

Pastor T.C. Arnold
Mary, Mother of Our Lord
Luke 1:39-55
August 15th, 2010

This day has been set aside by the church-ancient to remember the life, the deeds and the experiences of Mary, the Mother of our Lord. We must be clear why days like this are celebrated as we recognize the Saints. We are not adorning the “person” of Mary by placing her as a human being above all others. She indeed is a “Blessed” woman among women. She sang about this very honor when where the text for today says, “...*from now on all generations will call me blessed.*” But even still, we do not adore Mary. We adore what God has chosen her to be. She is blessed because of the one she carried in her womb. She is blessed because of her Son – Jesus the Lord made flesh for us.

Take a look at Mary for a moment. She would seem to be the last person the Lord of all creation would choose to be the very vehicle of humanity for the Savior. Words that have been used to describe Mary include: lowly, insignificant, inferior, poverty-stricken. Besides this, she was a young, unwed woman. Socially she had very little significance at all – at least until she got married and could be identified with a husband. There was a reason why a woman like Mary was chosen.

“Just as God in the beginning of creation made the world out of nothing – for the very reason He is called the Creator and the Almighty. His manner of working continues unchanged. Even now and to the end of the world, all His works are such that out of nothing, worthless, despised, wretched and dead, he makes that which is something, precious, honorable, blessed and living” (LW, Vol. 21, pg. 299). The life of Mary is a commentary on the life of Christ Jesus the Savior. The life of Jesus is a commentary on how the Lord has, “*scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; he has filled the hungry with good things and the rich he has sent away empty.*”

Beloved in the Lord, we stand right at the beginning of the Gospel of St. Luke. We hear what Jesus will do, be all about, before He was ever born. Remember, the life of Mary is a commentary on the life of Jesus to come. For this reason, the world was turned upside down by what happened to Mary at this very moment. This is called “The Great Reversal.” In other words, it wasn’t difficult to find those of deep religious conviction who believed that the Lord favors those who seem so blessed. Kings were thought to have an extra measure of grace. Those in authority were closest to the Lord. The Pharisees and the High Priests were to be placed in the highest honor and their reward would indeed be in heaven. But the life of Mary, giving commentary on the coming of a most precious Son, the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, changes all that.

It indeed is a “Great Reversal”. And Jesus would echo this exact thing in His greatest of all sermons – the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus would say at the very beginning of His public ministry, “*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven... Blessed are the meek... Blessed are those who hunger and thirst... Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake...*” As Luther once said, “God is the kind of Lord who does nothing but exalt those of low degree and put down the mighty from their thrones, in short, break what is whole and make whole what is broken” (LW, Vol. 21, pg. 299).

Break what is “whole” and make “whole” what is broken. Are we the ones who are “whole” or we the ones who are broken? Remember what Mary said in the Magnificat: “*He has brought down the mighty from their thrones...the rich has been sent away empty.*”? We might think that we aren’t powerful or rich? But is that an accurate assessment?

According to America Wealth Verses Third World Poverty (by John Durr), the United States is undeniably the richest and most powerful nation ever on the face of the earth. The gross domestic product (GDP) of the U.S. is larger than the next two biggest economies combined – China and Japan. The U.S. economy out-produces the combined economies of over forty-seven poor nations, which

account for 53 percent of the population of the world. In 2000 the per capita income of the U.S. was 360 percent higher than the world's average per capita income (CPI). The U.S. boasted a CPI of \$34,100 while the average world CPI was \$7,410 (measured in international dollars).

According to statistics from the World Bank, 56 percent of the world's population lives in extreme poverty. They survive on an income of less than \$730 per year or \$2 per day. Half of the world's poor who comprise 28 percent of the world's population live on \$1 or less per day. In comparison, the average American earns from 46 to 92 times more than the poverty stricken comprising over half the world's population. Are we the rich and powerful that are “whole” and will be broken – according to what Luther said as well as the mother of Jesus in the Magnificat? No matter what position you hold how much income you have or where you live right now – you are among the richest people in the world. We live in the most powerful nation in the world.

Beloved in the Lord, to consider positions of power or wealth is not to count how many people are under you or how much money, stock options, or property you own. To be mighty or rich, according to the Lord, is an attitude and a way of life not a physical reality. Remember Kings like David, Solomon, and Josiah who were the most powerful people in the land, but were revered by God because they revered God first? Remember men like Nicodemus, a rich ruler, or Zacchaeus, the chief among Tax Collectors? These were rich men who put Christ first. It is not a sin to have positions of power and wealth. It is a sin to use such power and wealth for selfish reasons.

And there is no doubt in my mind, no matter what our “social position,” we are the broken people who can relate to a song from a peasant woman like Mary in the text for today. The Great Reversal for us today is that our Lord takes our broken lives and makes them whole again. He takes the lives of people like you and me – who suffer from the struggles of day to day living – and mends our broken hearts. Some of you might be challenged by income or a lack thereof. Some of you might be wondering today what you are going to do with your son or daughter who is struggling with their families, or with friends they have met at school or on the playground. Some of you might be having the worst time of your life right now in the relationships with the people that are closest to you. Some might be wondering how we are just going to get through the next week. We are broken people – who might be the richest in the world – but we don't feel rich – because we need something much more.

Beloved in the Lord, that more starts with a song of thanksgiving and praise from the very beginning – like Mary's song. At the very beginning of her life Kalyn was brought by her parents to that font of Holy Baptism. That is the place, beloved in the Lord, where the Lord breaks what is whole and makes whole what is broken. The Lord has done this for Kalyn this morning and He has done it for you. Our Savior takes our broken lives – broken by sin, pride, arrogance, the idea that we don't need a Savior who heals because we are not that bad off – or I can do it myself – and mends our lives by climbing a hill called Calvary with a heavy cross – a tree he would be nailed to for you. The Lord *became* the broken for us so that we may enjoy the wholeness of heaven to come. Mary's soul magnified the Lord and her spirit rejoiced in God her Savior –because her poverty ridden insignificant life had purpose not only for her but for the world. No longer would she be judged, or any of us, on status or wealth. Christ has taken care of that – not only for her but for you as well.

Today, as we remember the faith of the mother of our Savior, we dare not forget her song. Her song rejoiced not in herself but of the blessings of the Lord. You have those blessings, beloved in the Lord. You are blessed among men, among women. Count your blessings – and see what you have. I'm not talking about money or power. I'm talking about status – your status before the Heavenly Father. By grace through faith we are who we are – the broken in so many ways made whole again by a Savior who was broken for us on the cross. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.