

**As Jesus was saying these things, a woman in the crowd called out, “Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you.”**

**<sup>28</sup> He replied, “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.” (NIV84)**

Theme: Blessed are those who wait for the Lord.

1. Mary waited for the Lord and was blessed.
2. We are blessed through his Word.

One of the names of Christ we are focusing on tonight is “Spring of Joy.” Jesus is the source of all our joy and happiness. The other name we are looking at is “Root of Life.” Because Jesus gives us life we are filled with joy. So the two names are connected. They are connected through the blessings of God. Tonight we see that blessed are those who wait for the Lord. For Mary waited for the Lord and was blessed. And God blesses us through the Word.

Mary sometimes gets a bad rap in Lutheran circles. That is because we are so sensitive to the adoration of Mary. We know that the Roman Catholics and others have give to Mary. They pray to her as if she can help us out. They even go as far as to call her the “Co-Redemprix” and the “Mediatix” along with Jesus. They claim that Mary has a role in saving us. We know that Mary needed a Savior, just like you and I. As a sinful human being she is not able to intercede between us and God. She can’t save us anymore than we can save ourselves. So we are a little weary of saying too much about Mary.

And yet when Gabriel appeared to Mary in Nazareth to tell her that she would give birth to Jesus he addressed her in a special way.

**Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.** God looked favorably on Mary. We reiterate this greeting in the advent hymn, *The Angel Gabriel from Heaven Came*. There we call Mary, “Most highly favored maiden.” Mary was favored by God. She was blessed.

The woman in our text for this evening said so. **Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you.** The woman who said this, said it because she was amazed at what Jesus said and did. Earlier Jesus

cast a demon out a mute man. And when the demon left the man could suddenly speak. This amazed a crowd who was with Jesus. But the Pharisees were not so impressed. They claimed that Jesus had the power to do this from the devil. Jesus’ reply to them was powerful. He pointed out that he cannot be sent from the devil since what he is doing is against the devil. And **a house divided against itself cannot stand.**

This woman was amazed at what Jesus said and did. What she said agrees with what was said about Mary when she was pregnant with Jesus. When Mary went to visit Elizabeth John the Baptist jumped in her womb. This caused Elizabeth to exclaim, **Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear!** Mary, like most Jews, had been waiting all her life for the promised Savior. And now in nine short months that Savior would be born—she would be first to know and see the Savior. This caused her to brake out is song—the song of Mary. **From now on all generations will call me blessed.**

You can see how Mary’s head might have started to swell. She was getting privileges that no one else would ever be given. She was the Savior’s mother. Soon she would feed and take care of the Son of God—she literally had the best son ever! She was a pregnant virgin, the boy growing in her womb was conceived by the Holy Spirit! An angel appeared to her to tell her how blessed she would be. God had picked Mary over all the other virgins descendants of David. She must have been special!

We may think we are special. We may think that God should bless us simply because of who we are. We are members of Holy Cross. That has to stand for something right! You have been going to Church your whole life. Your parents were good Christians. You have a real temptation to think that God should give you privileges simply because of who you are. In your mind, you are something special. God must have recognized that as well, so he will bless you.

But Mary wasn’t blessed simply because of who she was. She wasn’t blessed simply because she was carrying God’s Son. She was blessed because God had given her faith. As Elizabeth also said to her, **Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished!** If Mary would have rejected the truth that her

Son is God and was also her Savior, she would not have been saved. She is just like the rest of us. She is a sinner in need of a Savior. She said so in her song. **My Spirit rejoices in God my Savior.** Like Mary we too need a Savior. For all of us sin against God every day. And God sent that Savior to us through Mary despite who we were. God didn't show favor to us because we were such good people, but he blessed us because we weren't good people. We were helpless to save ourselves—So God sent his Son. Is it a good thing that you have been a Christian your whole life, that you come from a strong Christian household, and so on? Of course it is. But none of that matters without faith. For it is through faith in him we receive the forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and every other spiritual gifts Mary's son would go on to give us. Mary was blessed as she waited for the Lord. Not merely because he was going to give birth to the Lord, but rather because God had worked faith into our heart to believe that her Son is also her God and Savior.

And it is only through the means of grace that the Holy Spirit works faith into our hearts. That is why it is we cling to the Word of God.

Jesus didn't disagree with the woman—Mary was blessed. But Jesus wanted to add to what she said. Blessed **are those who hear the word of God and obey it.** That is what we are doing today. We are here to hear the Word of God in sermon and lessons. We sing them through hymns and psalms. And it's not just hearing, but we also get to read God's Word anytime we want. We get to sit down with the Bible and read the Word of the Holy Spirit. Through this reading and hearing God increases our knowledge and faith in him. Through his Word we are blessed.

But God doesn't just bless us as we hear the word, but also as we obey the word. Actually, that is not exactly what the Greek says. The Greek really says, "guard." God blesses those who guard his Word. And that includes a number of different things. First and foremost it includes faith. Through faith God blesses us. It's not enough simply to hear the Word, but to also believe it. It is faith that grasps the blessings God offers to us. To guard God's word also means to protect. We defend God's Word against all outside attacks. We uphold the truth against those who want to spread false doctrine.

Because it is through the Word that God blesses us we will want to hear his Word as often as we possibly can. As we wait for the Lord, we get into his Word. We study his Word every day. We ready devotions at home both privately and with our families. We attend Bible class. We make sure our children are in Sunday School. We regularly attend worship. We realize that there are many things we are ignorant of. So we thirst for more knowledge. We pray that through our studying of his Word God may increase our knowledge and faith in him.

And when someone dares to say something against God's Word, we stand up for the truth. If God blesses us through the Word, than we want to make sure people hear the Word. And not something that is contrary to the Word. So instead of keeping our mouths when we hear something wrong, we show them the truth. We calmly explain to them what God's Word says. That way we can let the Holy Spirit work through his Word. So he can give many blessings.

But what exactly does God bless us with? Through his Word he gives us faith. That faith receives the blessings that Mary's Son would give. Through him we have the forgiveness of sins. He took away our sins on the cross. And he credited us with his perfect life. Then he rose from the dead. And through faith all who believe in him will live forever. As Jesus said in Mark, **Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.** Through the hearing of the Word God blesses us with forgiveness and eternal life. And in heaven we will live with our **Savior**—forever. Therefore we can say that Jesus is the Root of Life. We will have a perfect life without sin. Therefore we can also call Jesus the Spring of Joy. For we will live with Mary's Son in eternal bliss.

As the mother of God, Mary was certainly blessed. But so are we—even more so. God blesses us by his Word through faith. God doesn't bless us simply because of who we are or what we have done. God especially blesses us by giving us faith through the Word. Blessed are those who wait for the Lord—who wait for the Lord in the Word. So as we wait for the Lord, let use of his Word regularly and often—and when we do we will be blessed. Amen.