**2 Sam 7:1-11, 16 (ESV)**

Now when the king lived in his house and the Lord had given him rest from all his surrounding enemies, **2** the king said to Nathan the prophet, “See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells in a tent.” **3** And Nathan said to the king, “Go, do all that is in your heart, for the Lord is with you.” **4** But that same night the word of the Lord came to Nathan, **5** “Go and tell my servant David, ‘Thus says the Lord: Would you build me a house to dwell in? **6** I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent for my dwelling. **7** In all places where I have moved with all the people of Israel, did I speak a word with any of the judges of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, “Why have you not built me a house of cedar?”’ **8** Now, therefore, thus you shall say to my servant David, ‘Thus says the Lord of hosts, I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, that you should be prince over my people Israel. **9**  And I have been with you wherever you went and have cut off all your enemies from before you. And I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. **10** And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may dwell in their own place and be disturbed no more. And violent men shall afflict them no more, as formerly, **11**  from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel. And I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover, the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house.

**16**  And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.’ ”

**Romans 16:25-27 (ESV)**

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

**Luke 1:26-38 (ESV)**

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. **28** 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. **31** 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. 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.” **34** And Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?” **35** And the angel answered 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 called holy— the Son of God. **36** And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. **37** For nothing will be impossible with God.” **38** And Mary said, “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her.

**“A Mystery, But No Secret”**

 Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. If there are ever memorable moments about counting down to Christmas, it has to be the use of the Advent calendar at the home. Of course, kind of like setting out a manger scene to remember Grandma, but not actually believing as she did that God was born of the Virgin Mary. The Advent Calendar too, in our secular society has had a makeover. Legos offers Advent Calendars counting down Christmas by building Star War figures, Ninja Turtles, and even a quaint town. There is an Advent Emoji Calendar to make different bracelets until Christmas. Crayola, Hot Wheels, Play-Doh and many companies have caught on to the Advent Calendar tradition.

 Now it does not happen that often, but this Sunday is supersized or we could say, “A two for one deal.” We end the season of Advent in the morning only to return and celebrate the answer to Advent this evening with Christmas. All this counting down has the purpose not for boosting sales, but a far more fulfilling promise. It is to see how the sins that weigh us down are quickly lifted by God’s grace and mercy. The good news first came personally to Mary as we heard, but tonight we know that the child born in Bethlehem is no longer a secret. The Angel Gabriel’s announcement invites us to trust how God fulfills His promises. God acts according to His Word to open more than windows on an Advent Calendar, but who is Christ for you.

1. **The Old Testament shows windows where God made known the mystery of His love.**
2. David wanted to build a house for God.
* He was a warrior king so he understood the need for honor.
* His desire to do good received praise by Nathan the prophet, “Go, do all that is in your heart, for the Lord is with you.”
* Of course, the Lord was with David, but he was not immune to sin and so just a few chapters later, he commits murder and adultery with Bathsheba.
* Rather than a home for God, God made His home with David promising the greatest honor, “And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.”
1. Building is what we do, but there is a mystery of love greater than our works.
* What man builds is never without sin and always needs constant repair and reformation for it to remain. (Reformation 500)
* John the baptizer was the Last Old Testament prophet proving that all the windows of the past about repentance and trust in God’s Word of promise.
* In the line of David would come a great mystery as Isaiah later declared, “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (Isaiah 7:14).
* God works according to His Word, because humanity was not going to achieve an everlasting kingdom or win redemption for sinners by the Law’s demands.
1. **The Gospel opens the door so the mystery of God’s love is no longer a secret.**
2. Rather than a prophet, the angel Gabriel came to Mary with the Lord’s announcement.
* His greeting had joyful words, but sinners do not know how to receive what God gives let alone His almighty presence.
* She had to hear, “Do not be afraid” for this grace of God forgave all sins and promised her a son calling His name Jesus.
* The line of David provided the true savior for God would give Jesus the throne of His father David with a kingdom that had no end.
* Mary asked how this would be, but a miraculous conception by a virgin was small in comparison to how the child born would, “…be called holy— the Son of God.”
1. Doubts about miracles are small compared to what the Gospel brings as the greatest miracle of promise that none needs to doubt.
* When the Angel Gabriel told Mary about the pregnancy of Elizabeth came with good news, “…nothing will be impossible with God.”
* If the virgin birth is not possible then instead of God in our flesh, it was an arrogant man who said, “And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” (John 12:32).
* Yet, St. John rejoices over God’s promise for humanity saying, “In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:10).
* God kept His Word to Mary and now He has kept the door open for any to receive the Word of Christ who is God for us.
1. **The Church’s strength is faith in God who acts according to His Word.**
2. Rather than making demands, it means a restored trust in what God promises.
* St. Paul ends His letter of Romans giving all glory to God, “who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ…”
* To such a Word proclaimed, even when not fully understood, is to say like Mary, “Let it be to me according to Your Word.”
* Maybe you have pain and loss that is a mystery, but baptism into Christ is not a secret.
* His kingdom will never perish, so confess, “Let it be to me according to Your Word.”
* If you fail to keep your promises, Christ brings His word of forgiveness.
* He removes all guilt and shame redeeming your life so you can say, “Let it be to me according to Your Word.”
* For those wearied by the world and weak to trust God’s Word, Christ is present.
* The Supper declares God is with us, so we receive His service saying, “Let it be to me according to Your Word.”

 The announcement by the angel Gabriel gave Mary a countdown of nine months until the birth of Christ. Our Advent calendars are now done and tonight the promise comes of what God fulfilled long ago. This Jesus begotten of the Father from eternity and born of the Virgin Mary is my Lord and yours. By His life, death, and resurrection God promises are not empty or short-lived like a secular society. God acts according to His Word opening more than windows, but the door flings open who is Christ for you. Amen. Now the peace of Christ that passes all understanding be with your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting. Amen.