

Mary – Mother of God

On behalf of sons & daughters everywhere...
Happy Mother's Day!

- To the mother of my children
- To the mother of the mother of my children
- To my own mom... listening via the Internet

Let's take a moment and honor some specific moms

- Most kids
- Most kids, inlaws, grandkids, grandinlaws...
- Mom lives farthest away
- Kid lives farthest away

In honor of Mother's Day, I would like to bring a few thoughts about Mary, mother of Jesus, and Mary's Model of Motherhood.

Maybe I am running some risk here... even identifying Mary as "Mother of God" might be a bit *provocative* to some.

Some church traditions *venerate* Mary, praying **to** her or **through** her, ascribing to her attributes that do not have much Biblical basis, but rather rose out of various traditions. That is **not** the kind of church we are; you won't find any statues of Mary around here, nor any particular devotion to her.

Nevertheless... I'm sticking with the title: *Mary, Mother of God*.

I think that in reaction to some of the errors inherent with the Catholic veneration of Mary... we Evangelicals have steered clear of this important figure in history. Mary is more than merely part of the story at Christmas... more than one of the figures in the manger scene.



I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary...

While there may be some differences of opinion and tradition among churches regarding Mary, about **this** there is no contention among Christians. Jesus is God... and Jesus had a mother: **Mary**. Hence, provocative or not, in a very real way, Mary was mother of God.

God, of course, was not created or born in an eternal sense. God is creator, existing eternally in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Think of it... God always had, and is, Father... but He wanted, and required, a mother.

I've heard people wonder, why is Mother's Day such a much bigger deal than Father's Day? Perhaps this is the definitive answer: God determined that mothers are so very important, He got one Himself!

When thinking of Mary this past several days, and her important place in our Faith, I recalled the gripping portrayal of Mary in the movie *The Passion of the Christ*.

Here is a particularly moving clip.

The *flashbacks* are heart wrenching.

This is the sort of things parents do... *flashbacks*. I know that as a father, I am occasionally gripped by moments when I *flashback* to a memory of a young son. I routinely observe others, especially mothers, gripped by emotion as they are transported back through a memory to when their children were so dependent.



The flashbacks in the movie reminds us that Jesus did, indeed, have (and needed) a mother. And, of course, that Mary, as the mother of Jesus, endured a particularly difficult burden.

I especially appreciated the way the movie depicted Mary's grasp on Jesus. Her tie to her son was strong; it was depicted as an unusually deep bond between a mother and a son. Yet, the depiction also showed how her grasp was **loose** in an important way; it was depicted that Mary knew that her son, Jesus, was not just hers... that she was merely a steward of this gift from God.

I know I'm learning this lesson everyday... and you parents are learning this lesson too. Children are given to us by God... not for our having, or keeping... but for our care and stewardship. And just as Mary seemed to parent with this clearly in focus, we do our best parenting when we understand that these children of ours are Gods.

So... Mary.

We've talked about a couple of ways motherhood comes along... thankfully there were no reports like Mary's... I'm not sure how we'd handle news of a virgin birth this morning. That would be pretty hard to believe today; what makes us think it would have been any easier to believe then?

Who was Mary?

Mary is a fairly common name these days; it seems like it was a fairly common name 2,000 years ago too. There are seven different Mary's mentioned in the New Testament.

The Bible presents this Mary as a godly, chaste, young Jewish girl who was betrothed to a devout Jewish carpenter named Joseph.

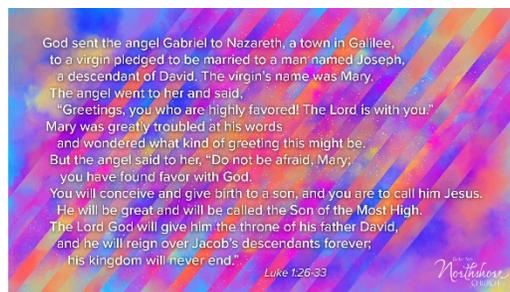
It seems that she not only had an *ordinary* name... she was an **ordinary** woman, in ordinary circumstances.

What made the difference was her attitude towards God. We can assume that she had an extraordinary commitment to God since she was the recipient of this most extraordinary gift of a son. She demonstrated that extraordinary commitment when she heard God's plan and immediately accepted it.

Here is the account from the Gospel of Luke:

²⁶ ... God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, ²⁷ to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

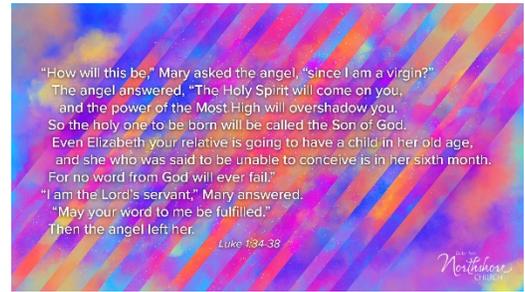
²⁹ Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. ³⁰ But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. ³¹ You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."



³⁴ “How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?”

³⁵ The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. ³⁶ Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. ³⁷ For no word from God will ever fail.”

³⁸ “I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May your word to me be fulfilled.” Then the angel left her. ¹



Accepting God’s plan could not have been without cost.

