Romans 1:2-5 The gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures regarding his Son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David, and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.

 I don’t know if you caught the wonder of verse 7 of this text. It said this, **“To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.”** Let me just highlight a few of the things that those words reveal, highlight them because in truth, those words still apply to us.

 Did you see how he called the believers in Rome: **“loved by God?”** Do you think that somehow the people in Rome were holier, more perfect or more devout than anyone else in the world that God should love them? Nope, they were just like all the people of the world. They were sinners thrown into the depths of despair with struggles common placed for this world. And fools? The Romans thought they had it pretty good as long as things were smooth. That’s the nature of the human. If things are smooth, and by that I mean going along at a tolerable pace, then we tend to ignore those bad, horrible, problematic or troublesome occurrences around us. But let those things become personal, let it be your struggle and your problem and boy we can immediately look at our lives and declare the world a hard and terrible place. Nope, the Romans were just like the people, all the people of the world. There was nothing about them that caused the Lord God to love them. Yet He did.

 God did because that is the nature of God. God knows our struggle and turmoil. God knows our joy and sadness. God knows everything. He knows the paths he has set before us and He knows which paths we have decided to take even though they were not his direction. God knows what confronts us and what confounds us. He knows if we are making our choices because we are befuddled and confused or if we have made those choices because we want Him to understand who we think the boss is. God knows everything about the world, about every individual and personality there could be. God knows our inclinations and our aspirations. And still God loves us. He loves us despite us. He loves us even though there is not a bone of our body worthy of his love. Yes, the believers of Rome and the believers of today are **“loved by God.”**

 And did you note that right after that these people are called “saints?” Again, they are not saints because of their personal goodness and perfection. They are saints because God in his love sent his Son to pay for their sins and to give them the gift of the forgiveness of sins. They are called saints because they are forgiven. They no longer have any charges against them because the grace of God as given in Jesus has declared them free from their wrongs and idiocies surely and freely. They are called saints because they believe what Jesus is, what He has done, and what He has become for them. That last line of that verse reminds them of why and what they have in God. Grace and peace. Yep, such is the gift and joy of every saint, every person who puts their entire hope and confidence in Jesus and His victory.

 Of course, that’s is what our text is about. What a great text for the fourth Sunday of Advent, the last Sunday before we celebrate and rejoice in the birth and wonder of God’s Son born to our world. The thing that I really like about this text is that it pretty much lays out what our faith is all about. Let’s look at the remaining words before us under the theme: **THE GOSPEL. 1st. Promised. 2nd. The Son. 3rd. The Lord.**

 In that first verse Paul introduces himself and lays out for us who and what he is. His is an apostle and someone set apart for the gospel of God. It is following those words that we have an absolute gem of a revelation from the Lord. It would do us well to pay attention because in these words I believe Paul clearly and precisely lays out exactly what the gospel is.

 I know, everyone today knows that the word “gospel” means “good news.” That’s fine and well as long as you grasp what the good news is all about. I say that because “good news” as a thing itself is really a rather relative term. If I am a thief my idea of what is and what is not good news is probably not going to be the same as your idea of good news as a law abiding citizen. Yet note that Paul leaves no doubt as to what this good news is. He says, **“The gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures regarding his Son**.”

 Paul says the gospel is the message from and of God. It is the same message that God has been giving the world through his prophets, those who were his spokesmen. Those men gave promises of God concerning the Messiah. The Messiah was going to be God’s Son and He was going to be the savior of the world. You can trace those prophetic utterances through the Old Testament. You can learn lots about God and his grace, God and his Son, God and what would be when He walked among us. All of those things are revealed in the promises of the prophets. Like our Old Testament reading today, a promise of the Messiah. You can learn two awesome things about that Messiah in those words. The Messiah was going to be born of a virgin! The Messiah would be called “God with us,” which is what Immanuel means. And that is just one example of the kinds of promises that God gave. There are those who would say there are some 350 promises concerning the Messiah in the Old Testament. I think that number way to low. You could probably double or even triple that amount because the whole point of the Old Testament was to reveal and prepare for that Messiah. He is everywhere for those who can see.

 And note one other thing about that first part of the verse we are considering. The gospel is about God’s Son. It reveals him. It tells about him. It tell us what to expect and what He will accomplish. The gospel is not about what we should do or be. The gospel is not about God’s New Testament rules for holy living or making a better world. The gospel is about God’s Son. And in the next part of this verse we are going to look at, we are told exactly who, and how to identify God’s Son, who is the heart and core of the Gospel and its teaching.

