

## **"For All the Faithful Women"**

August 15, 2021

*"For all the faithful women who served in days of old, To You shall thanks be given; to all, their story told. They served with strength and gladness in tasks Your wisdom gave. To You their lives bore witness, proclaimed Your pow'r to save.*

*"We sing of Mary, mother, fair maiden, full of grace. She bore the Christ, our Brother, who came to save our race. May we, with her, surrender ourselves to Your command, And lay upon Your altar our gifts of heart and hand."*

When we think of Mary, the mother of our Lord, we may imagine her as portrayed on Christmas cards. She gently cradles the baby Jesus as the infant Savior receives the adoration of shepherds. We do not always picture her as the young woman of Nazareth who received an angelic visitor and heard the astonishing news of what God would accomplish through her.

Mary was betrothed, promised to Joseph, although they had not yet come together as husband and wife. The welcome news that God was fulfilling His promise to send the Messiah surely brought joy, but with that news came the possibility of shame and disgrace for Mary. The Child to be born would be holy, the Son of God. Joseph, not yet understanding the wondrous miracle, was faced with a decision. Should he marry his betrothed and raise the coming Child as his own? Should he divorce Mary for adultery, which could be a sentence of death for her, or divorce her quietly and spare her public shame? All of this lay ahead for her, yet when Mary heard the Word of God, in humble faith she believed the miracle to come: "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38b).

The angel greeted Mary as the "favored one." God chose Mary, not because of some traits within her, but according to His grace, His favor. Undeserving sinners, we, too, have received God's favor. Jesus, true God and true Man, was born among us to give His life as the perfect sacrifice for our sins. God called us through the Gospel, the Good News of Jesus, to be His own holy people. We were dead in sin, helpless and unable to save ourselves. God, by grace through faith, raised us to new life in Christ.

In our hymn we pray that we, like Mary, might "surrender ourselves" to God's Word. Through the word of the Holy Spirit, Mary responded in faith. She offered herself as a living sacrifice in God's service, submitting to the miracle He would accomplish in her life. We pray that we too might be living sacrifices, to lay on God's altar "our gifts of heart and hand." Called to lives of love and service in the Name of Jesus, the Son of God and Mary's Son, we respond in faith as Mary did: "Let it be to me according to your word."

**THE PRAYER:** Mighty God and Savior, lead me by Your Spirit to listen to Your Word and, in humble faith, to follow You. Amen.

This Devotion is based on the hymn "For All the Faithful Women," which is number 855 in the *Lutheran Service Book*.