**“Favored”**

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2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16

Romans 16:25-27

Luke 1:26-38

 Advent 4

From the Romans’ text: **THIS** is “the revelation of the **mystery** that was kept secret for long ages but has **now been disclosed**, and through the prophetic writings has been **made known to all nations**”.

Grace to you and peace from God, our Father, and from our Lord, and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Bridge

Christmas is not only **known-of** but **celebrated** by more than 2 of the almost 8 Billion people on this planet. 160 countries represent the “**nations**” to whom the **“mystery” of what this event marks** acknowledges this as **“disclosed” to them**: **“made known”** every year **anew** this time of year in all those places of the world.

The story (in its simplest form) is of a **young girl** **pregnant (miraculously) after the visit of an angel**, **giving birth to, then, One special**. But **“kept secret” is how its thought-of** through the entire **Old Testament timeframe**. Anticipated (but only by ones open to the “mystery” hinted-at), it seems “**kept secret**” **to unbelievers** through even the **New Testament effect of it**. No bigger, though, “**Mystery**” exists … the first being that of God’s love (a “mystery” to those not accepting it. The second: the **“favored” reason** **WHY** the first “mystery” **is cherished by so many … because (through this Gospel) God makes us “favored”**.

Text

As tired as many are of the **commercial melodies of the Season** (starting to play almost right after Halloween), **one exception warms as being** **truly and appropriately** **Advent**. “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” is the prayer to “Come” of, especially, the last seven days in what’s called the “**O Antiphons**” of Advent. They’ve (by melody and word) been **cutting through secular clutter** for at least 1,500 years. Advent’s been **known an** **Advent anticipating Christmas by this** …and it’s that long served as great **partnering** **music to the Gospel message of the virgin Mary’s “Magnificat”**.

Hear, again, that **Magnificat** (**Mary in** **response** to the **Gospel of “Coming” that the angel Gabriel told her of … and her “favored” status in that, which was, also, her cousin Elizabeth’s, and ours)**:

“**My** soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for **He has** looked on the humble estate of His servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for **He who is mighty has done great things for me**, and **holy is His name**. And **His mercy is for THOSE WHO FEAR HIM FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION (that’s also us)**. **HE has** shown strength with His arm; **HE has** scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; **HE has** brought down the might from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; **HE has** filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty. **HE has** helped His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy, **as HE spoke to OUR fathers, to Abraham and to His offspring forever**.” “**Through the prophetic writings** the mystery **HAS BEEN** **disclosed to all nations**.”

1. Isaiah (even from the **historical texts** of his first 29 chapters / the **Messianic “mystery” hidden was certainly revealed in history to the one who SEARCHED FOR IT, SEEKING from the “prophetic writings”**): “the Spirit of the Lord shall **rest upon Him**, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. And **His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord**. He shall not judge by what His eyes see, or decide disputes by what His ears hear, but **with righteousness** He shall judge **the poor**, and decide **with equity** **for the meek (the humble) of the earth**” (Is. 11:2-4). “**The Lord of hosts He is who is** wonderful in counsel and excellent in wisdom” (Is. 28:29). From that, response is made by believers (the Church) historically through the “O Antiphon” assigned for this past Thursday (the first of the last week’s days of Advent): “O Wisdom, proceeding from the mouth of the Most High, pervading and permeating all creation, mightily ordering all things: **COME and teach US the way of prudence**”.
2. From, again, Isaiah: “He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He shall kill the wicked” (Is. 11:4-5). “Lord, **be gracious to us; we wait for You**. Be our arm every morning, our salvation in the time of trouble” (Is. 33:22). This past Friday, we were given to respond: “O Adonai and ruler of the house of Israel, who appeared to Moses in the burning bush and gave him the Law on Sinai: **COME with an outstretched arm and redeem US**”.
3. The prophet Isaiah discloses to the hopeful: “there shall come forth a Shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a Branch from his roots shall bear Fruit” (Is. 11:1). “**In that day** the Root of Jesse, who shall stand as a Signal for the peoples—of Him shall the nations inquire, and His resting place shall be glorious” (Is. 11:10), to which the hopeful respond (for Saturday, 5 days before Christmas Eve): “O Root of Jesse, standing as an **Ensign** before the peoples, before Whom all kings are mute, to whom the nations will do homage: **COME quickly to deliver US**”.
4. Isaiah’s oracle says: “I (the Father) will place on His shoulder the key of the house of David. He shall open, and none shall shut; and He shall shut, and none shall open” (Is. 22:22). “Of the increase of His government and of peace there will be no end, on the **throne of David** and over his kingdom” (Is. 9:7) “to **open** the eyes that are blind, to **bring out** the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness” (Is. 42:7). Sunday’s “O Antiphon” is: “O Key of David and Scepter of the house of Israel, You open and no one can close, You close and no one can open: **COME and rescue the prisoners who are in darkness and the shadow of death**”.
5. “The people who walked in darkness **have seen** a great light (that’s Him **revealed**); those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them **has** Light shined” (Is. 9:2). We have to say on Monday: “O Dayspring, splendor of light everlasting: **COME and enlighten those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death**”.
6. “He (the Coming One) shall judge between the nations, and shall decide disputes for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore” (Is. 2:4). “Thus says the Lord God, ‘Behold I am the One who has laid as a Foundation in Zion **a Stone (His own Son), a tested Stone, a precious Cornerstone, of a sure foundation**: **whoever believes will not be in haste**’” (Is. 28:16). Tuesday’s “O Antiphon” is “O King of the nations, the Ruler they long for, the Cornerstone uniting all peoples: **COME** and **save us all, whom You formed out of clay**”.
7. And, for Wednesday: “The virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel” (Is. 7:14). “O Emmanuel, our king and our Lord, the anointed for the nations and their Savior: **COME and save US, O Lord our Go**d”. Wednesday concludes **Advent** as it **gives way** to Thursday’s **remembered** “**COMING**”.

Application

 What’s heard of the **“Mystery”-made-flesh in the baby of Bethlehem** (the person of the Christ) / all the **names of that “Mystery”** as God’s Wisdom and Ruler of Israel, the Root of Jesse born of lineage, the Key of David (who opens doors but also judges righteously), the Morning Star (who we’re also waiting for in the Advent of His **RETURN**), the King of all Nations (the eternal King and kingdom), and Emmanuel (“**God** **with us**” **and** **for us, finding “favor” with us humble of ourselves**), Jesus (God’s “Mystery” is “**disclosed** through the prophetic writings”. He is “**made known to all nations**”. And **God (in Christ Jesus) is for the meek who call upon Him, FAVORABLY-DISPOSED by His Father’s mercy and grace, Him sending His Son to be born of an also-favored girl and to die so that (ALL BY HIS FAVOR) WE CAN LIVE THROUGH HIM**.

The “Mystery who’s disclosed and made known” on **Christmas night (and anticipated by Advent)** is that **God CAME to us and for us … to favor Mary and Elizabeth and everyone else including US**. So, indeed, “**to US** a Child **is born** … **to US** a Son **is given**.” **Praise God that His “Mystery” has been revealed in Jesus!** In +His **name**. Amen.