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St. Mary, Mother of our Lord

St. Athanasius Lutheran Church
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“The Blessing of the Word: From Eve to Mary to You”
Text: Luke 1:39-55; Galatians 4:4-7

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

Today we commemorate Mary, the mother of our Lord. She is worthy of honor as the woman through whom our Saviour Jesus received His human nature.

But we cannot properly remember and rejoice in Mary, without recalling and thinking of another mother - the first mother, in fact; the mother of all the living, and that is Eve. For the promise God made to Eve is now fulfilled in Mary. The promise that an offspring of Eve, one who would be born of woman alone, would place His human heel down upon the serpent's head. That promised one is conceived in the womb of the virgin Mary. The Saviour who is both the Son of God and the son of man. Eve's words of joy: *“I have gotten a man, the Lord”* (Gen 4:1), have finally come true. The Lord has come in the flesh.

This promise brought joy to Eve because she knew what she had lost. God had created and given her life and a Paradise in which to live it, but she was not content with that. She reaches out for more. She believes the word of satan instead of the Word of God, and so takes what she was not given. But in so doing, she receives not more and better life (as satan had promised), but death. And in passing the forbidden fruit onto her husband, he too dies. Yet not just him, with him all creation is plunged into sin and death on that sad day.

But just as God had breathed life into Adam after forming him from the dust of the ground, so now it is His Word that breathes life into Eve again. The God whose Word she did not believe, the God whose command she had just broken, the God whose creation she had just ruined with sin, does not reject her. No, she will still be the mother of all the living - He does not take that gift away from her. And, in fact, He makes her motherhood even greater - just as she was taken from the flesh and bone of man, so a man will come from her flesh and bone to make things right again. And with that Word and promise of God, she begins to live again. Now living by faith clinging to this Word and promise of God.

And then, as St. Paul said, ***when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son***, born of woman. The Word spoken to Eve becomes flesh in the virgin womb of

Mary. The Word that gave life from the dead to Eve, now plants the one who will be the life of the world into Mary. And the fruit of her womb will not plunge the world into sin and death, but will raise the world in forgiveness and life. So yes, Elizabeth, you are quite right. **Blessed is the fruit of Mary's womb.**

And, Elizabeth continues, **blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.**

Don't take that for granted. It would have been easy for Mary not to believe this Word, just as Eve did not believe. That fruit was nothing special, why would God forbid it? And Mary was nothing special - just an ordinary maiden whom no one considered of any importance - why would God choose her?

Why indeed? Except as Mary had learned from the prophets, that's who God is. **The God who brings down the mighty from their thrones, and exalts those of humble estate. The God who fills the hungry with good things, and sends the rich away empty.** The God whose daily occupation is to create something from nothing, to give life to the dead, to take what is worthless in the eyes of the world and use them for wonderful and awesome things. Luther said that was the most staggering miracle of all here: that Mary believed this. That she - *little she, insignificant she, nothing she* - believed that she would be the mother of God.

And unlike Eve, with this Word she is content. She asks for nothing more. She humbly receives what she has been given. **My soul magnifies the Lord**, she says. The Lord who does not reject sinners, but gives great gifts to men.

Do you believe that? I know that you do. Then why do you keep acting like Eve and reaching for what has not been given to you? Then why do you keep trying to be something before God, as if you have something to prove to God? Then why do you think that God has forgotten you in your troubles, rejected you in your sin, and does not rejoice in you? Repent of these things, O sons of Adam and daughters of Eve, and hear the Word that God would speak to you: *I forgive you all your sins.*

For yes, you are like Eve; but also you are like Mary. Yes, you are a sinner; but in your sin and death your Saviour comes to raise you in His forgiveness and life. And you are here to **magnify the Lord** who has done such great things for you. *For blessed are you who believe what is spoken to you from the Lord.*

Yes, you who *believe* this Word, even if you cannot see it or feel it. Even so, it is true. When Mary **went with haste** to visit Elizabeth, she couldn't see or feel the truth - she wasn't showing yet, she felt no kicking in her womb yet - but the Word of the Lord does what it says. And just as there was new life by the Word in Mary, so there is new life in you by that same Word. A son of God, a Christian, who cries

“Abba! Father!”

For that is why the Son of God came down to us in our sin and death and is planted in the womb of the virgin Mary - *to give you life*. Not a second chance at the same old life, but a new life. For we don't just need help, we need a resurrection. And that is what Jesus has come to give us. And so as we confess in the Creed, *He is born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, is crucified, dead, and buried, and on the third day rises again from the dead*. That we too might rise from the dead. And not just on the last day, but even now, rising from the death of sin to a new life in Christ. A resurrection given to us even now through God's Word of promise. His Word which does what it says. His Word which raised Eve, gave life in Mary's virgin womb, and now gives life to you.

Yes, to you. To little you, insignificant you, nothing you - you are baptized and made a son of God. You are baptized and your sins drowned and buried with Christ. You are baptized and resurrected with Christ. In those waters the Word and promise of God were given to you. In those waters the Holy Spirit overshadowed you, the Son lives in you, and the Father is well-pleased and delighted in you. You are holy. He has made you so. You have a new life. He has given it to you. You may not feel it, but believe it. For what God says to you and about you is truer than what you may see or feel.

Which is important, because Satan will try to convince you otherwise, that you are *not* blessed. That God, in fact, is not good and faithful. He will play tricks with your eyes and deceive you with your feelings, trying to get you to turn away from God and His Word and His promise.

But here again, the example of Mary can help us. For Mary was most blessed among women, but her sorrows were just beginning. From Joseph almost dismissing her, to the outdoor birth of her child, to fleeing in the night from Herod's sword and exile in Egypt, to losing her Joseph, and then standing at the foot of the cross in horror as they tortured and mocked her son. But she would see her risen Lord, and even in her sorrows she knew joy. Even in sorrow, she is blessed.

And so it is for you. Blessed are you who believe, though your sorrows may just be beginning; though they be many and great. Your Saviour has not left you or changed His mind. His Word is true and sure. As He sustained Mary, so He will sustain you. Your Lord is risen, and so even in sorrow you will know joy. Even in sorrow, you are blessed.

For yes, ***blessed is the fruit of Mary's womb***, and blessed are you who eat that fruit, who eat the Body and drink the Blood of your Saviour Jesus Christ. The fruit that gives salvation and life, that the life of Christ live in you. This table Jesus sets before

you in the midst of your troubles, in the midst of your sorrows, in the midst of sin and death, to give you life and joy in the midst of these things. That you know they cannot win. For the one in you is greater than these, and still He is filling the hungry with good things, exalting the humble, and raising the dead in the forgiveness of their sins.

And so blessed are you; yes, truly blessed, who hear this Word of God and believe. You whose sins are forgiven. You who are baptized. You who join the angels and archangels and all the saints who have gone before us, singing the song of the blessed one: ***My soul magnifies the Lord . . . for He who is mighty has done great things for me.***

In the Name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Now the peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.