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Romans 16:25-27

²⁵Now to God who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages ²⁶but is now disclosed, and through the prophetic writings is made known to all the Gentiles, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith—²⁷to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever! Amen.

Luke 1:26-38

²⁶In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." ²⁹But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³²He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. ³³He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." ³⁴Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" ³⁵The angel said to her, "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 holy; he will be called Son of God. ³⁶And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. ³⁷For nothing will be impossible with God." ³⁸Then 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.

Text Romans 16:25-27; Luke 1:26-38
 Theme Giving God glory”
 Subject Paul’s Doxology to the Romans
 Occasion Advent 4 – December 20, 2020 – Bethany ELCA – West Branch, Iowa

Long ago I learned from Brother Michael and old wisdom among some preachers:

“First, I takes my text,
 then I ‘splains it,
 then I spangle out a while,
 then I add the rousements”

*Fun to imagine and remember so much easier when we’re together to be aroused by
 the good news of Jesus Christ*

Before us are 3 readings from scripture

We’ve heard them in this order:

Luke 1 :46-55 – The Magnificat (Mary’s song)

Romans 16:25-27 – Paul’s doxology to the Romans

Luke 1:26-38 – The Annunciation (The angel Gabriel’s visit to Mary)

They were likely written in this order

Paul’s doxology to the Romans

The Annunciation

The Magnificat

Mindful of all 3, my text is Paul’s doxology to the Romans

Doxology?

Paul’s glory talk; praising and thanking God for God’s actions

When we’re reading or studying the Bible, we often do look for what we can do

And there is lots to do:

feed the hungry, visit the sick, clothe the naked, shelter the homeless

*just this last week Shelter House’s Fairweather Lodge was gutted by
 fire; 5 men are left homeless – each has been provided shelter, but this
 group of guys have a bond and now they are separated.*

And there’s lots we can say:

obey the Great Commission: tell and teach about Jesus

We do like reading about God in action

PARTING a sea, CALMING a storm, CHANGING water into wine, FEEDING 1000s

Or reading about Jesus’ followers in action

HEALING the sick, CONVERTING 3000, RECEIVING a vision

We like hearing, as we did today, about the angel’s VISIT to Mary

But then what?

Can we get out of our head?

Rev. James Buchannan of the 15th Avenue Baptist Church in Nashville once scanned a crowd of students with northern European ancestry as he preached.

The students were very attentive – but they were not responding.

Jim paused, looked over the congregation,

“Ah, I see. You are God’s frozen chosen”

“Paul’s doxology to the Romans” IS ABOUT GLORY – it might seem to lack action.

But when glorifying God captivates the heart,

SIGHS erupt, SHOUTS erupt, PEOPLE STAND & APPLAUD

In my career I remember 4 times;

once after I played “Riding on a Mule”

And when glorifying God captivates a life,

SERVANTS ARISE AND MINISTRIES HAPPEN

Paul’s doxology to the Romans is a radiant with gratitude for God’s revelation in Jesus

When reduced to one phrase, it even sounds like an order

Now to God ... be the glory forever. Amen.

GIVE GOD GLORY

Do remember “Rise and Shine” – the Noah song?

So, rise and shine and give God the glory, glory

Children of the Lord

A Bible School song; the children are excited to sing it; standing, doing motions, and clapping

And then they sit down

Okay, but what is **giving God glory**?

What do we do?

Marva Dawn calls our worship a “glorious waste of time”

You can’t take it to the bank

You can’t register it as a course

You can’t put it under the tree

Her point is the purpose of our worship is to PRAISE AND THANK God.

God’s the audience

We are the actors before God – *even when we’re livestreaming or ZOOMing*

God is the one praised, applauded and honored

God receives our singing

God is proclaimed in the reading and preaching.

We **GIVE GOD GLORY** now in our worship this morning – *with an odd sense of together*

St. Paul ends his letter to the Romans glorifying God because of what he’s told them.

Paul's grateful to the Roman congregation for even existing.

They are at the center of the Roman Empire and they are faithful

GLORY TO GOD

Paul is determined to join them in evangelizing the Greeks and Barbarians in Rome

He wrote boldly right away in the first chapter,

For I am not ashamed of the Gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith (Rm. 1:16)

GLORY TO GOD

God is the one strengthening our witness.

God has revealed **the mystery that was kept secret** (Rm. 1:25c)

What's the mystery?

God has **made known** (the mystery) **to all the Gentiles** (Rm. 1:26b)

What's the mystery?

What's the mystery Paul proclaims?

Since all have sinned & fall short of the glory of God, they are justified by his grace as a gift through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus (Rm. 3:23-24)

What? **Justified by God's grace**

EVERYBODY MESSES UP AND JESUS IS GOD'S FREE GIFT

JESUS IS THE SAVIOR.

GLORY TO GOD

Paul announced in chapter 5,

"rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God" (Rm. 5:2b)

As Christmas nears have this in mind:

THE CHRIST CHILD MAKES IT POSSIBLE FOR US TO SHARE GOD'S GLORY

GLORY TO GOD

Paul recognized this was all sounding too slick, too smooth, too simple – too cheap.

So, he exhorted people in chapter 6:

to REMEMBER AT BAPTISM, we were connected to Jesus who was buried and then arose to newness of life.

AT OUR BAPTISM WE DIED TO SIN & WERE MADE ALIVE IN JESUS CHRIST.

God converted us – made us new

GLORY TO GOD

Paul became so vulnerably honest in the letter.

And we know he's talking about us too.

HE KNEW WHAT HE WANTED TO DO – BUT HE DIDN'T DO IT.

HE KNEW WHAT HE DIDN'T WANT TO DO – BUT HE DID IT.

I was going to self-share or give you some dramatic illustrations

We are our best illustrations of this.

Paul wrote in chapter 7

Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through our Lord Jesus Christ. (Rm. 7:24b-25a)

GLORY TO GOD

The 8th chapter of Romans is one of the most beautiful chapters in the Bible

During Christmas when you read or hear many Bible passages, set aside a little while to read Romans 8

Romans 8 concludes a section on suffering and persecution with these words:

*So relevant in every time and place – universally relevant;
especially now during the pandemic,
hearing and seeing so many angry people,
trying to discern truth*

Paul writes

(Nothing) in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rm.8:39b)

Thinking about Paul;

having heard some of Mary's story;
we are likely moved to do something
(slowly)

Let's not just yet

Be with Mary for a little
That little while before she went to Elizabeth
Before she broke into song

Remember some of those moments in your life when God came to you

Maybe when someone visited or called or more mystic

When you heard **“Do not be afraid, for you have found favor with God.”** (Lk 1:30)

Sigh

Sigh out loud
Shout or Sing
Go tell someone

Give GLORY TO GOD