

May 14, 2017
Sunday Morning Service
Mother's Day
Community Baptist Church
643 S. Suber Road
Greer, SC 29650
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MARY, MOTHER OF GOD'S CHOICE Luke 1:26-38

It almost seems unfair to talk about Mary on Mother's Day, and more so if we use her as an example of motherhood. Everyone knows that Mary was not normal, right? Nearly all religious people know that God chose her, venerated her, dealt with her supernaturally, and took her to heaven where she intercedes for those who pray to her and through her. Yes, religious people are aware of those things. But people who love God and love God's Word hold quite a different view of Mary.

Mary, as the Bible presents her, was in most ways a very normal woman and mother, apart from the fact that God the Holy Spirit impregnated her with the promised Seed, the Messiah, the Savior. Yes, that was pretty spectacular. But beyond that amazing miracle, we find Mary described as a very human woman. As such, she is able to encourage mothers of any age; especially mothers, who like her, know God, love God, and trust God.

First, it might be profitable for us to consider and refute the major errors about Mary that are unbiblical and have been taught by the organized, but errant, visible church over the centuries. In answer to those misgivings, we will discover some of the great descriptions of Mary as God had them recorded in His Word, the Bible. Having discovered Mary, we will close by spending a few minutes considering how Mary's example from the Bible can be a challenge and an encouragement to mothers of any age.

Mary the Mother.

We will begin our brief study of Mother Mary, by considering who and what she was not or is not still today. The visible, organized, but errant, church has taught some pretty amazing things about Mary for centuries. However, these things are extra-biblical and untrue.

First, Mary was not the mother of God. The early church sought to clarify the teaching that Mary bore Christ through the miracle of the Holy Spirit conceiving Him in her womb. That part about Mary is certainly true. We read in Luke's account, *When Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?"* (Luke 1:41-43).

Mary was indeed the mother of Jesus Christ our Lord. And it is also true that He is co-equal with God the Father. But it is very confusing to say that Mary was the mother of God. How did the church come up with that? When Constantine popularized Christianity, he brought various pagan idolatries into the Church with him. One of those heresies involved the mother goddess idol concept from Roman legend. The result of combining paganism with Christian practice is the heresy of praying to Mary mother of God.

Second, Mary was not sinless. The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that *By the grace of God Mary remained free of every personal sin her whole life long.* In contrast to that error, the Bible teaches that God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit alone are sinless and that all have sinned and fallen short of His glory (Romans 3:23). Mary, being as human as we all are, qualifies for the "all have sinned" assessment.

Third, Mary did not ascend to heaven. Again the Catechism of the Catholic church teaches that *The Most Blessed Virgin Mary, when the course of her earthly life was completed, was taken up body and soul into the glory of heaven, where she already shares in the glory of her Son's Resurrection.* That is tradition added to Scripture and contrary to Scripture. The Bible teaches that with the exception of Elijah and Jesus, no human has ascended to heaven permanently. The

legend that Mary miraculously ascended to heaven without dying is just that – legend.

Fourth, Mary is not the queen of heaven. The Catholic Church teaches that Mary is now exalted as Queen over all things. Again this is a church tradition that finds no merit or reason in Scripture.

Fifth, Mary was not a perpetual virgin. Scripture clearly teaches that Mary was a virgin when she conceived Jesus because she and Joseph had not had intimate relations. Mary, explained to Gabriel that it was impossible that she could be pregnant with the Christ child because she had not known a man, Luke 1:34. Joseph also intended to divorce Mary privately because he knew that they had not had relations. However, Scripture reveals that after the birth of Jesus, Mary and Joseph had normal intimate relations which produced step-brothers and sisters of Jesus (Matt.1:25; 13:55; Luke 8:20).

Sixth, Mary is not the mediatrix. The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches a prayer to Mary that includes: *Turn, then, most gracious advocate, thine eyes of mercy toward us. Pray for us, O holy Mother of God, that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.* The Bible teaches that we have one mediator between us and God, and He is Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 2:5).

Seventh, Mary does not appear miraculously in apparitions today. The result of these many heresies that the image of Mary shows up on pieces of toast or in the clouds of the sky robs Christ of His glory. He is now glorified in heaven as our only Savior from sin, our only mediator, who alone lived perfectly in life, died innocently, rose from the dead for our justification, ascended to heaven and is coming again. But then again, these heresies come from a religious organization that exalts the Pope as the replacement for Christ on earth.

How refreshing it is for us to be able to open our Bibles and discover Mary as the Bible describes her. Mary was the Lord's bonds slave. That very politically incorrect assessment is not well received by a world that is in rebellion to the Lord. But to us who love our Creator and Savior, being a bonds slave to Him is the least we can do.

Because she considered herself the bonds slave of the Lord, Mary was willing to do the Lord's will, even if it was difficult to comprehend (Luke 1:38). *And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant*

of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her (Luke 1:38). As we have indicated already, the English word *servant* is the Greek word *bond servant*. That word describes a person who occupied a lowly, humble station in life. This servant was one who an owner and master purchased for a price. Therefore, the bonds slave lived to do the will of the master.

To that end, it was fitting that Mary acknowledged that the Lord was her master. In all honesty, what the angel announced to her was impossible for her to comprehend. Nevertheless, she presented herself to God because she was simply willing to be used according to the Master's will.

Mary's attitude as the Lord's bonds slave did not change as Jesus grew, and it became obvious that He was not just her son but her Lord. The New Testament lays down evidence that Mary submitted to the Lord even as a mother. That is obvious in the wedding at Cana story where we discover that Mary was in charge of the entertainment at the wedding. *On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples. When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come." His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you" (John 2:1-5).*

This short story is such a beautiful illustration of Mary's submission to her Master. That the party ran out of wine would reflect on Mary's inadequate preparation. Therefore, it seems the most logical thing for her to do was to ask Jesus for a simple miracle, somehow knowing Jesus was capable of creating more wine in order to stave off embarrassment.

Notice in the story how Jesus rebuked His mother for requesting a public glimpse of His glory. Nevertheless, Mary fully trusted that Jesus would do what was right and fitting. Her words to the servants, "Do whatever He tells you" is an expression of implicit trust and submission.

Also, acting as the submission servant of the Lord, Mary played some part in Jesus' human maturing. The entire span of some thirty years of Jesus growing from a boy to an adult is contained in one sentence: *And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor*

with God and man (Luke 2:52). On the one hand, Jesus was the Son of God which means He already had perfect wisdom. On the other hand, He was fully human which required that He grow in wisdom. Wisdom and right relationships don't just happen to children. Surely Mary did her best as a mother, all the while knowing the nature of her child.

Mary was not only a submissive servant of the Lord, but she was a perceptive woman. Go back to the beginning of this story and read, *In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be (Luke 1:26-29).*

The words *tried to discern* mean that Mary pondered Gabriel's message. She thought it through. What did the angel mean by, *"Favored of the Lord, the Lord is with you"* (v.28)? To be favored of the Lord is to be a recipient of His grace. Mary understood that she had not been doing anything special to warrant God's grace. That her God would pick her to be the mother of Christ, the promised Messiah, forced her to contemplate the full meaning of Gabriel's statement about God's favor, God's grace on her.

She pondered the promise, *"The Lord is with you."* That is a remarkable affirmation. Did Mary ponder that statement in light of her ordinariness? Did her sins or shortcomings flood her mind? The obvious conclusion for her must have been quite confusing. "Why would the Lord God have favor for me and be with me in particular?"

But as Gabriel continued with the Lord's message, Mary's pondering had to become even more mind-boggling. Gabriel continued, *"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 to 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"* (Luke 1:31-33).

What did Mary think about that promise? Did she conclude she would conceive the promised son through normal means? Not for

long! How would she possibly be the mother of the *Son of the Most High and fulfill God's promise to David regarding the eternal King!* That was impossible. That was Mary's conclusion: *"How can this be since I am a virgin?"* (Luke 1:34). That was the only possible response for Mary who had kept herself pure. We ought to be able to understand why Mary was perplexed and pondering. We ought to be sympathetic with her.

What is the only possible answer to these deep, confusing questions? Gabriel gave the answer: *"Nothing is impossible with God."* To be satisfied with that answer would require much faith in the God of the impossible. Any mother would find herself pondering for a long time about such news.

Gabriel's announcement of Mary's pregnancy and the Savior's birth was not the only time she tried to discern what was happening. She also pondered the shepherds' message (Luke 2:17). The shepherds showed up at the stable to witness the Christ child according to what the angels had said. *And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child (Luke 2:17).* What exactly did they make known? The message, *"Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy that will be for all the people"* (v.10). The promise, *"For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord"* (v.11). They must have told about the stupendous experiences of the heavenly host praising God, *"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"* (v.14).

And Mary treasured these things and pondered them. We should not criticize Mary for being pretty introspective with such messages flooding over her. She was trying to weigh all the testimony with what Gabriel had told her. Be sympathetic with Mary and remember that she could not turn to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John to get answers to her questions. This was a very new and unprecedented experience.

In the same way, a few days later, Mary pondered Simeon's message. We read that when Mary and Joseph took Jesus to the temple to dedicate Him according to the law, that *there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he*

would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law (vv.25-27).

When Simeon saw the Christ child, he broke out declaring a message about the salvation God had sent. *He took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, "Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel"* (vv.28-32).

That would be plenty for Mary to try to discern. But Simeon didn't stop there. He also spoke about the sword that would pierce Mary's heart. *And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed"* (Luke 2:34-35).

And Mary and Joseph marveled. *And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him* (v.33). Of course they did! We might well call this an understatement. That she had just given birth to the Prophet, the Messiah, the King, that God had promised since the Garden of Eden caused her to marvel. That she would experience a sword piercing her own soul made no sense at all. How could she experience pain if she was the mother of the most desired, most longed after, most looked forward to person in Israel's history? Neither Mary nor her fellow Jews understood God's plan for the Savior from sin.

Mary was a humble servant of the Lord, a perceptive woman who tried to discern God's astonishing work through her, and she was a woman of great joy. In the context of being reminded by her cousin Elizabeth that God had highly favored her, *And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation"* (Luke 1:46-50).

Her soul, her entire being, was making God her Lord great (v.46). This is what real worship looks like. The servant makes the Master look great. Her spirit (again a reference to her entire being) rejoiced in God who she fully trusted to be her Savior (v.47). She understood that God chose her for unique and special blessing (v.48). She rejoiced knowing that God who is mighty, sinless, merciful did great things for her (vv.49-50). In her rejoicing, Mary taught how the mother who truly trusts God delights, rejoices in what He has done for her through His mercy.

But true to the prophecy of old Simeon, Mary was also a woman of sorrow. She experienced the pain of that sword piercing her heart. Watching her Son die in crucifixion was not the only time she felt that pain. Early on in life she must have been pained when her young son rebuked her. Like the time Jesus stayed behind to meet with the religious leaders in Jerusalem. When His mother and Joseph found Him and expressed great concern about His actions, He rebuked them. *And when his parents saw him, they were astonished. And his mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress." And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?"* (Luke 2:48-49).

How did Mary feel that time when it seemed like her Son ignored her. *And a crowd was sitting around him, and they said to him, "Your mother and your brothers are outside, seeking you." And he answered them, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers!"* (Mark 3:32-34). Ouch! Even if Mary really understood Jesus' mission and ministry (which she did not), these words would have stung. Did she remember Simeon's prophesy?

Of course the greatest, the most intense sorrow would have swept over Mary when she watched as her dear Son was mocked, tortured, crucified, and buried. We see her at the cross weeping. But she was absent from those who anointed His body and buried Him. She was not among those who went to the tomb on Sunday morning to find it empty. No doubt she was overwhelmed with the sorrow that Simeon had promised. Mary experienced all human emotions. Therefore, she is able to teach mothers today.

What Mary Continues to Teach Mothers.

Mary teaches today's mothers to be willing servants of the Lord. That servanthood seems like a fitting response if you, like Mary, understand God's favor toward you. God revealed His amazing grace to you through Jesus Christ. Christ coming to be Mary's baby showed that God favored her. The Greek word behind the English word *favor* is the same root for the word *grace*. God did not favor Mary because she was in herself someone special. God did not favor Mary because she had accomplished wonderful deeds that brought glory to God.

God poured out His grace on Mary because He chose to pour out His grace on Mary. That was the same kind of blessing that Noah enjoyed. Noah was found to have God's favor showed to him. As a result of God's favor, Noah lived different from everyone around him.

In the same way, Christ coming to be your Savior is God's demonstration of His favor, His grace to you. God has already revealed common grace to all by sending Jesus Christ to die for sin. God also reveals saving grace as He convicts of sin and draws sinners to the Savior to be saved. It is all a matter of God showing favor just like He did with Mary. But it doesn't stop there.

Saving grace is a wonderful demonstration of God's mercy, kindness, and compassion toward sinners. But if His grace stops at salvation, life will be pretty tough for mothers. Mothers need God's grace in order to face the daily grind. Not joking, mothers need much of God's grace in order to fulfill their responsibility to their children. It is possible for a mother to be tough, determined, and shrewd in order to bring children to adulthood. How much better it is to depend on God's grace to help the children grow in wisdom, in stature, and in favor with God and fellow humans. That task requires enlightening grace by which a mom is continuing to know God better, know her children better, and by the same grace to know herself better. She also needs strengthening grace for both emotional and physical survival. She needs daily grace to trust her Master more.

Mary continues to teach mothers to be like her and humbly submit to God's will. By experiencing God's grace, mothers will know God's person and God's will better. But knowing God's will

and doing God's will are not the same. When we become familiar with God's will, at some point we will certainly be required to put to death our own will and bow humbly to God's. Mothers will discover this is a repeated need from the moment they know they have conceived until their last breath.

Mary teaches mothers of every age to trust the Lord's will in joy and in sorrow. Like Mary, mom should rejoice that the Lord has showered her with favor. Be quick to acknowledge God's abundant grace in your life. Be faithful to rejoice in the reality that God has chosen to be kind to you. Mothers should be able to find something about God's favor to her that would be cause of rejoicing daily.

And like Mary, depend on the Lord in times of sorrow. The times of sorrow are inevitable. Just because God has shown His grace to you does not mean that you have escaped the impact of sin in the world. Sin causes sorrow. It is inevitable. God knows that and calls you to run to Him in faith, to be embraced by Him through faith. In times of sorrow and disappointment, let God's promises enfold you like His loving arms.

And finally, Mary teaches mothers to help your children grow in wisdom, stature, and in favor with God and man. Like Mary, be concerned for your children. Be concerned that they will know the Lord. If mom is concerned that her children will know the Lord, she will teach them early the truths about God and their Savior. But maybe more important than teaching God's truth is demonstrating God's truth. Show the children how to trust God's Word.

Be concerned to help them love the Lord. Teach them why they should love their creator. Teach them often that the Creator loved them first. That is to help them grow in favor with God. But also help to grow in favor with fellow humans. Moms have a great responsibility to teach their children how to be "good" people. That is to teach them to be patient with others, to be helpful toward others, to respect authority, to know how to discern truth, and to be willing to sacrifice for "right".

And like Mary, Mom needs to direct her children even though all along she knows that they are actually God's children. Each child is a gift from God. Each child belongs to God. And yet many children, even those who grow up with good, biblical teaching, refuse to acknowledge that God is their Master. That is the great heartache

of motherhood. No mother has the ability to remove the spiritual blindness with which her child is born. She learns instead to beg God to do His miracle of salvation and waits on God to do His will.

Mary sets a wonderful example of a mother who trusts God. She was not perfect regardless of what human traditions have taught. She was as human as we all are and, no doubt, failed as much as we do. But she trusted God, even in the amazing things, to humble herself to His will.