

“Mary” (Pastor Drew speaks on “Joseph”)**Craig Crawshaw**

During the five Sundays of this December, pastor Drew and I want to speak to you of the “Christmas Witnesses” of the Christmas story found in Holy Scripture. And we want to explore what each has to teach us, and endeavor to learn from their witness. This first Sunday I will speak on Mary, the mother of Jesus, and pastor Drew will speak on Joseph, the earthly father of Jesus.

I think we can agree that Mary is one of the great women of the Bible, if not at the top of the list. She was an exemplary wife and mother of stellar character and a faithful Christian disciple. Yet she often does not receive the recognition she deserves, largely because of so many erroneous teachings surrounding her – such as the assertion that she was a “perpetual virgin” and that she answers prayers and dispenses special grace. These unbiblical claims both confuse and turn some away from digging deeper into her wonderful qualities that deserve both our great admiration and emulation.

Mary’s first “appearance” in Scripture is a prophetic reference from the pen of Isaiah the prophet, written hundreds of years before Mary was born.

Isaiah 7:14 *Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.*

Though Mary was but a teenager from a modest family in a small rural village, she had the pedigree of being a descendant of King David. So she must have marveled at this prophecy and wondered and speculated if she might be the one of whom the prophesy spoke. It was certainly the hope and dream of all young Jewish maidens.

Much of what we learn about Mary’s excellent character comes from her encounter with the angel Gabriel in the first chapter of Luke’s gospel.

Luke 1:27-38 *Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin’s name was Mary. And coming in, he said to her, “Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.” But she was very perplexed at this statement, and kept pondering what kind of salutation this was. The angel said to 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 name Him 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 His kingdom will have no end.” Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?” The angel answered and said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God. And behold, even your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age; and she who was called barren is now in her sixth month. For nothing will be impossible with God.” And Mary said, “Behold, the bondservant of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her.*

FAVORED

Twice Gabriel tells Mary that she is “*favored of God.*” Ponder the impact and import of having God’s “favor.” This should ever be our goal as disciples of the Almighty. Mary was clearly handpicked by God as one who had “*found favor*” with the Almighty. The clear implication is that it was her exceptional godly character that won God’s favor as the one who would bear the Messiah. May we ever seek God’s favor that He might choose to use us for His divine purposes. What a privilege to be used of God!

HUMBLE

Mary’s response of being “perplexed” and “pondering” her being favored implies her not understanding why she would be favored as anyone special. In this Mary is living out the admonition of Paul given in Romans:

Romans 12:3 *Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but think of yourself with sober judgment, according to the measure of faith God has given you.*

May we ever strive to esteem others above ourselves. As the proverb says”

Proverbs 27:2 *Let another praise you, and not your own mouth.*

YIELDED

Of most special note is Mary's response to the amazing news of Gabriel: "*Behold the bonds slave of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.*" There was no argument, or criticism, or unwillingness – only total yieldedness to God's will for her. Yes, she questioned the "baby while being a virgin" part. But despite that super-hard-to-believe pronouncement, she said in absolute faith, "so be it." To say that she was a "bonds slave" acknowledged that God owned her and she was His to instruct and use. Oh, that we might learn that attitude and demonstrate the faith of Mary!

REJOICING

For lack of time, let me mention but one more great quality of hers that we must emulate. And that is, her animated rejoicing in God. We see this when Mary goes to visit her aunt Elizabeth shortly after Gabriel's news. She knew the importance of getting support for her upcoming trial from one she could trust, and so she went to Elizabeth.

Luke 1:39-56 *Now at this time Mary arose and went in a hurry to the hill country, to a city of Judah, and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. And she cried out with a loud voice and said, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And how has it happened to me, that the mother of my Lord would come to me? For behold, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what had been spoken to her by the Lord." And Mary said: "My soul exalts the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. For He has had regard for the humble state of His bonds slave; for behold, from this time on all generations will count me blessed. For the Mighty One has done great things for me; and holy is His name. And His mercy is upon generation after generation toward those who fear Him. ...*

Oh, dear beloved of God. Does your soul "exalt the Lord" in praise freely and spontaneously? Does it happen in dark and troubling times as well as in pleasant times? Do you often find yourself lifting Him in in rapturous praise for His great character and gracious provisions? If so, you are emulating the character of Mary. And if not, may you choose to draw nearer to the dear Savior that the overflow of your heart might be His exalting praise. Remember, to "magnify" the Lord (Latin: "magnificat") is, like a magnifying glass, to help others to see Him as greater than they now see Him. So become a "magnifying glass" for God!

