

The Song of Mary

Luke 1:26-56

As the mother of the Lord Jesus Christ Mary is blessed among women. She received the good news of the incarnation of the Son of God and believed what the Lord would accomplish through Him. She provides a wonderful example of true Christmas faith and the cost of following Christ.

The Blessed Virgin

Mary is one of the most famous characters of the Christmas story and we want to mark her example of faith and not that of those who embrace superstitions about her. She is called blessed among women by the angel Gabriel (v. 28). He tells her not to be afraid because she has found favor (grace) with God (v. 30). Elizabeth twice calls her blessed, and Mary says that all generations will call her blessed (vv. 42, 45, 48). The honor and blessing of bearing, raising, and nurturing the Lord Jesus Christ should be minimized, and it's an honor given to a sinner as she confessed: *"And my spirit rejoices in God my Savior"* (v. 47). The false doctrine of the Immaculate Conception posits that Mary was born free from original sin, first declared as official Roman Catholic doctrine by Pope Pius IX in 1854. But Jesus saves Mary from her sins and without Him she would be lost. Calling Mary blessed and calling on her in prayer to bless are very different. The law forbids practicing necromancy, trying to connect with the dead or pose as someone who can (Lev. 20:6). The godly don't pray to departed saints anywhere in Scripture (cf. 1 Sam. 28). For the faithful departed to hear us, they would have to be omniscient like God is. Mary is no co-mediatrix or co-redemptrix: *"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus"* (2 Tim. 2:5). The Assumption of Mary, the idea that she never died but was assumed into heaven, is also not in Scripture. We can say and sing "Ave, Maria", remembering what the angel said without dishonoring her testimony with superstition and idolatry (cf. Ex. 20:4-6). Mary was a virgin when she conceived by the Holy Spirit, and Joseph didn't know her sexually until after Jesus was born (v. 34; Matt. 1:25). After that Mary was a faithful and fruitful wife to Joseph, bearing four more sons and at least two daughters (Matt. 13:55-56). Because she was a virgin until the birth of Jesus it's appropriate to refer to her at that time as the blessed virgin, but we're thankful for the legacy of the Reformation which eventually rejected the idea of her perpetual virginity and restored the honor of the marriage bed (Heb. 13:4).

Taking up Her Cross

Recognizing and rejoicing in the coming Messiah was a great exercise of Mary's faith. She is likely 13 to 16 years old when Gabriel speaks to her, and knowing that she has not been with a man, she understands that it will look like she has (v. 34). This would likely mean the end of her betrothal to Joseph (Matt. 1:19). Simeon soon tells her this child will bring about the fall and rising of many in Israel, a sign that will be spoken against, and a sword will pierce her own soul (Lk. 2:34-35). The flight to Egypt and the slaughter of the innocents in Bethlehem are all part of the Christmas story (Matt. 2:14-18). Mary does not live in Jerusalem or Caesarea. She's from the small town of Nazareth (cf. Jn. 1:46); she and Joseph have little resources. She is not overstating anything when she says God has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant (v. 48). Mary reminds us of Miriam, Moses' sister. Jesus is the greater Moses, the promised prophet to come lead and Israel through a greater exodus (Dt. 18:15). Miriam watched over baby Moses by side of the river when Pharaoh's daughter found him. She then approached and offered to get a "Hebrew woman" to nurse him for her (Ex. 2:4, 7). She suffered through Israel's slavery and later sang after the exodus: *"The horse and rider He has thrown into the sea"* (Ex. 15:20-21; Mic. 6:4). Mary is blessed by the high calling of motherhood and the honor of bearing her Lord. She put her faith in God in face of fear.

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The Magnificat

Mary was steeped in Scripture, and her humble response was to magnify the Lord (v. 46), thus her song is called the Magnificat. The Song of Mary references numerous of passages in the Old Testament revealing her faith and hope in what God would do through the Messiah.

⁴⁶ “My soul magnifies the Lord, (1 Sam. 2:1-10; Formerly barren Hannah rejoices at the dedication of her son Samuel, priest/judge to be)

⁴⁷ And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. (Hab. 3:18; Is. 61:10; Ps. 35:9)

⁴⁸ For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; for behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed. (1 Sam. 1:11; Ps. 138:6)

⁴⁹ For He who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is His name. (Ps. 71:19)

⁵⁰ And His mercy is on those who fear Him From generation to generation. (Ex. 20:6, 34:6-7; Ps. 103:17)

⁵¹ He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. (Ps. 89:13, 98:1, 118:14)

⁵² He has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted the lowly. (1 Sam. 2:7-8)

⁵³ He has filled the hungry with good things, And the rich He has sent away empty. (1 Sam. 2:5)

⁵⁴ He has helped His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy, (Is. 41:8; Ps. 98:3)

⁵⁵ As He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed forever.” (Gen. 17:19; Ps. 132:11).

A Merry Christmas

Mary had learned and believed the Old Testament promises, the good news that God would show mercy to His people, and deliver them from all of their sins. “With Mary, we behold it”, as the hymn says:

*This Flow’r, whose fragrance tender
With sweetness fills the air,
Dispels with glorious splendor
The darkness everywhere.
True man, yet very God,
From sin and death He saves us,
And lightens every load.*

Jesus is the gospel, and the gospel is the only thing that dispel the darkness of sin that comes from our hearts — “From sin and death He saves us.” Christmas is about the life and death of Christ for our sins. Like Mary, treasure up all of these things and ponder them in your heart (Lk. 2:19). God did not whisk her and Joseph, the shepherds, the wise men, or the families living in Bethlehem away to the light of heaven. He sent His Son to shine the light in this dark world so that men would be of sin, righteousness, and judgment. So first, to have a merry Christmas, we behold the gospel and believe it. Second, we believe that He does lighten every load. His yoke is easy and His burden light, and He came to make His blessings flow as far as the curse is found. This is every bit as much a matter as believing the gospel in the first place. We celebrate the light and victory of Christ at Christmas, and it’s a light that shines ever brighter. Mary saw it at the first flash, just the promise that it would happen. We live In the Year of Our Lord nearly 2024. Because Jesus took on flesh, died and rose, your labor in the Lord is not in vain, nor the labor of your brothers and sisters for 2000 years. As you wrap, open, celebrate, plan for the new year, work, rest, and rejoice, believe and live in the hope of your Savior.