

Rev. Danny Mackey
St. Mary, Mother of Our Lord (Observed)
August 14, 2022
Luke 1:39-55
Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church in Muncie, Ind.

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

“Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!”

Mary was pregnant with God. God, the Lord of the Universe, the Creator of heaven and earth and all therein. Our Lutheran Confessions put it this way: “We believe, teach, and confess that the Son of Man...was received into God when He was conceived of the Holy Spirit in His mother’s womb, and His human nature was personally united with the Son of the Highest” (Epitome VIII:15).

Franz Pieper, professor and the fourth president of our beloved Synod, also writes, “For Scripture says, as already pointed out, not only of the grown man, not only of the adolescent boy, not only of the babe in its mother’s arms, but of the embryo in its mother’s womb that it is God the Lord” (Christian Dogmatics Vol. II, 84).

Mary was pregnant with God. That’s why she’s blessed among women. That’s why all generations call her blessed. Jesus is the fruit of her womb. That may sound a bit strange to us, but it’s not new. It’s the teaching of God’s sacred Scripture, as both our Confessions and Biblical scholars attest.

Mary was pregnant with God. She had to be. Our salvation depends on it. Psalm 51 tells us that we were conceived and born in sin. Prophet Isaiah tells us that all the good deeds we do as we live our lives are nothing but a “polluted garment.” Apostle Paul tells us that the wages of our sin is death, that all we deserve is God’s wrath and punishment.

All our babies, apart from Christ Jesus being conceived, would be in dire straights. Their salvation depends on Mary being pregnant with God. Jesus is Lord from His conception by the power of the Holy Spirit so that all children can be justified even in their mothers’ wombs. When Mary goes and visits Elizabeth, recall that the baby John the Baptizer leapt in his mother’s womb at the approach of his Lord Jesus. This is clear and certain evidence that faith can exist even in the womb. Where the Word of God is, faith can be (and often is) created. Therefore, it’s quite possible that—knowing the power of God’s Word—that the unborn babies of church-going mothers are indeed saved. Because they’ve already heard

God's Word, it's quite possible (maybe even probable) that our babies already believe in Jesus before coming to the font.

Mary was pregnant with God. What a great comfort this is to Christian parents who've lost a child to miscarriage. That unborn baby came into contact with the Word of our Lord through the ears of his or her mother. We can commend that child to our heavenly Father, relying on His abundant, lavish, and extravagant mercy. No such comfort can be given to those whose unborn baby has never come into contact with God's powerful Word. But for Christian, church-going parents, who mourn the loss of an unborn son or daughter, grief and sadness is mixed with hope. The hope of salvation that Christ Jesus has won on the cross for all nations: young and old, male and female, born and unborn.

And when a child is brought to Holy Baptism's font, to the life-giving water, rich in grace, and a washing of new birth in the Holy Spirit, as St. Paul says in Titus 3, that child is joined to the entire life of Jesus of Nazareth. They are joined to His conception, His birth, His childhood and adolescence, His adulthood, His earthly ministry, His judgment before Pontius Pilate, His suffering, His death, His burial, His descent into Hell, His resurrection, His ascension to the right hand of the Father, and, finally, when the Last Day comes, to His glorious return to judge the both the living and the dead.

Jesus passed through all the stages of life for us. He took our place in the womb and in birth, redeeming us from our sinful beginning. He took our place as He lived His life for us, covering the "polluted garment" of our deeds with His perfect "pure and spotless" deeds. He took our place on the cross, redeeming us from the punishment of Hell. He took our place in the grave and rose again, redeeming us from the sting of death and giving us sure and certain hope. Understanding that Mary was pregnant with God gives an even greater meaning to the Hebrews passages that tell us Jesus was made just like us in every respect—right down to developing in the womb—except He was without sin. All of this, in our place.

Mary was pregnant with God. Our salvation depends on it.

But we're not done learning from this pregnancy. It also teaches us of God's great love for all human life. God was involved in this conception, and He was involved in yours as well. His hands, Scripture says, knit you together in your mother's womb. His hands shaped you and formed you...in the womb. You're not the product of some biological assembly line. You could all have a sticker on the back of your neck saying, "Hand made by God." That

gives all life—including your life—value. Value that doesn't depend on how well you can see or hear or walk or talk or think. Value that doesn't depend on how you look or feel. Value that doesn't depend upon your health or the absence of suffering in your life. You are valuable to God because He made you and He loved what He made so much that He was conceived in a womb, born in a stable, suffered on a cross, and buried in a tomb.

Then He rose again to say "Yes" to it all, to say "Yes" to you, to give you His victory over death and the grave. That's love. And now that He's paid such a high price for you with His precious blood, He has another reason to value you. He has redeemed you—bought you back with a price. God loves life from the moment of conception. Life is the work of His creating hands. God loves life from the moment of conception. Life is the work of His redeeming hands.

This He shows most clearly in Baptism. At the font, in and with the water, God acts. Your body is the mark of God's creation; your Baptism is the mark of God claiming you as His dear child. He marks both your forehead and your heart with the sign of Christ's cross, the symbol of your redemption, your salvation, your being made right with God, your justification. Jesus took you into His very hands, poured the water of His righteousness and grace over your head, and declared, "This child is Mine. He will share in My inheritance and glory and life. Heavenly Father, into Your hands I commit this child." And the Church stands in witness of this historic event. Historic for each and every baptized child of God, because it is at the font that we behold God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—at work in us.

Mary was pregnant with God. Truly, blessed is she among all women. All generations call her blessed. And we also are blessed, as is Mary, because Jesus was God and man from the moment of conception. And from that very moment of conception, He was Jesus, Lord, Redeemer, Savior. From that very moment of conception, He took our place to save us from our sins—to save all of us no matter the stage of our lives.

What love God has for us, even from the moment of conception! What love God has for us, all the days of our lives!

In Jesus' name.

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