

St. Mary, the Mother of God, 2010

Text: Luke 1:46-55

Title: Mary's Praise

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Mary praised God. It was a remarkable thing, and the church has echoed her song of praise down through the centuries. In fact, you just finished singing it yourself.

But consider for a moment the circumstances surrounding this song of praise, the situation in which Mary sung it. Think about what Mary was going through when she erupted in praise and thanksgiving.

Mary had just been told that she would be the mother of the Son of God. The angel Gabriel had appeared to her and told her of God's plan, and the special role that she would play.

Mary was probably just a teenager at this point. She was engaged to be married, but was still a virgin.

In Mary's day it was dangerous for her to be pregnant, perhaps even deadly. Adultery was a capital crime.

The natural thing would be for Mary to be filled with fear and worry. Think of all the questions that would have gone through her mind. What will happen to me? What will happen to my baby? How will this work? What will Joseph think? How do I explain this to him? And what about my parents?

How will I be able to raise a child on my own? How do I care for the Son of God? What's He going to be like? Will He be a normal child? Or something strange and different?

Having a baby under any circumstances is a stressful time, full of worry and anxiety, especially your first child. You wonder if you'll be a good parent, if you'll have what it takes. You wonder if you'll be able to provide for your child, not only for his physical needs, but emotional and spiritual as well. You worry about everything that could go wrong during the pregnancy. You worry about the dangers of childbirth.

In Mary's day giving birth was a much more perilous experience. Many women and children did not survive.

Did Mary share these worries and fears? Was she anxious about not only becoming a mother, but the mother of God? Did Mary have any second thoughts?

If so, then she didn't show it. Mary didn't complain about being chosen. She didn't try to avoid serving in this way. Remember Moses? He came up with every excuse in the book not to serve. And Gideon, who kept testing the Lord to make sure that He had the right man for the job. And

the most notorious of all was probably Jonah, who caught the next boat for the other side of the world rather than preach to the Ninevites.

But not Mary. Mary said, “May it be to me as you have said.” No excuses. No complaints. No second thoughts.

And when she goes to visit her cousin Elizabeth, she sings a song of praise and thanks to God for His goodness to her.

Mary delights in the way that God has chosen to work His salvation. Not through the strong and the mighty, but through the weak and the lowly.

God could have chosen the Queen in Jerusalem to be the mother of His Son. God could have had Him born in a royal palace with servants to wait on His every need.

But instead, God chose a young, unmarried girl from Galilee to be the mother of the Savior of the world.

There was nothing that Mary did to deserve this honor. She didn’t win a contest or a pageant. She didn’t even apply for the job. It all came to her as a gift, pure grace and mercy.

And this is what comes through in her hymn of praise. “He who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name.”

Mary doesn’t talk about herself, except as the recipient of God’s grace and mercy and blessings. She doesn’t sing about herself and her accomplishments, but only about God and His faithfulness.

Today is the day the church has set aside to give thanks to God for Mary and the blessing she has been to His people.

As Lutherans, sometimes we avoid talking about Mary, because we don’t want to get confused with those Roman Catholics. When was the last time you saw a “St. Mary’s Lutheran Church”?

Mary has a special place in the history of salvation. Every week we mention Mary’s name in the creed, as we confess our faith in her Son.

Mary was there at the beginning. The Son of God was conceived in her body, and she carried Him inside her for nine months. She gave birth to Him in the most trying of circumstances, away from home, not even in a house. Mary brought Him to the temple to present Him to the Lord. And then she was forced to flee to Egypt to save Him from Herod’s sword. She raised Jesus Christ from infancy, teaching Him to walk and talk. Mary heard Jesus’ first words; she fed Him; she comforted Him; she taught Him; she loved Him.

Mary brought Jesus back to the temple at age 12. She was there at Cana for his first miracle. And Mary was standing at the foot of the cross with her heart breaking as Jesus died.

But that was not the end. Mary was there for Easter, too, and was filled with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

Moms are important, and Jesus' mother was an important part of His life. She was faithful and caring. But Mary never sought attention for herself, she kept pointing people to her Son.

We have a lot we can learn from Mary. We can learn from her faith as she sings it in the Magnificat.

Chances are, there are a lot of things in your life that are troubling you, that you are anxious and worried about. You may not be an unwed, teenage mother, but there are plenty of other things to cause you to be afraid.

Maybe you're worried about finances, how you will pay the bills and provide for your family. Maybe you're worried about your health or the health of a loved one. Maybe you're worried about spiritual matters, about your own sinfulness and whether you're really forgiven.

When Mary saw her situation, she wasn't consumed by worries and fears. Instead, Mary gave thanks to God and praised Him for His faithfulness. Mary trusted that the Lord would take care of her and that He would remember His promises.

Last week, Jesus told you to consider the crows and weeds. This week, look at Mary. If there was ever a person who deserved to be worried and anxious and upset, it was her. But the Lord took care of her. The Lord sent an angel to tell Joseph of the miracle by which she had conceived, and so he took her to be his. The Lord kept them safe on the road to Bethlehem and even to Egypt and back. The Lord watched over Jesus as He was growing up and kept Him safe. And even when Jesus died on the cross, the Lord raised Him from the dead on the third day.

Today we don't celebrate Mary, as much as we celebrate the Lord's goodness to her, and to you.

You, too, are weak and humble and lowly. You don't deserve to play a role in God's salvation. You don't deserve to bear Christ into the world.

And yet, the Lord chose you. The Lord sent His Son to you. In moments you will receive the very Son of God here at this altar, as He joins His flesh and blood with yours. As you leave you will bear Jesus Christ in your body out into the world.

So sing along with Mary. Give thanks, and praise the Lord for His goodness to you. Magnify the Lord. Rejoice in God your Savior.

The Lord has looked on your humble estate. The Lord has blessed you. The Lord has done great things for you. The Lord has shown mercy to you. The Lord has exalted you, raised you up. The Lord has filled you with good things. The Lord has helped you, His servant, in remembrance of His mercy. The Lord has kept His promise to Abraham through you.