**Mary - A Blessed Woman**

Based on [Luke 1:26-56](https://biblia.com/books/esv/Lk1.26-56)

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Advent Midweek 2

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Joseph was a righteous man, writes Matthew. Mary found favor with God, and was blessed among women, writes Luke. Mary and Joseph were righteous people. It is important to the gospel writers to say this. It doesn’t mean that they were sinless. It doesn’t mean that they didn’t need salvation from God. It means that they were of such character that ***they feared God*** and ***wanted to do what was right in His sight***. They were humble; they didn’t try to be God’s equal or partner; they didn’t want to claim his glory for their own. They wanted to be his servants.

It was important that the parents of the Messiah were blameless, because Jesus himself would be slandered. And those who try to destroy reputations don’t particularly care about the truth, only about twisting people’s opinions. Had Joseph been a drunk, or an open despiser of God’s Law, Jesus’ opponents would have used that to malign Jesus. Instead, Joseph was a just man. So they mock his occupation, “Isn’t he the carpenter’s son?” And had Mary been known for sexual immorality, Jesus’ opponents could have confused many sincere people by saying that Jesus was conceived out of wedlock. But she was a virgin. Even though, that didn’t stop the pharisees from implying that Jesus was conceived in sexual immorality (John 8).

Indeed, if you had rotten parents, God does not judge you guilty of their sins. Even so, you have to live with their bad name. It needed to be absolutely clear that the Messiah was persecuted not for any actual sins of himself or his family...but that he was persecuted purely out of the envy and spite of those who would kill God if they had the chance. They did. But he was blameless, his parents were blameless, therefore he was the perfect unblemished sacrifice for sins.

In today's reading, we have a story that has been given the title "The Visitation." Mary, the mother of God visited her cousin, an old woman named Elizabeth. A pregnant old woman. Pregnant with John the Baptist. And when Mary greeted her, maybe with words like, "The Lord be with you" or "Peace be unto you", "shalom”. And those Words carried in, with and under them, the Holy Spirit that caused the unborn baby, John the Baptist, to leap for joy in his mother’s womb.

And it’s remarkable how--in this one little passage--the Old Testament and the new come together. For the Israelites in the OT, “The Ark of the Covenant” was a special box which held the presence of the living God. Now of course, nothing can contain the almighty God unless he wants to be contained and localized. So God put Himself, in, with and around this holy box this Ark, so that he could visit his people and so that they could know he was with them.

Now in the Book of Second Samuel, King David, was seeing to the safe return of the Ark to Jerusalem. And the Bible says that “David arose and went.” The bible says that, upon arrival the Ark was greeted with “**shouts of joy**.” And David, in fear of the power of God cries out, “**How shall the Ark of the Lord come to me?**” On its way to Jerusalem, the Ark was taken into the house of a man named Obededom, and it became a source of Blessing for his house. The ark stayed in Obededom’s house **for three months.**

Friends, do you see the connection, with what was read to you today in the Gospel? David arose and went with the Ark. Mary arose and went with the unborn Jesus. Upon the ark’s arrival, it was greeted with shouts of joy; upon Mary’s arrival, John leaped in his mother’s womb for joy. David cries out, “**How shall the Ark of the Lord come to me?**” Elizabeth cries out, **“Why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?**” The ark was taken to Obededom’s house, and the scriptures say it became a source of blessing to his house. Blessings abound when Mary, the Mother of God, enters Elizabeth’s house. And finally, the Ark of the Lord remained in the house of Obededom three months. Can you guess how long Mary stayed with Elizabeth? /// It’s uncanny, isn’t it?

Mary was not herself divine, but she bore in her womb your Lord and your God. Like the Ark of the Covenant, Mary is a temporary and portable vessel that houses the immediate presence of God. And for that she is and will always be “Blessed among women.” She was the Ark of the Saviour, and as such should always be remembered with dignity and respect as the Mother of our Lord.

An ark is a holy container, a special box. And there are many Arks in Scripture. ***The Ark of Noah*** housed the remnant of mankind created in the image of God. And as the universal flood washed away the wicked world, Noah and his family, eight souls in all, were saved. ***The Ark of Moses*** was a basket that kept God’s chosen Lawgiver safe as a little child from the murderous Pharaoh, so that he could deliver his people to the Promised Land. ***The Ark of the Covenant*** contained the two tablet of stone upon which were written the Ten Commandments, a summary of God’s will and Word for his people. And, Mary, ***the Ark of the Savior*** contained Jesus who was born on Christmas day, and who was placed in a lowly manger to show us that the Almighty God is comfortable living among his people, even in a world of sin.

It is to Him we pray. It is in His Holy Name that we trust. It was in the Ark of His Mother’s Body, the Blessed Virgin Mary, that our Saviour came to humanity in the flesh. He comes now in the Ark of Bread and Wine that are his body and blood to be received by faith for our forgiveness and life. And he will come again in an Ark of Clouds, with myriads of angels attending to redeem all things on the last day.