

## OLD TESTAMENT LESSON: 2 *Samuel* 7:8-17

- 8 “Now then, tell my servant David, ‘This is what the LORD Almighty says: I took you from the pasture and from following the flock to be ruler over my people Israel.
- 9 I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have cut off all your enemies from before you. Now I will make your name great, like the names of the greatest men of the earth.
- 10 And I will provide a place for my people Israel and will plant them so that they can have a home of their own and no longer be disturbed. Wicked people will not oppress them anymore, as they did at the beginning
- 11 and have done ever since the time I appointed leaders over my people Israel. I will also give you rest from all your enemies. “‘The LORD declares to you that the LORD himself will establish a house for you:
- 12 When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom.
- 13 He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.
- 14 I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with the rod of men, with floggings inflicted by men.
- 15 But my love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you.
- 16 Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.’”
- 17 Nathan reported to David all the words of this entire revelation.

## PSALM: 89

of Ethan the Ezrahite.

- 1 I will sing of the LORD’s great love forever; with my mouth I will make your faithfulness known through all generations.
- 2 I will declare that your love stands firm forever, that you established your faithfulness in heaven itself.
- 3 You said, “I have made a covenant with my chosen one, I have sworn to David my servant,
- 4 ‘I will establish your line forever and make your throne firm through all generations.’”
- 5 The heavens praise your wonders, O LORD, your faithfulness too, in the assembly of the holy ones.
- 6 For who in the skies above can compare with the LORD? Who is like the LORD among the heavenly beings?
- 7 In the council of the holy ones God is greatly feared; he is more awesome than all who surround him.
- 8 O LORD God Almighty, who is like you? You are mighty, O LORD, and your faithfulness surrounds you.
- 9 You rule over the surging sea; when its waves mount up, you still them.
- 10 You crushed Rahab like one of the slain; with your strong arm you scattered your enemies.
- 11 The heavens are yours, and yours also the earth; you founded the world and all that is in it.
- 12 You created the north and the south; Tabor and Hermon sing for joy at your name.

13 Your arm is endued with power; your hand is strong, your right hand exalted.  
14 Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; love and faithfulness go before you.  
15 Blessed are those who have learned to acclaim you, who walk in the light of your presence, O LORD.  
16 They rejoice in your name all day long; they exult in your righteousness.  
17 For you are their glory and strength, and by your favor you exalt our horn. [2]  
18 Indeed, our shield [3] belongs to the LORD, our king to the Holy One of Israel.  
19 Once you spoke in a vision, to your faithful people you said: "I have bestowed strength on a warrior; I have exalted a young man from among the people.  
20 I have found David my servant; with my sacred oil I have anointed him.  
21 My hand will sustain him; surely my arm will strengthen him.  
22 No enemy will subject him to tribute; no wicked man will oppress him.  
23 I will crush his foes before him and strike down his adversaries.  
24 My faithful love will be with him, and through my name his horn [4] will be exalted.  
25 I will set his hand over the sea, his right hand over the rivers.  
26 He will call out to me, 'You are my Father, my God, the Rock my Savior.'  
27 I will also appoint him my firstborn, the most exalted of the kings of the earth.  
28 I will maintain my love to him forever, and my covenant with him will never fail.  
29 I will establish his line forever, his throne as long as the heavens endure.  
30 "If his sons forsake my law and do not follow my statutes,  
31 if they violate my decrees and fail to keep my commands,  
32 I will punish their sin with the rod, their iniquity with flogging;  
33 but I will not take my love from him, nor will I ever betray my faithfulness.  
34 I will not violate my covenant or alter what my lips have uttered.  
35 Once for all, I have sworn by my holiness—and I will not lie to David—  
36 that his line will continue forever and his throne endure before me like the sun;  
37 it will be established forever like the moon, the faithful witness in the sky."  
38 But you have rejected, you have spurned, you have been very angry with your anointed one.  
39 You have renounced the covenant with your servant and have defiled his crown in the dust.  
40 You have broken through all his walls and reduced his strongholds to ruins.  
41 All who pass by have plundered him; he has become the scorn of his neighbors.  
42 You have exalted the right hand of his foes; you have made all his enemies rejoice.  
43 You have turned back the edge of his sword and have not supported him in battle.  
44 You have put an end to his splendor and cast his throne to the ground.  
45 You have cut short the days of his youth; you have covered him with a mantle of shame.  
46 How long, O LORD? Will you hide yourself forever? How long will your wrath burn like fire?  
47 Remember how fleeting is my life. For what futility you have created all men!  
48 What man can live and not see death, or save himself from the power of the grave [5]?  
49 O Lord, where is your former great love, which in your faithfulness you swore to David?  
50 Remember, Lord, how your servant has [6] been mocked, how I bear in my heart the taunts of all the nations,  
51 the taunts with which your enemies have mocked, O LORD, with which they have mocked every step of your anointed one.  
52 Praise be to the LORD forever! Amen and Amen.

