

## **Sermon Draft**

**Text: Romans 16:25–27**

**Sermon: “Mystery Revealed”**

This Fourth (and last) Sunday in Advent places the Church on the threshold of celebrating the birth of Jesus, the Son of the Most High, who is the fulfillment of God’s promise to David to establish his throne forever. Though God did allow David’s son Solomon to build him a house the Lord’s dwelling in a tent (tabernacle) until that point foreshadowed the fact that in the Virgin Mary, God would become flesh and dwell (tabernacle, tent) among us.

The mystery promised to David and the patriarchs and foretold through the prophets is now enfleshed in the Virgin by the power of the Holy Spirit as he overshadows her while the angel Gabriel announces the glorious incarnation (Luke 1:35).

In our Collect, we pray that the Lord would stir up his power, come, and help his people by his might, graciously and mercifully lifting the sins that weigh us down.

In the Hymn, “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” (LSB 357) we sing about our coming Savior, using several of his messianic titles.

Verse 5 speaks of the coming Emmanuel as the “Key of David,” the “scepter of the house of Israel,” who opens wide for us the heavenly home that is ours in him. This is truly a mystery revealed!

Can you imagine trying to build a house without any plans or idea of what you want. Even if we manage to build or establish some sort of ground floor structure you couldn’t be sure that it was strong enough, sound enough for the second floor which the plans for were also kept secret. If a house were built this way we probably would not want to step across the threshold in fear of it collapsing on us.

In our sinful nature we are like this house built without any plans. Our natural flesh attempts to establish and strengthen itself spiritually. Only God has the plan for our lives. He tells us exactly what He expects and wants, and what he has done for us. And we need to listen otherwise we can never be sure that our status before him is firmly established.

Only through the mystery of the Gospel being revealed to us do we know of God's love, mercy, and grace. And only as we are given the gift of our faith through the hearing of the Gospel can we look forward to the day when we will step across the threshold into God's presence for all eternity.

Without the Gospel we cannot come into God's presence because only through the revelation of the Gospel which is Jesus Christ can this be accomplished.

On this Fourth Sunday in Advent, as we stand on the threshold of giving glory to God in the highest in celebration of our Savior's birth, our Epistle teaches us that God establishes and strengthens us by revealing the mystery of the Gospel.

Living in mystery with respect to God is terribly uncertain, if not dangerous. World religions consist of uncertain seeking into the mysteries of God and life. Thinking themselves wise, they dream up their own obedience of faith (v 26).

Islam is all about pleasing Allah and hoping he will reward you. Hinduism is about living a good life now so when you return you won't be reborn as a cockroach and Buddhism is all about becoming enlightened. No mention of a loving God, the gift of faith or the hope and promise of salvation. These false religions and cults unwisely focus their future and the future of their souls on false teachings that lead to death not life. What does our text from Romans tell us: ***“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 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—to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen.***

We need not look to anyone else or anything else, ***“to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ!”*** But even us Christians try to understand the mysteries of God apart from his revelation. We sometimes develop our own version of “the obedience of faith,” as if our obedience brings us to faith or helps us to the faith (v 26).

We cannot come to faith on our own or except Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, both are gifts from God, yet some Christians believe that they must do the work or can do the work and come to faith on their own and earn God’s acceptance. We try to establish and strengthen our faith on our own terms (v 25).

The result of all such pursuits is, at best, frustration and ignorance at worst, temporal, and even eternal calamity.

The world and even our own sinful flesh regularly try to construct a spirituality based on “secret heavenly designs” we try to discover by our own devices apart from God’s self-revelation.

But such building leads only to destruction like a house of cards that easily falls at the slightest ill wind. For it can neither establish nor strengthen us to receive the things of the only wise God.

Thankfully, we do not need to discern such secrets, for God reveals the mystery and makes it known to us through the proclamation of the Gospel about Jesus Christ. He promised this Gospel from nearly the beginning, in Genesis 3:15 God tells Satan, the serpent, ***“I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your offspring and hers; He will crush your head, and you shall strike his heel.”***

The prophets revealed portions of it by “the command of the eternal God” (Romans 16:26). Now it is disclosed and revealed in the incarnate Son, born of the Virgin Mary.

The Son of the Most High is truly “Jesus” (Luke 1:31–32)—the Lord who “***will save his people from their sins***” (Matthew 1:21).

He lives the perfectly obedient faith and goes to the cross to reveal and establish the Gospel for us.

By the Gospel of Christ, God both establishes us and strengthens us to his own glory. By the Gospel that declares to us Jesus Christ, God establishes us in the faith. By the Gospel proclaimed from this pulpit. By the Gospel mysteriously poured over us in the waters of Holy Baptism. By this same Gospel, God strengthens us for godly, obedient living and assures us of forgiveness in the Absolution. And by and through the Gospel mysteriously feeds us from this altar. In this God-given obedience of faith, we give glory to God both now and forever.

Just as little as a contractor cannot build a multi-story home without having a design plan given to him, so we (and the world) are not able to establish and strengthen ourselves spiritually apart from God's revelation of the mystery of the Gospel.

In the and through the Gospel Jesus Christ is revealed to us, the mystery of his incarnation, his life of obedient faith, and his substitutionary death on the cross, God establishes us in the true faith and strengthens us in lives obedient to his holy will.

All this is to his glory which he mysteriously shares with us even now and will share more fully in the revelation of eternity.

Amen