

Theme: **“According to God’s Word let our light shine”**

Text: Luke 1: 26 – 38

Season: 4th Sunday in Advent

Date: December 24, 2017

Place: Shepherd of the Rockies LCMS, Bailey, CO

Grace and peace to you as you let the light of God shine in your life, from God, our Father, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Do you promise to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help you God? Do you promise to love, honor, and cherish, for better or for worse, till death parts you? Do you promise to be my best friend and with this pinky swear to keep our friendship the rest of our lives? We live in a world of promises made; some are kept, but many are broken. Where there is a large amount of money or property involved the promise is minutely defined in a long and complicated legal document to make sure there’s no wiggle room and no loopholes by which one can escape the obligation of his or her promises. It’s not sufficient any more to simply depend on another person’s words, or at least that’s the way it is in this sin filled world that we live in.

Even in the closest of relationships, promises are broken and people are let down, disappointed and left feeling betrayed. A father tells his ten-year-old son, “I know I promised to be at your soccer game, but something came up that I had to deal with.” A husband tells his wife, “There’s someone else.” One nation tells another, “We will no longer honor our treaties.” Maybe you’ve been the victim of a broken promise. Or perhaps you are the one who has broken promises.

For the past four weeks of advent we have talked about the lights of God’s hope, peace, joy and love. Where is the light of hope in this world when promises are not kept? (Put out a candle on the wreath as you ask each question.) Where is the light of peace in this world when people make promised but then don’t keep their word? Where do we find joy in this world when the fun activities someone promised to do with us are canceled? Where do we find the love that you need in this world, when we promise to love someone and then they give it away? To be honest in this world there are very few promises keep perfectly and that’s why there is a lot of darkness and very little light shining in this world. The light of the promises of hope, peace, joy and love can be impossible to find without the Word of God in your life, for God keeps His promises perfectly.

Today in our Gospel lesson we read the Word of God written by the Evangelist Luke who tell us, **“In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from 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. And the virgin's name was Mary.”** (Lk 1: 26 – 27)

Why does the Evangelist Luke use the words, **“In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God?”** It’s God’s Word that the Evangelist Luke is referring to. The candles on the wall they represent God’s Word and that’s what these words from the Evangelist Luke are reminding us of. God’s Word recorded in the Old Testament tell us that God would send a new Elijah to prepare the people for the coming of the promised one. That baby of Hope has now been in his mother Elizabeth’s womb for sixth month because God had kept His promises to us and sent the Angel Gabriel to Zechariah and Elizabeth. The promise was fulfilled as Elizabeth, who was once barren and beyond the years of child bearing, is now bearing that promised child. (Light each of the candles again from the candles on the wall) The light of Hope comes into this world through God’s Word for God always keeps His promises and that is the light of hope that we can trust in as we hold onto our faith in God. It is God’s Word that brings us to faith and it is God’s Word working through our faith that gives us hope even when there is no hope in this world.

The Evangelist Luke tells us, **“And he came to her and said, “Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!” ²⁹ But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be.³⁰ And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.”** (Lk 1:28 – 30) The favor and peace that we are looking for is not found in the words of mankind or in the broken promises of this world, but in the message sent to us by God whose favors us and stands with us even in the midst of the problems and difficulties. (Light the candles of Peace) When we are troubled and concerned about our life or the life of someone else, we need to look to God’s Word for the light of peace that reminds us that we have found peace with God not by what we have done but because of what God has done for us. Yes, the light of God’s Word comes into our lives to give us Hope and Peace where there is no hope or peace as God works in our lives to keep each and every promise that He has made to us.

The Evangelist Luke tells us, **“And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High.”** (Lk 1:31-32) For Mary the day of annunciation was filled with fear and concern that was turned into joy, as she heard the good news of the Messiah coming to be conceived in her even though she was a virgin there was joy. (Light the candles of Joy) Yes, the child born in her would be the one who would save all mankind from all their sins so that the light of God’s Word can shine brightly from our lives in the darkness of this world to give us the hope, peace and joy that God wants us to live in. The Annunciation of the Christ Child is Good News for us also as we look forward to the celebration of the birth of the Christ child and His coming again to take us to live with Him in the perfect world that is filled with the perfect joy and peace that we have been hoping for.

The Evangelist Luke tells us, **“And the Lord God will give to 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.”** (Lk 1:32 – 33) In our Old Testament reading for today we heard about the desire of King David to build a temple for the Lord and the Lord telling King David, **“Moreover, the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house. And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.”** (2 Sam. 7:11, 16) The Annunciation of the Christ Child was some 700 years after God had spoken those words to King David but His love for His people and His desire to keep His word never fails. The light of true love is found in the Word of God given to us so that we can know what the true hope, peace, joy and love of God is for all eternity. (Light the candles of Love) Yes, God’s Word brings us the true light of the world that dispels the darkness of our sins so that we see and live in the light of God now and for all eternity. That’s the hope that God’s love gives to us. That’s the peace that God’s Love has prepared for us. That’s the joy that God’s love wants us to have for all eternity.

“But how will this be?” That’s the question that we often share with Mary as we look at the world that we live in and we compare it to the promises that God has made to us by His Word. It doesn’t make any since for a virgin, a true virgin will become a mother, especially the mother of the Son of God and yet that is just what happened. It doesn’t make since that a woman who was barren until her child bearing years was over, will now have a baby that will prepare the

people for the Son of God who had been promised from the time sin first came into this world. Still that is what has happened and still is happening in our lives as God, through His Word, brings the light of God into our lives instead of the darkness of our sins.

But how will this be? How can our lives have the light of hope, peace, joy and love in this world, when the darkness of this world has put out the light of hope, peace, joy and love in our lives over and over again? The Evangelist Luke tells us, **“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 called holy—the Son of God.”** (Lk 1:35) The Holy Spirit worked in the lives of Mary and Elizabeth to give them a child when it was impossible for them to have a child. God can and does miracles in our lives and He does it through the Holy Spirit working through His Word and Sacraments in our lives. Yes, God’s promises are always kept and they happen at just the right time to fulfill all that God has promised us. Oh, they may not make sense to the world’s way of thinking but they have happened in the past over and over again and they will happen in our lives also as we let God’s Word go to work in our lives just like Mary did. The Evangelist Luke tells us, **‘And Mary said, “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to Your word.”’** (Lk 1:31)

According to God’s Word our light will shine out into the darkness of this world to show us the path to our heavenly home and to draw others to the path of righteousness that God has prepared for us by the life, death and resurrection of the little baby born in a stable, in a little town called Bethlehem just as God’s Word had promised so many years ago. Yes, God’s promises are all kept to give each of us the hope, peace, joy and love that comes from God to live among us, to take all our sins away so that we can live in the light of God’s love now and for all eternity. So be a servant of the Lord and let God’s Word go to work in your life, so that the light of God’s hope, peace, joy and love can be seen in the light shining from you so other can come to see the light in the darkness of this world. Amen.