



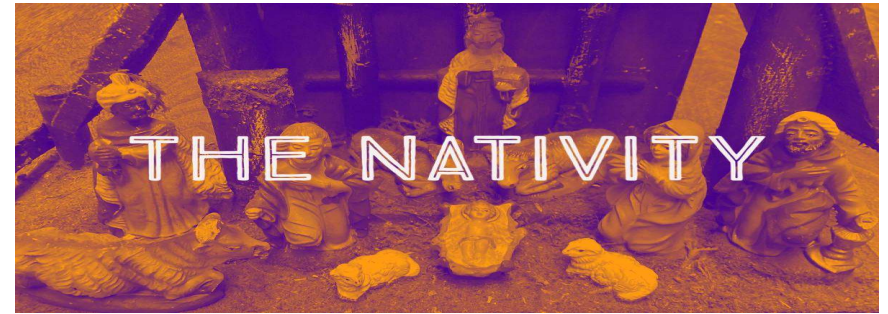
## Stepping Stones

### Luke 1:26-31, 38 New Revised Standard Version

<sup>26</sup>In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, <sup>27</sup>to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. <sup>28</sup>And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." <sup>29</sup>But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. <sup>30</sup>The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God." <sup>31</sup>And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus.

<sup>38</sup>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.

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At first, the idea of being favored by God may seem like a wonderful thing. After all, who doesn't want to be set apart for special treatment? Often, when we hear the word "favor" it is for the sake of good health and financial stability. But, is this always the case? Might it be that our understanding of "favor" has come to be limited in its scope?

Take Mary for instance. She was an early teen, engaged, and living in a lower-class community. One can only imagine what she may have been doing at the moment Gabriel appeared. Perhaps she was sweeping the floor or drawing water from a well. Regardless, it was this young woman who heard, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you."

Nothing that follows says anything about good health or financial security. If anything, it sounds like an opportunity which would come with its share of challenges. She would become pregnant in an unconventional way with a baby who would grow up to be anything but the average son. Simeon, upon Jesus' dedication at the temple, said, "...a sword will pierce your (Mary's) own soul too." It seems Mary wasn't destined for a life of ease after all.

1. **The favored life is open to God's grace and power.**
2. **The favored life looks for ways to be a blessing to others.**
3. **The favored life doesn't always change our circumstances.**

**Prayer Pebble:** Lord, help me to realize that your favor brings with it a calling, responsibility, and no guarantee of ease. Amen.