

St. Mary, Mother of God

August 15, 2021

Luke 1:39-55

While growing up in Minnesota, talk of saints in my childhood church was not commonplace. To speak of Mary, let alone observe the Festival of Saint Mary, Mother of Our Lord, that seemed completely foreign. This is a bit surprising when you take a step back as Mary is spoken of throughout the Divine Service - specifically in the Creed and sometimes in the Proper Preface.

Still, some of you may remain suspicious of observing Saint days throughout the Church Year, such as Mary. But, our Lutheran Confessions have always taught that it is right to observe the feasts and festivals of the Saints, to include Mary. The Augsburg Confession states:

"Our churches teach that the history of saints may be set before us so that we may follow the example of their faith and good works, according to our calling."¹

The Apology of the Augsburg Confession further presents the three reasons for observing and honoring the saints more fully. To summarize the confessors,

"First, we thank God for giving faithful servants to His Church. Second, through such remembrance, our faith is strengthened as we see the mercy that God extended to His saints of old. Third, these saints are examples by which we may imitate both their faith and their holy living according to our calling in life."

Our Lutheran Confessions provide an outline of why and how we are to remember the faithful servants of God, and for this, we give thanks this day for Mary, the Mother of Our Lord.

We give thanks because she was a faithful servant of God. In the verse before the Gospel, Mary responds to the angel Gabriel's announcement of the Christ child she will

¹ McCain, P. T. (Ed.). (2005). *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions* (p. 44). St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House.

bear, *"Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word."*
(Luke 1:38)

How often do you join Mary's confession, *"I am a servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word?"* You could hear these words flowing off your lips tomorrow as you return to the office, can't you? Alright, probably not. Truthfully, this confession by the mother of our Lord can't be further from your lips.

We live near a city where everyone angles not for servitude but to be served. Our hearts, our minds, and the words of our lips do not reveal our care and concern for the history and people that point us to God, but rather for the history being written today - the latest gossip, the most recent resignations of the most powerful, the current stats and statistics regarding the Coronavirus. Our words and thoughts reveal where our trust truly lies and the lowly estate of our hearts today.

Our hearts are lowly, aren't they? And still, every time we gather in this place, we join Mary as she proclaims in the Magnificat, *"For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant."*

He regards us in our lowly estate and grants us His mercy. For we heard and have this truth still today, *"And His mercy is on those who fear Him; from generation to generation."* Throughout the Magnificat, there are images of the Passover and the Exodus. God is the One who exalts the lowly, pulls down the mighty from their thrones, and sends the rich away empty.

The Father's mercy is revealed through the incarnation of His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. He came into your lowliness as He grew within the womb of Mary, taking upon Himself your flesh. He took the place of a servant, and upon the cross, He ascended His throne where His mightiest work was complete in His death.

Why is this? Because you are not the faithful servants, you are called to be.

Mary's words continue to give voice to the Church today in responding to God's Word. In the remembrance of this maidservant, we are called to say, *"I am a servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word."*

This morning, Gregory was baptized. He confessed His faith. He joined Mary in saying, *"I am a servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word?"* And in the Baptismal waters poured over the head of Gregory, he entered into Christ's death and was raised again. None of this was his action, but just as Mary says, *"The mighty one has done great things,"* so Greg confessed with Mary – it is not my work, my doing, but it by the hand of God and according to His will and His Word.

In a few moments, Evangelina and Lisette will confess their faith through the rite of Confirmation. In some churches, the rite of Confirmation is seen as a person's pledge to God, the focus and dependence are upon them, and the unique faith they possess. But, Evangelina and Lisette will respond to the questions asked regarding their faith by saying, *"I do, by the grace of God."* With these words, they confess the faith of old and join Mary in saying, *"I am a servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word?"*

The pattern of baptism and confirmation continues within all the hearts of man. As we began the service with the sign of the cross we also remembered our baptisms, the Holy Name placed upon us, made us holy, and set us apart with the rest of the saints.

As we confessed our sin, we confessed that we too are unworthy servants of the Lord. Our confession of sin prays before the Father - do not judge us as we deserve, but according to your Son – the Word made flesh.

As we confessed the Creed, we join the Church and all the saints of old in confessing the One True God and how the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit continue to create, redeem, and work faith within us.

Today, as we observe Mary, the Mother of Our Lord, permit her confession to point you to her Son, Jesus Christ. This is what her entire life and the lives of all the saints do; they

teach us how to suffer for the Gospel, how we are to be servants of God and one another, and how to look onto the cross where Salvation was won for you and for me.

Permit this Word of truth to abide in you this day and throughout your many callings of this life. +INJ+

*The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.
Amen.*

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