

In Jesus' name. Amen.

This afternoon/evening we are introduced to a real theologian of the cross.

One who was a true student of the Lord, who listened with a discerning ear, trusted His promises, and obediently submitted to His will, regardless of what it meant for earthly comfort.

So who is this theologian, someone rather unassuming, I think.

We read selected verses from our text.

As follows in Jesus' name:

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary.

And [the angel, Gabriel] came to [Mary] and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be.

And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to Him the throne of His father David, and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end."

And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"

And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the Child to be born will be called holy – the Son of God. And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For nothing will be impossible with God."

And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her. ^(ESV)

This is Your Word, heavenly Father; sanctify us in the truth, Your Word is Truth. Amen. (John 17:17)

Mary, that unassuming maiden, is a real theologian of the cross.

And what a contrast to Zachariah from last week's lesson and meditation,

who, when Gabriel announced that the Lord had heard and was answering his prayer, immediately questioned the fulfillment of that word, asking "How can this be?"

Here, a studied, elderly priest, a theologian by occupation, struggled with this word of the Lord.

But Mary was not a priest. She wasn't a Levite or a rabbi. She didn't live in the holy city of Jerusalem, or any great hub of Scriptural learning.

She was a, presumably, young betrothed virgin in Nazareth –

John 1:46

(remember the town that Nathaniel so flippantly asked, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?").

But make no mistake, Mary was a theologian.

Listen to her throughout this text:

When Gabriel first greets her, how does she receive his greeting?

She was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be.

We have no clues as to how Gabriel appeared or how he entered.

Was he glowing with holiness?... with tell-tale angelic wings... as we often see in pictures?

or was did he look like a regular man off the street?

Did he simply appear from out of nowhere to her in the inner room of her father's house?

or was she working a garden outside when he just came up the street and stopped to talk?

But what was Mary's concern, she wasn't troubled at the sight of him, but **at the SAYING.**

and she didn't simply ignore it or blow it out of proportion, but she **tried to discern ... the greeting.**
And when he speaks further, she listens carefully...intently.

After Gabriel explained what was to happen to her, that she would **conceive and bear a Son,**
and that this Child would be **called the Son of the Most High** and be given the throne of David,
and reign over a kingdom that has no end,

she does not balk at such an unbelievable declaration and promise... as Zachariah had.

Instead, she is curious, how is this to happen?

How is this supernatural thing to take place in this natural world?

How does this concept of the coming Christ become a concrete reality?

Basically: How will she become pregnant?

And as Gabriel revealed how:

that **The Holy Spirit will come upon you,**

and the power of the Most High will overshadow you;

therefore the Child to be born will be called holy – the Son of God,

she believed his word.

She didn't chafe at the mention of the 3 persons of the Triune Godhead.

She didn't scorn the two natures of this Christ, the (human) **Child being called ... the Son of God.**

And I would submit to you that this is so because she was such a student of God's Word.

That she meditated on and pondered His Word, not only on the Sabbath day, but continually,
... maybe even **day and night.** ^{Ps. 1}

God had left hints about this coming Savior since Adam and Eve:

The **seed of the woman** would crush the serpent's head. ^{Gen. 3:15}

Isaiah had foretold it:

"Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel." ^{Is. 7:14}

These are pretty incredible, unbelievable statements, and yet, the Lord boldly made them,

revealing how He would **"help His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy."** ^{Luke 1:54}

These great promises were meant to be heard and meditated on.

And note how this is not the navel gazing type of mediation

where you try to vacate your mind of everything, and become one with the universe.

Neither is it the mindfulness meditation of training your attention to achieve a mental state

of calm concentration and positive emotions, encouraged by the American Psychological Assoc.

And it is more than just "the intellectual exercise of working out the meaning & application" of a text.

It is the *hearing, reading, and marking, and taking to heart, or better still, inwardly digesting* ^(ELH, p. 86 & TLH p. 14)

what God, in His mercy and grace, has revealed to us about our salvation, our Savior. ^{Collect for the Word.}

This *meditatio* is reading the words over and over, even out loud,

hearing them speak to you and work on your heart,

inwardly digesting them, mulling them over to get everything you can out of them.

It is thinking on what the Son of God has done, in taking on your human flesh

and eternally uniting it with His divine nature, so that you may once again be united to God.

It is extracting all the comfort you can find of your sins forgiven through Jesus' death and merit,

and letting it nourish and satisfy you from day to day, even/especially when afflicted.

And this *meditatio* is not a just a solitary endeavor.

We meditate on God's Word together —

as we hear and discern the preached word together, and consider it and share it with others,
as we participate in our Bible Classes and home devotions, encouraging one another,
and raising each other's curiosities to look deeper into these words and promises of God.

Mary was such a theologian.

There is evidence of this throughout the biblical accounts with her.

When she went to visit her pregnant relative Elizabeth, Mary breaks into song,
betraying a fluency in Scriptural language, as she mirrors similar expressions of joy from Hannah
in 1 Samuel 2, when the Lord had blessed her with a miraculous son as well.

(There are also hints from Job's lamenting in his suffering Job 5:8-13.)

And what did Mary do when the shepherds came, saw, and spread the good news of Jesus' birth?

What did she do when she found Jesus in the temple after 3 days of searching,
but didn't immediately know what to make of His response to her,

"Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" Luke 2:49

She kept... treasured... pondered them in her heart.

She did not ignore them, or flippantly cast aside what she could not understand.

She believed them, trusted them as God's Word, and lived with them, considered them,
meditated on them.

And, in time, the Lord revealed the mystery of "these things" to her,

so that St. Luke could record them... and so that you could keep, treasure, and ponder them as well.

And as she discerned the greeting of Gabriel to be valid,

and the fulfillment of the prophecies of the Christ-child to be legitimate,

she humbly submitted herself to God's good and gracious will, regardless of her comfort in this life.

What would people say about a pregnant betrothed lady?

It didn't matter. This was God's will and His way.

What would Joseph, her betrothed, do?

It didn't matter. This Child is the Son of God, her Son, and yet her Lord and God, and her Savior.

Who would believe her?

It didn't matter. Their belief did not change God's Word.

Dear Loved by God, theologians of the Triune God,

Mary did not have the title "doctor of theology." She was not schooled in rabbinic studies.

She was a wife and a mother, an ordinary Christian, before the term was ever coined.

She was blessed, not because she conceived, carried, and bore the Christ-Child,

but because she believed God's Word about Him, the Savior of the world and her Savior.

This blessing is yours as well. It doesn't require a degree. You don't have to be a pastor.

It is yours through the grace of God and the gift of the Holy Spirit,

who has drawn you to hear God's Word, to meditate on it, and to believe in Jesus as your Savior.

Thanks be to God!

In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

Soli Deo Gloria