

14 August 2013
St. Mary, Mother of Our Lord

St. Athanasius Lutheran Church
Greenspring Village, Springfield, VA

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"He Remembered!"

Text: Luke 1:39-55; Galatians 4:4-7; Isaiah 61:7-11

Did anyone ever forget your birthday? How about your anniversary, or some other special day? It's no fun to be forgotten.

Or, did anyone ever just forget to do what they said they were going to do for you, when you were really counting on them? Or forget to show up where they said they were going to meet you, and you were really looking forward to being with them? Forgetting can really mess things up.

This evening we heard Mary exclaim: ***He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever.***

To many in Israel, it probably seemed like the Lord was taking *forever* to fulfill His promise. How long had it been since that promise had first been uttered to Eve? That promise of a Saviour. And then repeated to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to David, and repeatedly spoken down through the years by the prophets? Well, it was so long that David often cries out in the psalms "*How long, O Lord, how long?*" (Psalm 13:1) and the people of Israel often thought "*The Lord has forsaken us; our Lord has forgotten us*" (Isaiah 49:14).

But the Lord did not forget His people or His promise. And so St. Paul told the Galatians: ***when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son.*** When just the right time had come, God sprang into action, sent the angel Gabriel to a young virgin in Nazareth, announced that she was going to be the mother of the Lord, and that virgin bowed her head and said: *Let it be to me according to your word* (Luke 1:38). And, I would say, not just the word then spoken, but according to the word that had been spoken ever since the beginning. According to that word first spoken *as promise* to Eve and now spoken *in fulfillment* to Mary.

And yet actually God had already begun to fulfill His word, for six months before the angel came to Mary, Gabriel first made a stop to see Zechariah and announce that he and his wife Elizabeth - who had been barren up until that time - were going to have a son. And not just any son, but the son who would go before the Lord to prepare his way. The promised forerunner. The plan was already in progress.

So when Mary goes to visit Elizabeth, the house is filled with joy! Elizabeth bursts out in blessing, six month old John leaps in her womb, and Mary cries out with joy, *He remembered!*

You probably know how Israel felt. It is easy still today to think that the Lord has forgotten you. When struggles are hard and long, when you feel dried up and empty, when prayers seem to go unanswered and the joy you once had seems like an old, faded memory.

But what Mary reminds us today is that *He remembers!* God does not forget you or the promises He made to you when He baptized you. *He remembers* and maybe the plans He has for you have already been set in motion six months ago and you just don't know it yet. But even if not, you are not forgotten. Rather it is as Isaiah said: ***For as the earth brings forth its sprouts, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to sprout up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to sprout up before all the nations.***

Or in other words, the working of God is like a seed planted in the ground. If you didn't know it was there, you might think there was nothing there and that ground was useless and barren. But that seed is going to sprout and grow ***in the fullness of time***. And when it does, it is going to produce a harvest of righteousness and praise. Of righteousness, which is forgiveness; and of praise, which is our confession of our faithful God who *remembers* His promises. Who *remembers* His children.

And maybe the reason we think the Lord has forgotten us, or we miss His working, is because we were looking in the wrong place. God doesn't always act how we expect. And so a Son is born to a virgin, and not in the place of kings, Jerusalem, but in a manger in Bethlehem. And then Mary tells us more about how God works - ***the mighty are brought down from their thrones, and the humble are exalted. The hungry are filled with good things and the rich are sent away empty.*** Not the way of the world, to be sure. But even better, for it is the way of God.

And it is His way *for you*. For you who are His children - not by nature, but by adoption, through the water and Word of Holy Baptism. His child, dearly loved, whom He will never forget. For you, all His promises are yes. For you, all His work is good. For you, is the joy of Mary's *He remembered!* ***An everlasting joy***, Isaiah says. For it is the joy of God's blessing. The blessing of His presence, His forgiveness, and His life. That's what changed a young virgin named Mary into St. Mary, and one ***whom all generations [now] call blessed.***

And you are so blessed. For ***the mighty one has done great things for you*** as well. The "great things" of His death and resurrection, that He be yours and you be His forever, in a unity and life that not even death can end. For this one born of Mary

not only gives life but conquered death; He makes promises and keeps them; He remembers and does not forget.

And so tonight we join Mary in magnifying the Lord and rejoicing in God our Saviour. For He has looked on your humble estate, and did great things for you.

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