- 1.[Title: Probably a literary or musical term
- 2.17 Horn here symbolizes strong one.
- 3.18 Or sovereign
- 4.24 Horn here symbolizes strength.
- 5.48 Hebrew *Sheol*
- 6.50 Or your servants have

**EPISTLE LESSON: *Romans 16:25-27***

- 25 Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past,
- 26 but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey him—
- 27 to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen.

**GOSPEL LESSON: *Luke 1:26-38* (also serves as the Sermon Text)**

- 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 [3] 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.

We all know about lotteries. There are lotteries that have daily drawings and others that have weekly or bi-weekly drawings. There are lotteries that pay out “pocket change” prizes. Then there are the big lotteries, the multi-million dollar lotteries. And when someone wins a big jackpot, we await with anticipation to learn who the lucky person is or how many lucky people there are. Usually we know if there is a winner, since the computer knows where the winning numbers were purchased, if there are winning numbers. But we don’t know WHO until that person or persons come forward to claim that prize. And, as we’ve seen in the past, that wait can drag out. The reasons for the person to wait can be varied: consulting an attorney on tax liability, deciphering who all was involved in buying the winning ticket, determining how one’s life will change.

Yet, maybe the biggest reason the lucky winner doesn’t come forward right away is because it “seems to good to be true.”

In our text today, Mary receives a similar surprise. She is taken aback by the news because **it Seems too good to be true. Gabriel gives Mary The Greatest News! God gave us His Son to pay for our sin! God also displays the power to keep His Promises!**

God has given us His Son to pay for our sins. What amazing news this is! For, try as we might, we are hard-pressed to get rid of sin in our own lives. There is a term in our society today, addiction, that summarizes this conundrum. You see, try as an addict might, he or she falls back into their habits and lifestyle even though they try to break away from it! Now this addiction can be open to the public, such as drug use or alcoholism. But many of us have a more covert, and usually more dangerous, type of addiction. Whether it is gossip, being angry with our neighbor, pride that we are somehow better than someone else because of our pious lifestyle or somewhat perfect church attendance, we all have an addiction. These addictions usually are pointed out to us, aren’t they? How often hasn’t a loved one said, “You always do this to me?”

The angel Gabriel brought this news of redemption from sin to Mary. A look at the words of Gabriel tells us about this redemption. Two names give us insight into this redemption.

The first name mentioned is “Jesus,” the name which Mary is to name the child in her womb. Jesus means “Savior.” And why is this child a savior and what will he save? This child will save all mankind from its sins. Matthew records another angelic visit, this time to Joseph, where the angel tells Joseph, **“and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21)**. You see, Jesus came to this earth to save sinners, even as Paul wrote to Timothy: **“This is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst” (1 Timothy 1:15)**. Are you a sinner? Do you feel burdened by sin and guilt? Then Jesus came for you!

The second name that tells us Jesus came to save sinners is “Jacob.” Jacob was the name of Isaac’s younger son who was renamed “Israel” by God after the two wrestled at Peniel (Genesis 32:22-32). Israel means “One who wrestles with God; Jacob means “heel,” because he grabbed Esau’s heel in birth. You see, Jacob for much of his life “grabbed at heels” for whatever he wanted, whether anyone was hurt in the process or not. He always thought he could out-smart others to get what he wanted. Ultimately, these things would catch up with Jacob. He found his match in Laban, who basically tricked Jacob into servitude for

twenty years just to get the woman he wanted and the cast-offs from Laban's flocks. Tired of this treatment, Jacob returns to Palestine where he must face the brother from whom he stole the birthright. It was then that Jacob turns to the Lord and in utter helplessness seeks the Lord to fix his mess. Thus, the wrestling match at Peniel. The name change signifies that Jacob finally lets God control his life.

