

11th Sunday after Trinity
Vicar Anderson | August 14th-15th | Saude, Jerico, & Redeemer Lutheran Churches

In Nomine Iesu

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Heavenly Father, You have provided your church model Christians who lived here on earth and have now gone before us to be with you in heaven. Faithful saints such as Mary who you used to bring about the greatest gift known to mankind. Not due to anything in her but instead by the grace bestowed upon her out of your great love and mercy. Thank you for sending your Son Jesus, bestowing upon us that same love and mercy. Amen.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. (Rom. 1:7, etc.)

The sermon text for today is taken from the 1st chapter of the Gospel according to St. Luke. We read selected verses in Jesus' name:

46 And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, 47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, 48 for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; 49 for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. 50 And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. 51 He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; 52 he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; 53 he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. 54 He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, 55 as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever."

These are Your words, heavenly Father. Sanctify us by Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen. (Joh. 17:17)

In Christ Jesus, you who are blessed through the gracious merits of our Lord the Son of the Most High, dear fellow redeemed:

Some Christian churches today believe and confess that Mary was conceived immaculately, completely without the stain of sin. That she was full of grace from the time of her birth and throughout her entire life. They say it had to be this way in order for her to accept the task set before her. They say she had to be a virgin because her virginity is the sign of her faith "unadulterated by any doubt," and of her complete devotion to God's will. Because of this they believe Mary is worthy of our prayer and she brings our petitions to the Lord.

But we know none of this is true because scripture does not speak on any of those things. God's Word only speaks of one person who was born completely without sin and His name is Jesus. The only Immaculate Conception we believe in is the conception of Jesus Christ. God's Word came to Mary when Gabriel visited her, and the Holy Spirit conceived the child. She became the mother of the Savior because God chose her and decided that she would be, not because of any willful decision Mary made.

Mary would give birth to a Son, but He would not be a typical son. This son would be called holy--the Son of God (1:35). He had no earthly father, but was conceived by the Holy Spirit. He

was fully God according to His divine nature and fully man according to His human nature. It was only possible for the Virgin Mary to conceive a perfect human being because God the Holy Spirit caused her to conceive.

The angel Gabriel said, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you” (Luke 1:35). We confess that Jesus is the second person of the holy trinity. Jesus is true God and true man. Therefore Mary is truly the blessed virgin, the mother of our Lord.

But the fact that she is the mother of our Lord is not the only reason Mary rejoices in today’s text, or even the main reason. She rejoices because of what Jesus’ coming means for all people. The Lord has exalted those of humble estate, and The Lord helped His servant Israel, in remembering His mercy.

Mary lived in a town in the region of Galilee called Nazareth and was betrothed to a man named Joseph (Luke 1:27). We know that Mary was a virgin; she had not had any physical relations with a man. She was a servant of the Lord, she knew what God commanded in His law and she believed in the promise of a Savior. She was not of any public significance and still God sent the angel Gabriel to come to her, to inform her that she will conceive in her womb a Son and she is to call His name Jesus (Luke 1:31).

It was a great honor for Mary to bear the God-man Jesus Christ. God chose her because she had faith. But even with a strong faith Mary could not provide any help in the plan for the salvation of mankind. Rather than being prideful and thinking highly of herself Mary recognized her need for a Savior.

Mary immediately takes the spotlight off herself and shines it on her Lord. She acknowledges her humble estate. In her song of praise she mentions “He” or “Him” close to twenty times. She refers to herself four times and in each case it is only in response to what God has already done for her. She knows where her help comes from. All her help comes from the Lord, to whom she sings her praises.

The same is true for us; our help comes from the Lord, and from the Lord only. And still our sinful nature continues to get in the way. Our self-centeredness and pride want us to believe we can do it apart from Jesus Christ. We puff up our chest in arrogance and think that we have all the answers. Our own intellect and reason become our idol and we put our trust in them, elevating them above the Lord. We think we know better than God, needing results now and the results we want. If God has something else in mind for us, well we just aren’t all that satisfied with it. We make our decisions with no regard to what His Word says and without His blessing. We think of ourselves as special, but in reality we are just ordinary sinners.

God sees right through our conceited hearts. He cuts through your self-reliance and pride so that you recognize your need for dependence on Him. He brings you down in order to raise you up again. This is what God’s Law and Gospel do for you. If you were not graciously given the Holy Spirit to recognize your sin and selfishness and need for Christ, you most certainly would be lost forever. God loves you far too much to let this happen.