In this case, Mary must have suffered great embarrassment being with child and not having a husband. God spoke to Joseph too... but it still had to be very difficult on Mary. Yet, in spite of all this, she accepted this difficulty as God’s plan... and committed herself to doing God’s will... all the while relying on Him.

Apart from giving birth to Jesus, Mary is not all that prominent of a figure in the Bible.



- **We see that she was a faithful Jew by the way she and Joseph carried out the rituals of presenting herself and her son at the Temple at the proper times.**
- **After Jesus was born, the Bible tells us that Joseph and Mary had other children. Again showing that Mary was a normal woman and mother.**
- **It seems that Joseph died and left her a widow with a large family. We’re not sure when Joseph died, but it is likely after Jesus was old enough to provide for the family. There are those who have speculated that caring for his widowed mother and family may have been the reason Jesus did not start his public ministry until after he was 30.**

Some of the Biblical accounts are not *all that flattering* of Mary. Again indicating that she was a normal mom.

At Cana, where Jesus performed His first miracle, she appeared anxious... even bossy.

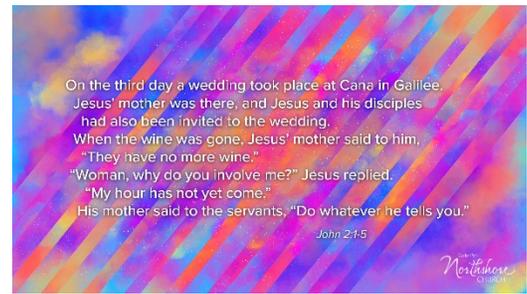
¹ *The New International Version*. (2011). (Lk 1:26–38). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Here's the beginning of the account from John 2:

On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there,² and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding.³ When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine."

⁴ "Woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My hour has not yet come."

⁵ His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."²



A mom being a bit bossy at a wedding. I'll not name any names, but a few of you guys might want to take note.

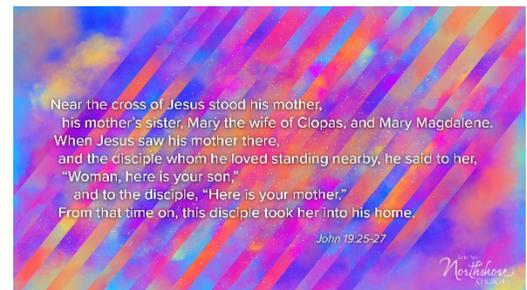
Everyone *did* obey Mary that day, including Jesus, and he performed His first recorded miracle at that wedding that day, turning water into wine.

While the account does portray Mary in a fairly ordinary way, her message should be noted by us all. It is there in verse 5, "Do whatever he tells you." Popular culture a number of years ago asked WWJD (what would Jesus do). Mary's message is more *on point*: DWJS (do what Jesus says).

Mary followed her son to the cross (just as we saw in the movie clip). She was there when they crucified Him... and mourned His death like nobody else could.

It might be the most startling verse in the Bible on a Mother's Day, here in John 19:

²⁵ Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother,³



We have every reason to believe that she was among those who were with Jesus after His resurrection, prior to His ascension. She was among those who were obedient to Jesus; we find the last mention of her in the Bible (Acts 1:14) as she continue in prayer with the other faithful who waited for the coming of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. Mary was not only present for the birth of Jesus... she was there for the birth of the Church.

² The New International Version. (2011). (Jn 2:1-5). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

³ The New International Version. (2011). (Jn 19:25). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Then the Bible is silent and mentions her no more.

Mary... just *ordinary* Mary.

She had shortcomings, just like all; she was a godly woman who loved the Lord and was faithful to God.



What made Mary special was her willingness to serve God out of her weakness. She simply wasn't anything all that special; she was ordinary... but God used her in a most extraordinary way.

We heard her *motto* this morning in Luke 1:38.

"I am the Lord's servant."

- The course that the Lord had for her life was a difficult one. She would have a child and not know a man.
- Clearly she understood what she was being asked to do. In verse 34, she replied...."how can this be seeing I do not know a man?"
- Yet, fully understanding the difficulties she faced she replied and said "let Thy will be done."



There was only one Mary, only one mother of Jesus... but God has a lot of mothers.

Let Mary's example be an example to all moms... and dads, and us all.

1. Believe God: Mary was able to be part of this most spectacular miracle because she believed God.
2. Serve God
 - a. Even if you're ordinary
 - b. Even if it will be difficult
 - c. Even if it is without honor... being a mom is often a thankless job

We all know of Abraham Lincoln. Do you know anything about his mother?



President Lincoln said, "All that I am or ever hope to be, I owe to my angel Mother." Yet, hardly anyone even knows her name. Lincoln was one of, if not the, greatest presidents we have had he said, "I remember my mother's prayers and they have always followed me. They have clung to me all my life."

"All I am I owe to my mother. I attribute all my success in life to the moral, intellectual and physical education I received from her." -- George Washington

These mothers were faithful to their God-given privilege and responsibilities. Their sons were great men because they had a great and wonderful mother.

It has been a theme of ours over the past weeks, as we wrapped up our Deuteronomy series: there is success through succession. Perhaps our most vital success is the success found in successors, in those who come after us. Thank God for moms who know and do this so well.

It was God who made ordinary Mary extraordinary.

She was no different from any other woman... or **any** of us for that matter.

Her belief in God and her service to God is an example for all of us.