

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you. Blessed are you among humankind and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus Christ. Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for us.

My guess is you probably haven't heard that too often in a Lutheran Church. And some might even cringe that a Lutheran pastor would even utter such a prayer. But to set the record straight, Luther never had an issue with praying to saints. And certainly Luther never had issue with Mary being highly esteemed in the life of the Church. She is the mother of God, after all. In fact, of all the statements of faith given throughout Scripture, Mary's Song, the Magnificat, might be the richest and most profound.

Just hear these words again: "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

It's stunning. It's deeply faithful. And in the midst of such uncertainty in her own life, she speaks with such surety and knowledge of who God is. I could only dream of speaking something so profoundly beautiful about my faith in God. Mary knows. She understands. She trusts in faith to a depth that cannot be fathomed. She believes that this gift is for her and yet it's not about her. It never has been. It's about God. It's about what God is doing through her. It's about the child. It's about what God is doing through her child for the sake of the whole world. And she gets it.

Over 2000 years have passed since Mary's Song. And even more years have passed since the countless times the world has seen who God is and how God acts. And yet, we still miss it. And we need to hear about who God is and how God acts over and over and over again. But Mary knows. And maybe there were times when she didn't get it. Maybe there were times when she wondered or even had her doubts. But in this moment, she knows. That the world God seeks to

save cannot remain the same. It just can't. Because the good news of a child born for us, a Savior given to us, cannot be good news for anyone as long as the world lives under the powers of sin and death. It cannot be good news until the lowly are lifted up, the hungry are fed, and all who long for newness of life are healed. It cannot be good news until the proud and powerful and rich have been brought down and reminded of the call to love and serve one another. Which means, according to the standards of the world, this might not seem like good news. Because it's all changing. But Mary knows. Mary knows the good news of God in the Christ-child she bears in her womb.

Because Mary is blessed. But she knows that her blessedness is not her own. It's not hers to keep or hold over people or even turn into a hashtag. #blessed. Mary sings these prophetic words because she knows the blessing must be shared. The blessing of God is for her, but it's not just for her. It's for everyone. It's for you and for me. It's for our neighbors. It's for the people we get along with and the people we don't. It's for those who agree with you and those who don't. It's for the ones who don't deserve it. It's for the world. And the world cannot remain as it is, operating as though riches and success and pride were the blessing of God. For the blessing of God is not our own. It is not a stamp of approval to keep doing things the same way, but an invitation to come and live into the new life God has prepared, a new life that comes in the most impossible of ways. Through a child born in a barn. Through his lowly mother. Because the blessing of God is presence. It is Emmanuel.

Blessed Mary. One of a kind. A willing servant, the model of highest devotion of humanity to God. A model of faith. Chosen for the sake of the world. Prophet and preacher of the Good News of Christ. Mother of God. Oh, that we could have a faith like hers and even more, the courage to live it out as fully as she does. And even so, when we do not or cannot bear such faith, may we turn to Mary's Song and hear the good news of God once again.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you. Blessed are you among humankind for the sake of the world and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus Christ, Savior of the world God so loves. Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for us. Teach us again. Help us to see and know the blessing of God, until all the world is flooded with new life in Christ. Amen.