AND THERE IS MORE

If time permitted we could speak of Mary's steadfast courage in facing the certain ridicule that would come with the news of her pregnancy out of wedlock; or her confident boldness in urging Jesus to help the situation at the marriage in Cana; or of her unwavering support of her son by being present at the cross and as part of the 120 disciples at Pentecost following his resurrection.

Yes, the Biblical witness of Mary, mother of Jesus, is well worth noting and striving to emulate. She was favored of God for a reason – for her humility, yieldedness, faith and rejoicing spirit, to name but a few.

No, Mary is not a co-redemptress, nor was she always a virgin, nor is she one to whom we pray and receive special grace. But she was a remarkable and very specially favored woman of God.

For this we can certainly join our Catholic friends and say, "Hail Mary, full of grace ..." And the greatest way we can honor her godly witness, is to fervently strive to emulate her gracious qualities.

Joseph Up Close

Matthew 1:18-25

Follow-up on what Craig said about Mary. Set stage for Joseph

Matthew 1:18

Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit.

1. Betrothal Definition
 - a. Parents
 - b. 1 year
 - c. House Prep
 - d. Go get her

Matthew 1:19

Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly.

1. Joseph
 - a. Moral
 - b. Merciful

“If a young woman who is a virgin is betrothed to a husband, and a man finds her in the city and lies with her, “then you shall bring them both out to the gate of that city, and you shall stone them to death with stones, the young woman because she did not cry out in the city, and the man because he humbled his neighbor’s wife; so you shall put away the evil from among you.

Deuteronomy 22:23,24

1. The Law
 - a. The Letter
 - b. Another option

For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

James 2:13

Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy.

Matthew 5:7

Matthew 1:20

But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 1:21

“And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.”

1. Joseph is Royalty
 - a. Thinker
 - b. Logical
 - c. Mystical/Spiritual

*But know that the LORD has set apart for Himself him who is godly;
The LORD will hear when I call to Him. Be angry, and do not sin. Meditate within your heart on your bed,
and be still. Selah*

Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, And put your trust in the LORD.

Psalm 4:3-5

*But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and
good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.*

James 3:17

1. He Meditated
 - a. He slept on it
 - b. God answered
 - c. Angel Gabriel
2. Jesus Greek for Hebrew Joshua
 - a. Jehovah is salvation
 - b. Joshua succeeded Moses
 - c. Moses
 1. Law, Can't Rest
 - d. Joshua
 1. Promised land
 2. Rest
3. Save from Sin
 - a. Primary Work

Matthew 1:22

So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying:

Matthew 1:23

*“Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,” which is
translated, “God with us.”*

1. Immanuel
 - a. Title Isaiah 7:14

Matthew 1:24

*Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his
wife,*

Matthew 1:25

and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name Jesus.

1. Marriage
 - a. No consummation
 - b. No perpetual virginity
2. The Privilege to name

Turn to Matthew 2

*Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, “Arise,
take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will
seek the young Child to destroy Him.” When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night
and departed for Egypt, and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken
by the Lord through the prophet, saying, “Out of Egypt I called My Son.”*

Matthew 2:13-15

*Now when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying,
“Arise, take the young Child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the young
Child’s life are dead.” Then he arose, took the young Child and His mother, and came into the land of
Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea instead of his father Herod, he was*

afraid to go there. And being warned by God in a dream, he turned aside into the region of Galilee. And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, "He shall be called a Nazarene."

Matthew 2:19-23

1. Logical, Mystical, Practical

"For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? "Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."

Mark 8:35-38