

THE PRAYER (In Unison) **Loving Lord, into a world of sin, and pain, and sorry, you sent the reason and source of joy and hope. Let us receive the joy and hope of Jesus in our lives this Advent. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ, your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.**

THE SCRIPTURE LESSONS

Old Testament Lesson

Isaiah 7:11-14

(God tells the king of hope for the people of Israel.)

11 "Ask the LORD your God for a sign, whether in the deepest depths or in the highest heights." 12 But Ahaz said, "I will not ask; I will not put the LORD to the test." 13 Then Isaiah said, "Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of men? Will you try the patience of my God also? 14 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.

The New Testament Lesson

Luke 1:26-38

(Gabriel shares God's plan for 'the hope of Israel' with Mary.)

26 In the sixth month, 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 be **with child and give birth to a son**, and you are to give him the name 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 the house of Jacob FOREVER; his kingdom will NEVER END.**"

34 "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

35 The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So **the holy one to be born** will be called **the Son of God**. 36 Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month. 37 For **nothing is impossible WITH GOD.**"

38 "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said." Then the angel left her.

INTRO - Do you have a Christmas list? I've handed out a piece of paper, please write down any items that might be on your Christmas list.

While you do that I'll share mine. Our family makes lists so others know what to buy. My list is not a big one. I asked for a game board I saw at Costco - 1 game with scrabble, monopoly, checkers and chess, I think. I asked for a white dress shirt and a yellow dress shirt. And I asked for some videos, Cary Grant Videos, Jimmy Stewart Videos, the Ben Hur video, and then some -ahem- Bruce Willis videos. I have a

section that says Too expensive. And I put down a GPS or an ipod. Then I have one other item, a sled for my snow machine. Only, Kathy already went with me and helped me buy it.

But, I handed you a piece of paper with another list on it. It says, 'life wish list.' Take a moment and fill that out. While you're doing that, I have my prayer list here. It is a lot longer, and includes some of you. For myself I pray for faith, family, finances, and then I have a whole list here for God's Church and St. John.

What do you have on your list?

I. These wish lists we have discussed, we may actually call our hopes.

A. These aren't something we have, but, something we hope for.

1. Some of the things on my Christmas I hope for, I might actually get.

When I recently had a chance to buy a new shirt, or the Ben Hur movie, I didn't do it, so that I didn't ruin someone else's gift.

2. Some of these I don't know that I'll get, right now at least, they're pretty expensive.

3. And, some of these I know will happen. The sled is sitting in my garage. Only, my kids say I can't use it if it is for Christmas. So, last Monday, stuff fell out of my other sled.

B. Mary had hopes.

1. Look at verse 27.

2. She was a virgin **pledged to be married** to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary.

3. She had sort of normal hopes for a husband, and a family.

4. She may have had other hopes too.

II. Unfortunately, all of us know of times when our hopes don't quite happen. I have family listed on my prayer list, with specific abbreviations for each one. But, Kathy's mom and my mom have both been in the hospital in the last month. Let me tell you, that is not on my hope list.

A. How about you?

1. Look at your list.

2. Can you think of hopes that have been dashed?

B. Look at Mary.

1. Now the angel was telling her a whole new list of things that would happen.

2. Listen

A. V. 31 You will be **with child and give birth to a son,**

B. 32 and 33 **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 the house of Jacob FOREVER; his kingdom will NEVER END."**

C. V. 35 So **the holy one to be born** will be called **the Son of God.**

3. This list from Gabriel, however, was ruining Mary's hopes, she thought, for a husband and a family. At least this wasn't the way things were done.

C. Our hopes are often dashed, because we are sinful people living in a sinful world. Our sin, and the sin of the world around us can ruin our plans and hopes.

III. Now look a little more closely at this list for Mary.

A. The angel said,

1. V. 31 You will be **with child and give birth to a son,**
2. 32 and 33 **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 the house of Jacob FOREVER; his kingdom will NEVER END."**
3. V. 35 So **the holy one to be born** will be called **the Son of God.**

B. This is Messiah talk.

1. God is saying he is changing Mary's plans, but is going to do something even better.
2. God is coming to the world. The Messiah, the Savior is coming.
3. God is taking Mary's dashed hopes, and turning them into something good.

C. Now, look at verses 36 and 37.

1. 36 Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month. 37 For **nothing is impossible WITH GOD.**
2. God can take something bad, and turn it into God.
3. God can take the sin of the world, and overcome it by His love, by His Son, By His Messiah, the Savior.

CONCLUSION - Yesterday, Kathy's mom was asking questions about Mom and Dad, about her mom and dad. Then she let Kathy know, 'Don't worry, God is in control. I'm ready to be with Him.'

My Christian friends, our hope is not in the things, or even the people of this world. Sin has created problems in this world. But, God has overcome them. Our hope is in God.

Look at your list. Is there anything that needs fixing? Guess who we hope in, who is in control, who has sent His Son, the Messiah, the Savior, the Son of Mary.