some of them
- But for the sake of simplicity
- Three points in this sermon:
- Mary received the word of God by grace
- She received the word of God in trust
- The word of God was fruitful in her
- So: we receive the word of God by grace
- We receive the word of God in trust
- The word of God is fruitful among us

Let's start:

- **In the sixth month**
- Of Elizabeth's pregnancy with John the Baptist
- **In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, 'Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you.'**
- Old Testament allusion:
- **Sing aloud, O daughter Zion;  
shout, O Israel!  
Rejoice and exult with all your heart,  
O daughter Jerusalem!** Zephaniah 3:14-16
- The cause of the rejoicing?
- The lord is with them...

Note: Mary is called 'favoured one'

- The angel is sent with a word from God
- Not because Mary has made herself worthy
- But because God is gracious

- For us, too, God gives his word by grace
- We are saved by grace, on account of Christ, through faith
- This is the foundation of the life of discipleship

The narrative goes on: **But [Mary] was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him 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 ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.’**

- Again, we hear of the favour of God to Mary
- But let’s pick up on the throne of David.
- In the Old Testament we read of God’s promise to David:
- **Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure for ever before me; your throne shall be established for ever.** 2 Samuel 7:16
- God would ensure that a descendant of David
- Would be established in an everlasting reign.
- When we call Jesus ‘Christ’ or ‘the Messiah’
- One of the things we mean is that he is the fulfillment
- Of the one-sided promise God made to David.

The narrative continues: **Mary said to the angel, ‘How can this be, since I am a virgin?’**

- Mary is engaged to Joseph
- But has not had sexual relations with him
- So the obvious question: how will this happen?
- **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.**
- As modern people we think of conception in medical terms
- But the language that is used here is from the temple
- From the presence of God in worship

- So, in Exodus, we read in the final words of the final chapter
- That the tabernacle, the place of meeting with God
- Is installed; and as Moses completes the work
- A cloud covers the tent,
- And the Lord's glory fills the tent.
- Then we read these words: **Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud *settled upon* it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.** Exodus 40:35
- That 'settled upon it' – that's what's going on with Mary
- In fact the same word and imagery is used later in Luke
- When Jesus is transfigured in glory before the disciples
- And St Peter starts to talk about building tabernacles:
- **While [Peter] was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud.** Luke 9:34
- So, Mary pregnancy with Jesus is described with this language
- And with the imagery of God's presence and glory.

The narrative continues: **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. For nothing will be impossible with God.'**

- There is a sign for Mary: Elizabeth, her cousin
- The words of the narrative bring to mind
- The pregnancy of Sarah in Genesis
- When she laughs at the very idea of falling pregnant in her old age: **Is anything too wonderful for the LORD? At the set time I will return to you, in due season, and Sarah shall have a son.'** Genesis 18:14

Because God has favoured Mary, and given her his word,

- And because nothing is impossible with God
- Mary responds to God's word in trust:
- **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.

- Here we see what trust looks like:
- Letting God's word do its work.
- We, like Mary, respond in trust as we assent to God's word
- As we assent to his word in baptism
- As we assent to his word in absolution
- As we assent to his word in the Lord's Supper:
- Our 'Amen' is our 'Let it be with me according to your word'
- And we know that God's word is fruitful

The word of God came to Mary from his grace

- She received the word in trust
- And she was fruitful with the Word of God:
- She became pregnant with Jesus
- With the one who would show us in the flesh
- Who God is
- And who would bring us peace with God.
- Like Mary, as we receive God's word by grace
- And we are free to trust this word
- And to be fruitful with the word of God
- This is how St Paul talks of the fruitfulness
- Of the Spirit among us: **the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.** Galatians 5:22-23
- This is the fruit grown by God as his word does its work
- So, like Mary, let us receive, and trust,
- And see God's word be fruitful in our lives.
- In Jesus' name. Amen!