

**Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
Des Moines, Wash.
March 28, 2010**

Luke 2:34,35 and John 19:25-27

We Are Blessed Just like MARY, Jesus' Mother

- 1. We're blessed as God provides salvation from our sins*
- 2. We're blessed as God provides for all our needs*

Hymns: 131 – 130 – 363 – 129 – 133

All Scripture quotations from the NIV

Luke 2:34-35 –

Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."

John 19:25-27 –

Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Dear woman, here is your son," and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

What a difference a year can make! Think about how a person's circumstances can change over the course of a year:

- A family might have no plan to moving out of their area, but circumstances change so that they live in a completely

different part of the country within a year's time.

- Job situations might change. A layoff might result in a new profession that is completely different from the old one, and perhaps very rewarding!
- Relationships can change. A young man might meet a "special someone," court her for a while, and get engaged in a year's time.
- Health can change. A life-changing disease can be diagnosed that must be treated and that affects daily life.

Imagine how one year changed the life of Mary. Mary was a young, normal Jewess living in little ol' Nazareth, growing up like many other young women. She got engaged in the normal way, most likely as a teenage girl. She was looking forward to a new family and a new life. Then everything changed:

- An angel appeared to her, telling her that she was going to miraculously have a baby, and that her baby would be God's promised Messiah.
- Mary heard her cousin Elizabeth exclaim, "*Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished!*" (Luke 1:42-45)
- Joseph had a dream to take Mary as his wife anyway and that "*she will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he*

will save his people from their sins."
(Matthew 1:21)

- When it came time to have the baby, she found out she had to travel 70 miles from home to another obscure village named Bethlehem, most likely riding on a donkey. And when she arrived, she found out she had no room with a bed, much less a sterilized birthing room with medical staff. She gave birth in some kind of stable with the animals.
- The Flight to Egypt, the Presentation in the Temple... What a difference a year made!

Mary is probably the best known woman of the plan of God in Scripture. **As we continue our sermon series this Lent called, "Women of the Lenten Story," let's learn that we are blessed just like she was in two ways. We'll learn how:**

1. **God blesses us by providing us salvation from sin**
2. **God blesses us by providing for all our needs**

1 — Did I just say that God blessed Mary with salvation from sin? Is that true? Maybe you've heard that a church body today teaches that Mary did not need salvation from sin. The fact is, after the 4th Century a number of false teachings about Mary developed:

1. A proclamation in 1854 by Pope Pius IX states: "**The most Blessed Virgin Mary was, from the first moment of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of almighty God and by virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, Savior of the human race, preserved immune from all stain of original sin.**" (Catholic Catechism, paragraph 491) This false

teaching is called the Immaculate Conception.

2. Another false teaching exists that Mary, "**when the course of her earthly life was finished, was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory, and exalted by the Lord as Queen over all things.**" (Catholic Catechism, paragraph 966)
3. In the same church, Mary is considered a figure that we should address prayers and worship.

What does the Bible actually say about Mary?

- In her song of praise from Luke 1 called the Magnificat, Mary exclaims, "*My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.*" (1:46-47)
- When Jesus was 12 years old and stayed overtime at the Temple in Jerusalem to speak with the teachers of God's Word there, Mary chided him. Jesus had to remind her, "*Why were you searching for me?" he asked. 'Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?'*" (Luke 2:49)
- Eighteen years later at the wedding of Cana, Jesus had to inform Mary that it wasn't time yet for him to do something about the shortage of wine for the wedding feast.
- Later there was a day when Jesus was preaching in a certain house, and Mark tells us that "*when his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, 'He is out of his*

mind...’ Then Jesus’ mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him. A crowd was sitting around him, and they told him, ‘Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you.’ ‘Who are my mother and my brothers?’ he asked. Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, ‘Here are my mother and my brothers!’ ”
(Mark 3:21,31-34)

Although Mary was highly privileged by God to bear our Savior, we see that she was not omniscient and needed salvation as a sinner.

God predicted to Mary how he would bring about the fulfillment of her salvation through a man named Simeon, when Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to the Temple for his Presentation: “*Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: “This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.”* (Luke 2:34,35) Simeon, under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, predicted that Jesus would cause the “falling and rising” of many.

Are you familiar with the term “watershed?” The term’s original definition is: “**The divide separating one drainage basin from another. The height of land between two catchment areas.**”

A watershed was a hill existed that caused water to drain either to one side or the other. There was no “in between” ground.

Simeon tells us that Jesus would be like that. He would have believers who would love him and cling to him in faith.

He would also have enemies and detractors who would oppose him and eventually kill him. Jesus would reveal the thoughts and attitudes of hearts.

