

In the name of ✝ Jesus.

John was going to “*be called the prophet of the Most High*” (Luke 1:76), but his mother Elizabeth did a bit of prophesying herself on this day. Filled “*with the Holy Spirit,*” she cried out to Mary, the mother of our Lord, with a loud cry, saying, “*Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!*” And indeed from that time on, “*all generations [would] call [Mary] blessed.*” She was the one favored by God to be the mother of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Mother of God Himself.

And one does not engage in idolatry of Mary to acknowledge her part in our salvation story, the humble way this maidservant “*believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.*”

In fact, what had just happened prior to Mary's traveling to “*the hill country ... in Judah*”? You know the story well. The angel Gabriel had greeted Mary and given her astonishing news: though a virgin, she would soon be with child by the Holy Spirit, and her child would “*be great and will be called the Son of the Most High*” (Luke 1:32). He will be a king in the line of David, but will rule an everlasting kingdom. And Mary believed: “*I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word*” (Luke 1:38).

Now let me engage in some idle speculation here. The Bible doesn't tell us anything about Mary's mother and father at the time. Obviously, hers was not the kind of news that you keep to yourself, yet how could she share this news with her parents? What would they say? Would they believe her amazing story? What would they do? God's laws were harsh for the crime of adultery: “*If a man commits adultery with the wife of his neighbor—and Mary was betrothed to Joseph, even though they hadn't come together (Matt. 1:18), then—both the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death*” (Lev. 20:10).

Now, it's true that the Bible doesn't say why Mary went to visit Elizabeth, or why this young maid went without her parents, but it could be because she needed to get away from them for a bit. And so, she went to her cousin Elizabeth's house in Judah, because she had to tell someone—and they didn't have FaceBook in those days!

But she didn't get a chance to tell. As Mary greeted Elizabeth, Elizabeth's baby John leaped for joy in her womb. And filled with the Holy Spirit, Elizabeth exclaimed, “*You've got something baking in the oven*”—well, not that exactly, but Elizabeth knew Mary was pregnant, and she exclaimed, “*Blessed is the fruit of your womb!*”

What a relief that must have been for Mary! She didn't need to break the news to Elizabeth. She didn't need to explain how it happened. The same Spirit who had conceived Mary's son in her womb, conveyed the knowledge of Mary's blessed favor to Elizabeth—Mary has come to me a mother, carrying in her womb "*my Lord.*" The Spirit did it in part by John's ecstatic leap for joy in Elizabeth's womb. This was a leap of faith—not the proverbial leap of faith where one believes in something without any basis. No, John's leap of joy was a leap of faith, faith wrought by the Holy Spirit as He caused John also to recognize in whose presence he stood—"*the mother of [his] Lord.*" Moreover, with this leap John began his prophetic ministry. By this ecstatic jump for joy, John caused Elizabeth to sit up and listen!

And the Spirit did it in part also by filling Elizabeth with His presence and giving her not only the knowledge THAT Mary was pregnant, but also that the child she carried would be the fulfillment of what the Lord had spoken: the Old Testament promises, the offspring through whom all nations would be blessed. And the Spirit gave Elizabeth the very word of God to proclaim: "*Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!*"

Mary was blessed, Elizabeth proclaims; she would bear the Savior of the world. The fruit of her womb was blessed to be a blessing to all flesh. Indeed, from her womb the Son of God received His flesh, made to be like us in every way, save one: He remained without sin, even though in Mary's womb, He was completely surrounded by sinful flesh, even though born into this world in weakness He was surrounded with more sin, doing battle with the author of sin, eating with tax collectors and sinners, being surrounded even on the cross with criminals, "*numbered with the transgressors*" (Is. 53:12), encircled by evildoers (Ps. 22:16).

Mary was blessed by her blessed Son, for by Mary's offspring would the ancient serpent's head be crushed, the mighty enemy of man cast down from his throne. This child of Mary was a blessing for the world, for by Him would the law be fulfilled as God intended, so that by His sacrifice she might be redeemed from death's sting and sin's power, that is, from the law (Gal. 4:4-5; 1 Cor. 15:56).

Now Mary didn't get a chance to tell her story to Elizabeth. The Spirit preempted that. But she did get to "tell out [her] soul the greatness of the Lord" (LSB935). Perhaps awestruck by this prophetic pronouncement, Mary acknowledged Elizabeth's trustworthy message, singing her beautiful and timeless hymn of praise not to herself, but to the Lord, her God and Savior. "*My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.*"

Mary sings what Elizabeth proclaimed: that it is not she who bestows favor, but she upon whom God's favor had been bestowed. Mary sings that even though

she is called blessed, and all generations will likewise call her blessed, that her blessing comes from the God who has favored her and is working through her, through her Son, to show mercy, to display His strength. God is working through Mary's Son to humble the proud, to cast down the mighty, to deflate the rich, but to raise up the humble, to fill the hungry, to help the faithful of every generation.

And the blessed Son of Mary did just that. Yes, the blessedness of Mary is also our blessedness. To be sure, no other woman will be called upon to bear the Savior of the world, but "*strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ... Christ [does come to] dwell in [our] hearts through faith*" (Eph. 3:16-17) — and we are blessed. No other woman will be chosen by God to bear the Christ, but God has in Christ, even before the foundation of the world, chosen us to be His own. No other woman will hear the angelic message delivered to Mary, or the prophetic message delivered by Elizabeth to Mary, and believe it, but we are blessed when we believe that which has been spoken to us by the Lord: that Christ was "conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried" for you; that on the third day Christ rose from the dead and has ascended into heaven; that He will come again to judge the living and the dead. We are blessed when we believe that in Christ we have the forgiveness of sins and life everlasting, and that He distributes these gifts by word and water and Supper.

Yes, we are blessed when we believe as Mary and John the Baptist and Elizabeth believed. We are blessed when we listen to the preaching of the angel and John and Elizabeth—when we listen to Jesus, the apostles and prophets—and believe. We are blessed when we believe and sing out our Magnificats: "My soul rejoices, My spirit voices—Sing the greatness of the Lord! For God my Savior Has shown me favor—Sing the greatness of the Lord!" "Yes, Lord, may it be to us according to Your word."

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.