**Faithful Mary**

**Feast of St. Mary T Luke 1:39-55**

**INI**

**“Blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoke to her from the Lord.”**

Today, we observe Mary, the mother of our Lord. But we don’t remember Mary because of Mary. We don’t remember her this day to exalt her to some sort of divine status. We don’t even exalt her to any status that you and I don’t share with her. Rather, today, we remember Mary because she points us to her Son, Jesus.

 We are as Mary was. That is to say, we’re humans - inflicted with original sin, we commit actual sins, and when we pass away from this earth, you and I don’t hear prayers here on earth and communicate them to the Father. The Catholic Church ascribes such characteristics to Mary, but Scripture testifies that there’s only one mediator between God and Man. That one mediator is the fruit of Mary’s womb – Jesus. So, we know that there wasn’t anything special about Mary’s nature, or about her status as a human.

Though, it pleased God to chose Mary to give birth to the Savior of the World. What makes Mary different – not in her nature – is something related to her faith. Her faith was great! She willingly accepted what the Lord had given her without complaint. Thus, Mary is the model for Christian faith here on earth. She demonstrates Habakkuk 2:4 better than any other character in Scripture, which says – ***“the righteous shall live by faith.”***

Elizabeth, who was Mary’s cousin, acknowledged Mary’s faith. For, Mary believed the Word of God that came to her through the angel Gabriel. The angel told her – **“Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give him the throne of His Father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”** Now, Mary was only 14-16 years old at the time. She was engaged to Joseph. Joseph knew he hadn’t engaged in pre-marital sex with her. What was he supposed to think when he saw Mary pregnant? Such acts of adultery could result in one of two things according to Jewish Law. At worst, she’d be put to death. At best, she’d be cast out of Nazareth and disregarded by her own people as a prostitute.

 Either way, the future didn’t look bright for Mary. But even though the future didn’t look bright, she trusted in the Lord nonetheless, and she had faith in His purposes. Since this was what the Lord wanted, she willingly went with it, trusting that the Lord would bring about what He promised – which was a Savior, through Mary. Her simple response to the angel wasn’t with disbelief. She didn’t say ‘the road is too hard, Lord. I’ve got a good thing going with Jospeh and I really don’t want to mess it up with this virgin pregnancy thing. Are you sure you got the right person? Can’t you find someone else?” Of course, Mary didn’t say that. Rather, she said: **“behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.”**

 She responded to God’s will with joy, even when the future didn’t look so bright. She responded to God’s Word with acceptance. In this way, we can learn from Mary. Because of the sinful world we live in, our ways will be met with adversity, pain, and suffering. The future may not look hopeful by any human standards. We may search and wonder what to do and where to go.

 This is where we take a play from Mary’s playbook – no matter what the future looks like, we submit to the will of God and rejoice in the results. No matter what the world thought about her and her pregnancy, she knew the truth. She knew the way to life, for the Lord had revealed it to her, in her womb. The Lord had looked upon her and blessed her. This Baby has and will do good things for her, and for the world. So it is with us – no matter how precarious our situations that the Lord sets before us may look, each situation is an oppurtunity to meet the Lord with faith, knowing and trusting that whatever situation He sets before us, He will use it to bless us.

 There’s a hymn that gives comfort in situations such as these, reminding us that it’s Jesus who leads us down these often times difficult paths. Hymn 718 in your hymnal is “Jesus, Lead Thou On”. The first stanza is this:

“Jesus, lead Thou On,

Till our rest is won;

 And although the way be cheerless,

 We will follow calm and fearless.

Guide us by Thy hand

To our fatherland.”

Stanza 2:

“If the way be drear,

If the foe be near,

 Let not faithless fear o’ertake us;

 Let not faith and hope forsake us;

For through many a woe

To our home we go.”

 And so, even when our futures look bleak, we rejoice in our sufferings, and trust that through it, the Lord blesses us and leads us to Himself. For He is our home.

 This gives the faithful joy – as it did to Mary! In our text for today, she expresses her joy in the words of the Magnificat – which most of us know well from Advent and Lent services. In her song of praise, she rehearses salvation history and the contents of the Gospel message. Her words tell of the ministry of her baby.

 In Mary’s song, she sings of the Great Reversal – that things that we think of as normal are actually the opposite with God. Examples of this great reversal are numerous in Scripture – a couple of which our sinful flesh struggles to accomplish. Jesus says **“If you want to save your life, you must lost it.”** And another place, Jesus says **“Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”**

 But here in Mary’s song, she sings of God’s great mercy in executing this “Great Reversal” for the people – that God shows strength to those who are proud within their hearts . That he brought down the mighty from their exalted places, and raised up the humble to fill their places. He fills the hungry and empty – those who have absolutely nothing. He fills them with good things. Blessed are the poor in Spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God. But the rich, He sends empty away.

 This is what Jesus has come to do – to reverse a fear-filled, despairing and discouraged group of people. He comes to set His people, along with all creation, free. This freedom from sin comes in the most unexpected way – a horrendous death. The most Holy God, creator of heaven and earth, the Word of God made flesh, His greatest triumph was death. Not just any death, but a humiliating, bloody death. Jesus came to fill people who are empty with the fruit of His cross and resurrection. Jesus brought down low those who exalted themselves. He did this by submitting to the slavery of their sin, by undergoing their punishment. He came to be the Messiah – to reverse the effects of sin which leads to death. Through Christ, death gives birth to life.

God first revealed this plan of the Great Reversal to Mary. God could have chosen a prestigious queen, choosing a noble birth. Yet, God chose to work through the humble to save the humble. To save the poor in spirit.

So, you see, Mary is the best example of faith. Even though earthly danger accompanied the promise of Jesus in her womb, she accepted this precarious situation with gratitude, thanksgiving, and joy. Because she trusted the Lord her God. We should imitate her faith – because just as Mary always points to Jesus, giving praise His work – never pointing to her own work – Likewise, so shall we always point to Jesus, and trust our Lord, no matter how bleak our future’s may look.

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