 Our text goes on: **“who as to his human nature was a descendant of David, and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.”** Wow! There is some marvel in those words. Let’s grasp, as best we can, the total awesomeness and wonder of these words.

 Lesson one: the Son of God was going to be a human descendant of David! Not a surprise there, for David and his line can be directly traced back to Abraham and further. Jesus would be the seed of Abraham and the son of David. He would be human, born of a human. Obviously that meant God’s Son would have a mother, for it is mothers who give birth. Oh, yeah, that virgin birth! God the Father by his power caused Mary to have a child without a human father because that Son was to be very special and unique. Do you know how many prophecies are fulfilled just in the fact that God’s Son would be human? I’ll just say, “Lots!”

 Lesson two: God’s Son would be filled with power. That power would be with the Holy Spirit and would be demonstrated in so many ways. Jesus would do miracles. Not just one or two but rather Jesus would do thousands if not tens of thousands of miracles. Each miracle was a demonstration of his power. Feeding 5,000. Walking on water. Healing every kind of sickness and disease. Healing the blind, the deaf, the lame and raising the dead to life. Did you catch what I said? “Each miracle was a demonstration of his power.” There was no one like Him and never had been. There was no one who did what He did, how he did it and in the numbers that He did miracles.

 That power of Jesus was also seen in his perfect and holy life. For 30 years Jesus lived on this earth perfect and holy. He obeyed every commandment in thought, word and deed. He demonstrated a grasp of God’s Word that even at twelve caused the teachers in the Temple to be amazed. If you don’t understand that to be a demonstration of power, then you try to be perfect and holy. I’ll bet none of us even makes it out of church today without sin raising its ugly thoughts and wickedness. Power, Jesus demonstrated this power of the Holy Spirit in such a way that there is no doubt He is the One.

 The most important demonstration of His power though, was found in his resurrection from the dead. Just as promised, Jesus became the atoning sacrifice for our sins. He went to the cross, stricken by God and smitten by Him. On that cross Jesus died. Died a most horrible and agonizing death. For three days he was in the tomb and then, just as God’s Word had promised, Jesus actually and physically rose from the dead. That Passion of Jesus is the fulfillment of the Passover, the manna from heaven, the bronze snake, and the sign of Jonah all rolled into one. But most important, the Father had said His son would die and come back to life. Jesus had said He would die and come back to life. When He does it, when He did it, it is the surest, the most certain sign that this is God’s Son. This is one of those passages that helps us to grasp that if your church doesn’t teach an actual and physical resurrection from the dead, then get a new church. It is our heart and core because it is the heart and core of Jesus!

 And what else can we learn about this babe laid in a manger? Consider just the end of that verse we read: **“Jesus Christ our Lord.”** Here is what it is all about. Please note that Jesus is his name. Christ is His title and office. That name we give Jesus says he is the promised Messiah of God and has completely fulfilled all the promises of God concerning that Messiah. He is the Christ. That means He is the Savior and our deliverer. He has won for us forgiveness of sin, eternal life and salvation. That’s what the title of Christ means.

 But more, Jesus is our Lord. If you wanted to translate that word then you could say that Jesus is our master, ruler, the one who has authority over us. But please grasp what this means. It means that Jesus is our heart and foundation. Jesus is the one who sets our boundaries and establishes our directions. Jesus rules in us and for us in our lives. We hear and we heed Jesus. Why would you declare someone Lord, a term we mostly apply to the One we consider the Supreme and all powerful Deity of the created world, and then ignore him, despise him, or even dare to tell Him to get out of your life? Jesus Christ is the Lord.

 And that last verse I want to cover quickly. **“Through him and for his name sake we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith.”** Everything for the believer, the true believer is wrapped up in Jesus. Grace comes from him. The ability to spread and share his Word comes from Him. The power to bring people to faith and grant them this wonder of salvation comes from Jesus. Our obedience to Him comes from Him. And don’t get carried away by that word obedience. It is simply a word that highlights that the Christians’ whole life and heart is focused on Jesus and what He has done. It is not about obeying the Law and earning heaven, it is about trusting Jesus, hearing His Word and clinging to the hope that hope that Jesus is now and always.

 God bless you as you go through Christmas and hear about, contemplate and believe this Gospel message of God’s Son come to save. Amen.