So why does Gabriel use the name "Jacob" instead of "Israel?" Weren't all of Abraham's descendants, especially those from Isaac, part of the Promise? The name Jacob would bring to Mary's memory, as well as Luke's readers, the events of Jacob's life. Just the brief overview I gave you tells you this person, thinking he had all the answers, finds himself in fix after fix. Just as we all find ourselves in fix after fix when we decide we know what's best and how to best get things accomplished. Thus, we all need to be saved from not only sin and death and Satan, but we also need to be saved from *ourselves*!

The child Mary carries is the one who has been chosen to save us. "[He will be called the Son of the Most High](#)" reminds us of that first Promise given to Adam and Eve when they first sinned by eating that forbidden fruit: "*And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel*" (Genesis 3:15). And when Gabriel also says the baby will be given the throne of David reminds us of the Promise God made to David, that his family will rule until the Savior comes, a Savior born of the line of David. Recall the words of Nathan the prophet to David in the Old Testament reading read earlier: "*When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with the rod of men, with floggings inflicted by men.*" We know of David's sins, yet God remained faithful to His Promise. David's descendants, for the most part, were evil kings more willing to worship Canaanite gods. Yet, God kept His Promise "[For the sake of my servant David.](#)" Celebrate! This is great news! In fact, it's almost [too good to be true](#)!

So, if this news is [Too Great to be True](#), how do we know it's true? What assurance do we have that the message of full and free forgiveness, that God has purchased each and everyone one of us, not only sitting here in this building today, but even each and every person walking past outside this building? As they say in Missouri, show me!

God has also displayed the power to keep His Promise. For what reason did God in the Old Testament, and His Son in the New Testament, perform miracles? To enhance life here on earth? No! They performed miracles to display their power, to show that they have the power to back up their promises.

I'm sure that most of us, when we buy an item of immense expense, look at the warranty. And when we look at the warranty, we also want to know who upholds that warranty. I vicared at a church where the building was a mere 10 years old. The roof, warranted for 25 years, started leaking. Needless to say, the company that installed the roof was no longer in business. Neither was the manufacturer of the shingles. The warranty had no power as the entities behind that warranty were now powerless.

But God has displayed that he does have the power to back up His Promises. Mary's question is reasonable: "[How can this be? I am still a virgin.](#)" Gabriel then points her to concrete proof that God has the power. Gabriel reminds Mary about her cousin Elizabeth who is now six months along with John the Baptizer even though she was past child-bearing age. No doubt Mary had already known that Elizabeth was expecting, since Elizabeth was pregnant for six months already. Gabriel simply lets Mary know that the same God who could make this happen is also the same God who can be born of a virgin.

Then the angel Gabriel reminds Mary, “[For nothing is impossible for God.](#)” How many times in today’s society are we told, “That cannot possibly have happened? It just doesn’t make sense.” People will discount the six days of creation, the virgin birth, the resurrection of our Lord from the dead. But for what? Simply because they cannot or do not want to understand it? What it actually does is rob us of our comfort if we believe the sceptics! For, if our God does not have the power to create everything from nothing, if our God does not have power of life and power over death, if our God cannot take on human flesh and dwell for awhile among us, then we also have a God that cannot save us from our sins, a God who can do nothing but sit and watch as we helplessly flail away at sin. We then have a God who cannot grant life and who cannot take away death. In essence, we are hopelessly lost.

But thanks be to God that with Him nothing is impossible! Thanks be to God He is the author of life! Thanks be to God He has conquered death through His death and resurrection! And thanks be to God that He has taken away all sin and guilt and made us His own dear children.

And what is Mary’s response? “[I am the Lord’s servant. May it be to me as you have said.](#)” With simple devotion and trust in God, she bore our Savior. Imagine what Mary went through. She could have been stoned for alleged adultery. She went through labor pains. Her betrothed himself had to be convinced by an angel that Mary’s child was God himself.

Yet Mary believed in the promises of God. She trusted that God would protect her. And she trusted that child in her womb would save her from her sins, as she would later say, “[my spirit rejoices in God my Savior](#)” (Luke 1:47). For while the news Mary received seemed “**Too Good to be True,**” the news remains that God is with us, He has paid for our sins, and He has displayed the power to back up His word. AMEN.