As Jesus was arrested, condemned, and crucified, this would be the very way God would accomplish our salvation. Peter would later write in 1 Peter 2:24, “*He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.*”

Simeon also gave Mary a glimpse of the pain that she would endure as she would see Jesus do this. A sword would pierce her heart also, not as a helper in the redemption of mankind, but as a mother. John 19 tells us, “*Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.*” Mary would have to watch the arrest, torture, and crucifixion of her son.

Many artists have depicted the crucifixion of Christ in paintings. Many of them have tried to capture the image of Mary at the cross, when a sword was piercing her heart in grief. Mothers, can you imagine? Can you imagine the pain of seeing your son die? Can you imagine the hurt as you would see him unjustly condemned and put to death? Fathers, can you imagine the grief you would have at the innocent death of your son? What truth Simeon spoke long ago!

One pastor summed this up by writing, “**She sees him suspended, but cannot touch Him; sees Him nailed, but may not loose Him; sees Him wounded... yet cannot bind up His wounds. She hears His cry, “I thirst,” but may not give Him a drink. As many torments in the body of Christ, so many wounds in His mother’s heart!”** (WELS sermon series “Women of the Passion History,” p. 23)

What is the first lesson Mary teaches us this Lent? **We are blessed, as she was, with the salvation that God has provided.** And seeing him this Lent, we are left with unmistakable feelings:

- Sadness – We are grieved because our sin has caused this. The price for our salvation is high.
- Repentance – We are moved to confess our sins and to believe that Jesus loved us so much he was willing to pay the price for them.
- Gratitude – Our hearts overflow with thanks to Christ, and we desire to live for him. Our lives are changed as we strive to leave our lives of sin and follow his commands.
- Love – We are moved to show love to others as Jesus has shown to us, emulating our Savior.

Thank God we, like Mary, are blessed as God provides our salvation!

2 – In the account of Mary from Scripture, we learn one other lesson as well, a lesson about God's providence. Luke 11 has an interesting reference to Mary where Luke writes, "As Jesus was saying these things, a woman in the crowd called out, 'Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you.' He replied, 'Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.' "

What does Jesus have to provide? **We are blessed as God provides for us spiritually.** In our life of faith, we receive regular strength as God provides his Word for our hearing. This is more blessed than him having a physical mother!

However, do we always feel that way?

- Do you hesitate to invite that Word into your home because of your busy-ness?
- Are you tempted during this busy church season of Lent to feel that two church services a week are an overkill for your schedule? Or that a Maundy Thursday service isn't worth coming to?
- I'm also reminded of something I heard once from a family that had strayed from worship at God's house. To explain why they hadn't been in church, they said, "We're just 'living life' right now." (What does that mean?)

May we thank God that he blesses us by providing for our spiritual needs through his Word!

We see one final way Jesus provides for us as we read John's account of his crucifixion: "*When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Dear woman, here is your son," and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.*" (John 19:26-27)

Evidently Joseph had died by this time. A widow's life wasn't easy. There was no social security, no life insurance, no carpenter's union pension plan. Jesus had possibly been providing for Mary for a period of time. Can you imagine her thoughts as Jesus is dying?

Jesus evidently saw that John could take the best care of Mary, now that his own work on earth was almost finished. So our Savior followed the 4th Commandment,

honoring his mother by entrusting her to John's care. Once again, Mary was blessed by God. It's interesting that we really don't hear anything more about Mary in the Bible. We do know that she was with the larger group of disciples who stayed in Jerusalem after Jesus' resurrection and ascension. But that's all we know. She had fulfilled the work that God intended her to do. And God blessed her with what she would need for the rest of her life, as he provided for her earthly needs.

We can remember God's promise to bless us by providing for all our earthly needs. Do you have stress about whether you will be provided for? Do you lose sleep over whether you will be able to pay the bills or keep your home? A pastor once raised the question, "Do you have more trouble believing that God has provided your salvation or that God will take care of your physical needs?" I think that's a thought-provoking question! Many days we might be thankful we know where the end of the road leads, but we struggle to trust that God will give us what we need until then!

We have God's clear Word that tells us:

- *Rom 8:32 - He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all-- how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?*
- *Philippians 4:19 – "My God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus."*
- *Matthew 6:33 – "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well."*

So today, let's learn the right lessons about Mary! Forget the added traditions and doctrines that have crept in down through time to glorify her unnecessarily! Rather, **we learn that God has blessed us as he blessed Mary:**

- 1. He blesses us by providing us salvation from sin**
- 2. God blesses us by providing for all our needs**

May this comfort us this Lent and always! Amen.