

"The Visitation" Luke 1:39-45 Visitation of Mary 2023 – RLC/FLC/SPL

Little Mary is pregnant with Jesus, has no husband, perhaps her mother is dead, and perhaps she is an orphan. To whom can she turn? She goes to her cousin, who is also expecting, a much older woman who can help. Two women get together to talk about having a baby, the caring and things that needed to be done. Womanly hearts flow out to these two women with a warmth of shared feeling and understanding that men cannot fully grasp. Good, helpful Joseph would really not be much help at all. Mary needed Elizabeth, the older woman, to help her and tell her so many things. Mary had need, and a kind of desperation, for she went with haste. How was she going to handle her situation that would set the tongues wagging? She wanted to be a good mother and know all the things that needed to be done for her child.

At Mary's coming, Elizabeth was thrilled when her child began a lusty kicking in her womb. She was glad to God as she was joining Him in the creation of life and of someone more to be loved, her child, and to his mother's joy more was given. It was given to Elizabeth to know that her little cousin's baby was something more. Her young cousin was mother of all mothers of all the world. In Mary, through her womanhood, the Lord was coming.

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“Blessed are you among women, and your child will be blessed! How could this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For you see, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped for joy inside me. Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill what he has spoken to her!”

Elizabeth agrees with Martin Luther in recognizing the greatest miracle in all this. There is the miracle of the angel’s message to Mary, the miracle that God should love us who waste and destroy His gifts in this world, and each other, and ourselves in rebellion and disobedience against Him. That God should love us so much that He joins us in our world to get under the burden of the misery we have made, as one of us, to free us, love us love’s way all the way to the bottom, and chooses a maiden, whom no one thought of any importance, to be His way to join and rescue us, born of a virgin. Then there is the most staggering miracle of all – that Mary believed it. She was given to, she received beyond thought and imagination, and simply acknowledged the gift. “Behold, the handmaid of the Lord.” Here is the miracle of faith. Into her nothingness comes the gift that the nonentity of Mary becomes “the mother of my Lord.”

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Mary's response is not, "Yes, that is me. Just think what it does for my self-image." Hers is the song of faith that tells God the giver what an astonishing God He is. "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior" We call it Mary's song or the Magnificat, but it isn't something that she just whipped up for the occasion. It is some Scripture she had learned by heart at Sunday School, so she is equipped for some solid praise. It is mostly Hannah's song of praise to God for the son that was given to her, Samuel, whom she gave back to the Lord's service. Leah's song is in it too. So, Mary's song is a piece with the song of all grateful mothers for the gift of a child created with them. Yet Mary is mother number one. Blessed is she among women, for the fruit of her womb is my Lord.

There is a size of joy and gift in Mary's song above all others. As mother she has the part of God to play for her child, and her child is God Incarnate. God hidden in child and boy like other children, whom she must nurse and teach to pray and help Him learn the commandments and the promises. The Fourth Commandment says, "Honor thy father and thy mother." This is honor that belongs only to God, and this honor He shares with parents who have the part of God for their children as He deputizes in creating and nurturing their children's life.

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The role of motherhood, and a mother's love, like other loves, needs another love running along with it, the love of the First Commandment. God's love and love of Him are always first and largest. For only as all our loves are tied in with God's love do they have their health, vitality, and happiness. In this way, too, a mother's love is kept from shriveling or growing hazardously oversize. We are told of two occasions when Mary had to learn this. At Cana she gave Jesus a prod, "Aren't You going to do something about the wine?" Jesus says, "What I am to be doing is not something that you have control over." Mary took it and magnificently and humbly she tells the servants, "Whatever He tells you to do, do it."

On another occasion Jesus was with His disciples and preaching. Mary sent a message summoning Him to come to her. Jesus did not go but proclaimed a relationship with Himself that is deeper and larger than mother and child, into which the relationship of mother and child is to be included and find its maturing and fulfilling place. He said, "Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother." Mary, too, had to learn discipleship. It was not easy. Yet in the hour of her utmost grief, a sword through her heart, she knew that being Jesus' mother was not something to be cast aside. Jesus appointed John to do the son's part for her that He could not do because of what was His to

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do by cross and resurrection for her and for us all. Tenderly from the cross, He says, "Woman, behold thy son! . . . Behold thy mother!"

All our loves have their full meaning, maturing, and fulfillment within His strong, saving, forgiving love to a happiness unimaginable but toward which all our love and happiness are to point and pull us as they are held within His love. Amen.