

## Daily Devotional, December 8, 2021 The Highly Favored

***Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call him Immanuel. Isaiah 7:14 (NIV)***

I have often wondered, as I am sure many others have, how Mary's life changed once the angel Gabriel told her she was to bear the Messiah. I have pondered over so many questions. How did Mary tell Joseph of her pregnancy? How was she treated by her family and her friends? How much gossip and ridicule must she have endured? Did Mary ever fear for her life in retribution, or the life of her child? Or was she truly at peace, trusting that the Lord would protect her?

I suppose my greatest question, though, is this one: Why her? The angel called Mary "highly favored," and scripture says she was deeply troubled by that greeting (Luke 1:28-29). I think a reasonable conclusion is that Mary did not understand what made her so highly favored in the eyes of the Lord, something I think we can all relate to. How would any of us react to such a bewildering selection out of the clear blue?

It is easy to look at our lives and question what makes us highly favored in the eyes of God. We argue with one another. At times we have malice and rage in our hearts. We tend to lie, we steal, we lust after so many of life's deceptive pleasures. Over and over, though we promise not to, we allow ourselves to slip into old habits and sinful behavior.

And yet, God is with us. That is the very meaning of Immanuel: "God with us!" The One who was in the beginning, is the One who was with Mary and is also the One who is with us now. Even though we wander like lost sheep, God is with us. Even though we run away like the prodigal son, God is with us. And though we reject Him like Peter, God is with us. He is *always with us*.

***Prayer: Gracious Lord, when i feel alone or broken, help me to cling to the truth that You are always with me. When i sin and feel full of shame, help me to remember that You never turn away from me. And when i feel close to You, help me to praise You for always being by my side. Help me to carry that truth in my heart and into the world. Thank You for always being with me and to count me as one of Your favored. In the name of Immanuel, my Savior, Amen.***