God has always taken care of those He calls His own. Throughout the Old Testament God used small and insignificant people to help preserve the coming of His Son. Using the small in stature to bring down the mighty. A young faithful shepherd boy kills a tall strong pagan warrior with nothing but a stone and a sling. And this same boy David would grow up to be one of the greatest and mightiest kings Israel ever saw and from whose descendants Jesus would come (Sam. 17:33, 46-51). Without God's almighty hand over David, he surely would have failed.

Apart from Christ we are nothing. The Lord takes what is nothing and makes it significant. He takes you, just an ordinary sinner and makes you righteous in God's sight. He makes the unimportant blessed beyond compare through His Son. He used Mary a small and insignificant servant of the Lord to bring about the Savior of the world.

It is right for us to recognize the honor Mary has of being the mother of the Lord. Mary's relative Elizabeth just prior to our text had greeted her saying, "blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb." Mary truly was blessed but not more blessed than you (Luke 1:48). She was blessed because of what her Savior did for her. His payment of death on the cross was for her, a sinner who trusted in her Savior. She is a saint in heaven because of her faith in Him.

There is a big difference between honoring Mary and praying to her. We do not pray to Mary or any of the saints, nor elevate them above Jesus Christ. God's Word tells us in St. Paul's letter to Timothy, "For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5).

Martin Luther greatly opposed praying to Mary and the saints. He says, "we want to hold the dear virgin and mother in all honor, as she certainly deserves to be honored; yet we do not want to honor her in such a way that we make her equal to her Son, Christ. For she was not crucified for us, nor did she die for us or pray for us on the cross; but Christ was crucified for us and died and pleaded and prayed for us with tears on the cross. Therefore honor Mary; but do not accord her the honor which we should accord Christ" (Ewald M. Plass, *What Luther Says*, 4009 pg. 1257).

Mary was unique in that her savior would physically dwell inside her womb and be born of her flesh and blood. He would be nursed by her and raised by her. She would love him as any mother loves her son. Throughout Jesus' life she would witness how the world would receive Him. She would hear how people talked about Him and see how badly He was treated. She knew that at some point He would be taken from her. This would be a tremendous challenge for Mary and she would need protection and support from the Holy Spirit.

Nevertheless she struggled to always trust the plan God had set in motion. Mary did not always nor perfectly understand who Jesus was and what He must do. When she finds Jesus in the temple teaching as a young boy she asks Him, "Son why have you treated us like this?" Jesus responds, "why were you looking for me, did you not know that I must be in my father's house?" (Luke 2:48-49).

At a later time in Jesus' ministry, Mary seems to have joined her family in wanting Jesus to stop teaching like He was. Some in the family try to seize Him saying, He was "out of His mind" (Mar. 3:21). Mary did not always speak up and rebuke others when they questioned what Jesus was doing. His mother and His brothers stood outside the house where He was, a house packed with people listening to Him. Jesus was told that His mother and His brothers were outside the crowd seeking Him. Jesus responded, "who is my mother and my brother?" And then with an outstretched hand He points to all who were seated around Him and He says, here are my mother and my brother and my sister, for whoever does the will of my Father is my brother, sister and mother" (Matt. 12:46-50).

Jesus makes it exceptionally clear that Mary His mother is not the focal point of His ministry; she was only a small piece of it. Jesus shows that the focal point of His ministry is the work of His Father. He was about His Father's business, saving souls and He is as much His mother's savior as He is yours.

Your Lord lived perfectly and went to the cross to die for you never once questioning the will of His father. You who are in Christ Jesus have everything. The Lord has filled you with good things. He has emptied you of your worldly ego and pride and filled you with God's grace. All that was completely worthless is now replaced with something precious. Through His Word He has filled you with His Holy Spirit and given you his body and blood for nourishment. The food he provides you with will never let you hunger and thirst again. The bread from heaven, Jesus Christ Himself, fills you! You are now full and completely satisfied.

Jesus has "clothed you with garments of salvation. You are covered in the robe of His righteousness" (Is. 61:10). The promise to Abraham and his descendants was kept. The mercy of God is remembered in His Son Jesus. He has caused "righteousness and praise to sprout up before all nations" (Isaiah 61:11). His promises are kept for you, and the benefits of them continue to come to you just as "flowers continue to sprout from the earth." All generations who believe in Him are called blessed. You are blessed just as St. Mary is.

St. Mary is a great example to all Christians. She had humility and a strong faith in her Savior. She knew that she did not deserve the honor of being the mother of our Lord and she also knew that she didn't deserve a Savior. Yet, God chose her from eternity to bear the Son of God and also be saved by Him.

The Lord has also chosen you from eternity to believe and to be saved. His love and mercy is abundant and abounds for all who believe in Him. The mother of Our Lord truly did have a reason to rejoice, and so do you!

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, forevermore. Amen.

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