

Sermon 2010 St. Mary Mother of Our Lord  
Text: Galatians 4:4-7  
Theme: "What About Mary?"  
8-15-10

Lutherans have long asked, "What do we do with Mary?" Many Lutherans become uncomfortable whenever the blessed virgin is brought up because they just don't know how they are supposed to feel about her. One year, when I celebrated St. Mary Mother of Our Lord, I had a member say to me, "I thought this was a Lutheran Church. Since when did we start worshipping Mary?"

It all starts with the Doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. This is the doctrine that states that Mary was without sin. The logic is that the angel Gabriel refers to her as one full of grace and in order for Jesus to be born sinless, he would have to come from sinless parents, that is, Mary the mother and God the Father.

Long before the Reformation, Christians were permitted to adhere to this teaching or not as their conscience led them. It may be of interest for you to know that Martin Luther himself agreed with the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. He preached in 1527,

*It is a sweet and pious belief that the infusion of Mary's soul was effected without original sin; so that in the very infusion of her soul she was also purified from original sin and adorned with God's gifts, receiving a pure soul infused by God; thus from the first moment she began to live she was free from all sin"*

It was not until 1854 that Pope Pius IX made the Immaculate Conception an official doctrine of the Church which must be confessed. Now think about what was happening in Lutheranism in the mid 1850's. We were rebelling against forced Catholicism in Europe and trying to distance ourselves from the Roman Catholics in the New World since unchurched American settlers saw us as about the same. So, many Lutheran pastors made a huge deal of Pius IX forcing Roman Catholics to worship Mary and conveniently forgot that our own Father Luther professed her sinlessness his whole life.

So what do we do with Mary? Whether she is sinless or not and whether she was a perpetual virgin or not, Mary is crucial to our salvation. God never intervenes in this world magically. He always uses real people and real tools to accomplish his will. Moses was groomed for 80 years until God raised him up to lead his people back to the Promised Land. David was just a little shepherd boy out in the back fields who God brought forward to kill the giant Goliath. Elijah was a traveling minister who was used to slay 400 prophets of Baal. All of these people are to be highly honored, not because of something in them, but because of the roles they were chosen to play in God's plan.

But Mary is most important of all. No Mary – No Jesus and No Jesus – No salvation. No salvation and nothing that happened over the last 5 or 10 thousand years really matters to us since we would all be damned anyway right? And like everything else God does, salvation is a tangible business. A baby is born to a lowly woman in a dirty stable and sleeps in a feed trough. He is one of us through Mary and something far greater than us through the Father. His flesh and blood is beaten and bruised, killed and damned. And by that, not only is he redeemed, but because we are connected to him through Mary, we are redeemed as well.

Do you know what that means? That means that not only is Mary sinless, but we are sinless as well. See, whether or not Mary was sinless before Christ was born, she is sinless now.

"God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons." Through Mary, Jesus was given to us and for us and by Jesus, through Mary, we are no longer slaves. We are freed from sin and we are sons and daughters of God the Father, so we are heirs to the kingdom of heaven. Luther again preaching on Mary,

"Men have crowded all her glory into a single phrase: The Mother of God. No one can say anything greater of her, though he had as many tongues as there are leaves on the trees." (From the Commentary on the Magnificat.) AMEN