



[Pastor Steven Billings](#)

Sermon for St. Mary, Mother of Our Lord
August 15, 2021

Blessed Among Women

Luke 1:39–55

³⁹ *In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, ⁴⁰ and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹ And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, ⁴² and she exclaimed with a loud cry, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! ⁴³ And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴ For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵ And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.”*

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.”*

Mary is the most blessed of all women. The angel Gabriel calls her “full of Grace.” Now, that’s in the Bible. Gabriel was no Romanist. If some don’t like it, I guess that’s their problem. And some people *do* have a problem with it, but I’m not sure why. They simply can’t permit themselves to think that Mary just might *be* higher than the cherubim and more glorious than the seraphim, as the hymn says (LSB 670:2).

But, the reality is that Mary *is* the most blessed of all women. She is called “full of Grace,” for the Lord is with her; indeed, the Lord is *in* her. Grace took up residence inside her, wore her flesh, came out in blood and water that He might bleed and die to make us clean. The promise to Abraham is fulfilled in the Son of Mary. Isaac gets off the Altar so that Jesus can get on it. That bloody, squalling Baby, set for the rising and falling of many in Israel, and for breaking the heart of His mother, is laid upon her breast, in a barn in Bethlehem. He wears the face that Job prophesied he’d see. His chubby little feet bring Good News from God, the News that those feet will be pierced and bear the scars into eternity. His fat little hands, whose touch shall bring health, turn water into wine, multiply the loaves – they, too, shall be bitten by the nail that they might deliver absolution. He is



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God. He is Man. He is with us, one of us, for us. He shall die, but He shall rise and ascend to pave the way into heaven for us. He is Emmanuel.

St. Mary the Virgin is honored by God above all others. She is honored by the shame of pregnancy before wedlock and the ridicule of her people. For so they also persecuted the prophets, and so too shall they mock her Son. The kingdom of God is not the kingdom of the world where Herod and Caesar rule by power and might. But the kingdom of God is where honor comes in chastisement. For the Theology of the Cross always means suffering and shame before glory and honor. And so, St. Mary, most blessed of women, poor peasant girl of distant royal heritage, bears the Messiah in shame and poverty. She witnesses firsthand the fullness of time and her own redemption in her own flesh and blood and no one cares but some uncouth ruffians from the hills.

This is how God honored her. Brothers and sisters, if *God* has so honored her, mustn't we? Is it our option to dishonor what God honors? Are we free to sneer at God's Mother or to speculate impiously about her relations with Joseph? I don't think so.

We honor Mary – first, by thanking God and rejoicing in the wonderful example that she is of His mercy. We honor her, as Christ honored those who had faith. We commend her for believing and submitting to God's Word, for showing us the way of faith. And we thank God for the gift that she is to us. For God uses Mary, with her weaknesses and her piety, with her shame and honor, to strengthen *our* faith. In her He demonstrates His compassion for us, for we, too, are lowly.

Secondly, we honor Mary by imitating her. We cling to the same faith and hope that she held, believing as she believed. We learn from her example about vocation and suffering in this life. And we learn about praise and worship. For Mary teaches us to sing.

Her song surges forth from the reality that God has spared her the tortures of Hell and delivered salvation to her in her Son. He will break her heart, it is true. But left on her own, Mary would have known greater and more terrible heartache – heartache, in fact, which would not end. But she was not left alone. The Seed of Eve, the Kinsman-Redeemer, was born to crush the seed of the serpent and to buy her back from his devilish clutches. Christ broke her heart, pierced her soul, in order to reform her, recreate her, renew her, revive her, and eventually, resurrect her. It's this Spirit-given confidence, this life-giving faith, that drives her song, the song we take as our own:

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 to me,
and holy is his name.
And his mercy is for those who fear him



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He has shown strength with his arm;
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he has brought down the mighty 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.

And so it is, that by the Grace of God in Christ Jesus, by that terrible and most wonderful sacrifice, by the power of His resurrection and triumph over the grave, that St. Mary is most certainly immaculate, pure, and undefiled forever, higher than the cherubim, more glorious than the seraphim – not because she was so honored as to nurse Him at her breast, but because she heard the Word of God, and impossible as it seemed, she believed it. She is forgiven, washed, declared righteous by Grace. Is it any wonder that her soul rejoices in God her Savior, in God her Son? And so it is with all His saints, even you. You have the same benefit, the same inheritance, the same Grace. You are forgiven, washed, declared righteous, lifted above the cherubim and seraphim, honored and blessed by God for Jesus' sake. Hallelujah! In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen