



## Luke 11:27-28

### The Blessedness of Keeping God's Word

Luke 11:27-28 And it happened, as He spoke these things, that a certain woman from the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, "Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts which nursed You!" But He said, "More than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"

Think if you will for a moment about all the sweet benefits Mary, the mother of Jesus, had. True, she was born in poverty, and never ascended to any high social rank during her lifetime, in fact in a worldly sense she didn't even have a tenth of the benefits you take for granted each day. And yet she was the one woman in the entire history of the earth to whom the Angel Gabriel appeared and said **"behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; 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."**

Mary alone, amongst women was found to be with child by the power of the Holy Spirit, to her alone was it given to give birth to Jesus in that stable in Bethlehem. Jesus was the infant child she sang to sleep. His were the arms that embraced her neck when she kissed him goodnight. This Jesus whom both prophets and angels proclaimed would "reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end" was the child whom she prepared meals for, dressed wounds for, knit sweaters for, kissed tears away for, and raised to adulthood. And while we know she and her husband Joseph had other children, for the Bible repeatedly speaks of the *brothers of Jesus*, we also know that she could not but be profoundly impressed by the fact that this little boy of hers was also the one whom the Angel told Joseph his step-father was in reality: *Immanuel*, GOD WITH US.

So you can understand, can't you, why some would be inclined to cry out "Ave Maria" or "Hail Mary." Why people might be inclined to conclude that because of her being the mother of the savior Mary was more *blessed* than any other woman. You can even perhaps begin to understand how people might begin to weave a theology of assumptions around her. **"Well if Mary was the Mother of Jesus, Jesus must have to listen to her commands, so I will pray to Mary to tell Jesus what I want Him to do for me."** Or, **"I know that being a woman and a mother, Mary will understand my prayers in ways that Jesus, who was after all a man couldn't, so I'll pray to her and she'll explain it to him..."** And so on.

From there, it is easy to see how our reverence for and dependence upon Mary will inevitably lead us to make her an object of our adoration and worship. How it could generate, prayers, and candles, and statues, and shrines, and followers. Given enough time, you can see how she might become something entirely different from the simple, faithful, hand-maiden of the Lord whom we meet in the pages of scripture.

As you can see from verse 27, the tendency to begin to exalt Mary because of her relation to Jesus is a normal human tendency. Here is a woman in the crowd listening to Jesus, who is perhaps hearing true

preaching of the word of God for the first time. This is amazing good news, this Jesus has not only cured a deaf and dumb man, now he has answered the criticism of the Pharisees, and declared that what the people of Israel have been waiting for, the coming of the Kingdom, has arrived.

The woman in these verses is right to be awestruck! It is not even a bad thing that she called out a response – Sometimes I am frankly *amazed* that people can sit through the proclamation of the greatest good news in history, hear that they are under a death sentence for cosmic treason, hear that the King of the Universe sent his own Son to bear the penalty of that treason in their place, hear that through faith alone they will become co-heirs with the prince of that Kingdom, and then respond with nothing more than a sleepy expression and stony silence. Oh but when our team scores a goal in a game that has no ultimate meaning at all – WOOOHOOO!

Not that calling out during a sermon can't become its own meaningless tradition. I remember hearing an anecdote from a Baptist brother who mentioned that on moving to a new church he was encouraged to find that one of the deacons would frequently call out Amen, Alleluia, and Preach it, during his sermons. He said it was quite encouraging till he began to suspect this guy was just cycling through and listening more for the preachers tone than the content. He said his suspicions were confirmed when he was preaching on having "Ears to Hear" and he shouted *I Sometimes wonder if anyone here really believes the Gospel I am preaching* and the deacon responded "Alleluia!"

So, the problem wasn't her zeal, it wasn't that she called out, the problem was of course the content of her response, what she probably called out in ignorance. Perhaps she was thinking, "if only my own son were more like him" or the like, but in any event her reflection was that the *mother* of Jesus had to be blessed *because she was his mother*.

Now if Roman Catholic theology were correct, Jesus would never have responded the way he did. He might have said "You have no idea how blessed she is" or even "Yes, blessed is Mary amongst women, and be assured she will pray for sinners now and that the hour of their death."

Instead, of course, our Lord *corrects her misunderstanding in two ways*.

1) He corrects her misunderstanding. It is not that  **blessings**  come through being physically related to him. In fact, you read for instance in John 7:5 that Jesus' own brothers initially "*did not believe in Him.*" Elsewhere we see his mother and brothers coming to speak to him, probably because they are concerned about the reports that he was getting into trouble with the authorities and essentially demanding that based on their being his relatives he leave off preaching and come out to them. There too Jesus answers with a gentle rebuke saying "For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother." (Mat. 12:50)

2) He tells her the way to true blessings, namely to *hear the word of God*, and *Keep it*.

### ***What does Jesus mean by that?***

You all know what it means to physically *hear the word of God* and you all do well to forsake not the assembling of yourselves together by coming to hear God's word preached no matter how feeble the delivery. Some people have asked me, if I go on vacation and there isn't a strong church in the area should I skip worship? God forbid! It is always better to go to hear even a weak message that you will have to really work on getting a few crumbs from, than not to hear at all. For faith comes by *hearing*.

But is hearing enough? Not according to the Son of God. If *all* you do is hear the word of God, then what should be a blessing to you will in fact be a curse. Hearing is not enough. **As Thomas Goodwin pointed out "Judas heard all of Christ's sermons."** You must not only hear that word, you must embrace that word by faith. It must be effectually received, and then and only then will it set down roots in your heart and bear fruit. You must not only know these words of Jesus, you must keep them, and then you must do them.

Don't be deceived for a moment: none of the information that is imparted to you in the Word of God is for entertainment purposes only. It is entirely composed of things to be known and things to be done. That is why the biblical Christian has both *Zeal and Knowledge*. He knows what the Word teaches, and he is zealous to carry out its commands. Unfortunately there are far too many professing Christians out there who put asunder that which the Lord has forever joined in His word and either *Know* much about the faith, without putting much if any of it into practice, or who Run around like chickens with their heads cut off, acting on impulses rather than working according to His instruction. **This is where self-examination is critical - be aware of which of those categories you are closer to and work to correct it.**

A) Brother if you are a walking Systematic theology, but do not live out any of the doctrines you profess to know, it is time to repent and spend more time on your knees. I have met far too many Antinomians in my time who were ignoring the admonition of James to "be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves." (James 1:22) I have also met far too many who have never once "given a defense for the hope that is in them." (1 Peter 3:15) Now Peter's assumption in his epistle is that you will need to be ready to do this, because people will *know you are Christians*. How will they know that? By reading your minds?

B) Sister, if you are just one big bundle of good intentions and desires to please the Lord, but you know less about the bible than your children, you too need to repent and leave off working in the kitchen for a while like Martha and take your place at the feet of Jesus. You may reply "No, study is not for me, I am a worker." Then hear the words of Paul 2 Tim. 2:15 "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

Let me give you two final applications here:

1) The first is the great truth the great spiritual truth that even being the nearest relative of Jesus is nothing compared with Spiritual Union to Him. As Jonathan Edwards puts it in the meditation in your worship folders [READ MEDITATION] Think about that, Mary's greatest privilege was not to have given birth to Jesus, but to have been saved by Faith Alone in Him! Her spiritual union with her redeemer is actually a greater blessing than her relationship to her SON! Have you stopped for a moment to consider all that you have gained through the gift of faith, which enables you to be a keeper and not merely a hearer of the Word?

Turn if you will to **Ephesians 1:1**. I want to read through verse 14, as I do, take notice of all the things that Paul says you have gained because of your Spiritual Union with Christ. [READ]

All of those things that Paul sums up as "EVERY SPIRITUAL BLESSING" is yours not because of who you are, but because of who you have believed in. You are richer than the greatest of earthly Kings!

- 2) If you are not a keeper of the Word of God, it doesn't matter how physically close you are to Jesus or how many times you have heard that word. I have already mentioned Judas, who travelled with Christ throughout his earthly ministry, and yet spent that time stealing from the bag and finished up betraying his Master. He heard, but was devoid of faith, and was no keeper of the Word.

**You** may outwardly be a member of the church, but if the Word of God has not sunk down into your hearts and put down roots into good soil, then you too will probably eventually betray your master by your actions.

Jesus preached to the people he had grown up with in Capernaum, and yet they had nothing but contempt for Him "Is this not the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers James, Joses, Simon, and Judas? "And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this Man get all these things?" (Matt. 13:55) You may have grown up with Jesus hearing his word, but this familiarity may have bred a similar contempt to that of his townfolk. I met far too many men, who had heard of Jesus all their lives, but never really met him, never closed with him by faith. He was just a Carpenter's son to them too.

Children, don't be deceived in this, your parents may know Jesus, but your relationship to them will not save you. You too must get a real work of Grace in your hearts. You too must be keepers of God's Word.

- 3) At the final judgment, this will be all that matters, **did you keep God's word? Did you truly believe in the Gospel of His Son Jesus? Did you live your life walking by faith or did you walk by sight? Preferring to place your hope in the riches and dreams of this world?**

*I was profoundly impressed, moved, and at times choked up as I watched Reagan's funeral. But in the midst of all the pomp and circumstance, all these brilliant eulogies by statesmen, the honor guard, the 21 gun salutes, it occurred to me that when Ronald Reagan died and then appeared for judgment, none of it mattered. None of it, not that he had been the leader of the free world, or that he had been a Hollywood Actor, or even that he was beloved by so many people. At that Judgment seat the only thing that mattered was if Ronald Reagan had loved the Lord Jesus Christ. Many have told me he did, and if that was the case, then when he stood there he was attired in the same Garb that every believer in Jesus has – the perfect righteousness of Christ. It is on that basis alone, and not that he defeated **an** EVIL EMPIRE or built a city on a hill – for only Christ has defeated **THE** EVIL EMPIRE, and only Christ is building **the real** Shining City on a Hill - that Reagan heard the blessed words that shall greet every keeper of God's word, great and small, "Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord."*