

December 19, 2021
Fourth Sunday in Advent
St. Timothy Lutheran Church – Huber Heights, OH
Pastor Joel Sutton

Luke 1:39-45 (Micah 5:2–5; Hebrews 10:5-10)

THE BLESSED FRUIT OF MARY’S WOMB.

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Our text for meditation today comes from the Gospel according to St Luke, the 1st chapter, which you heard read earlier.

In Gospel today’s text, we meet two very different women who share a unique condition. The *young virgin* Mary and the *elderly barren* Elizabeth are both pregnant by God’s miraculous means. The angel Gabriel announced to Zechariah that his wife Elizabeth would bear a son who should be named John. (Luke 1:13) Because Zechariah did not believe the angel, he was struck mute until the child was born. (cf: Luke 1:20)

In the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, the same angel came to Mary and told her that she would conceive by the Holy Spirit and the child born to her would be called holy – the Son of God. (cf: Luke 1:35) Unlike Zechariah, Mary believed and acknowledged God’s gift saying:

“Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.”
(Luke 1:37-38)

When the angel left, Mary got up and hurried into the hill country to see her relative Elizabeth. It was no more than a three or four day walk as our Lord God was busy knitting human life together in both unique wombs: in one, the Savior of the world; and in the other, the Savior’s prophet who would prepare the way for His coming.

Mary enters the house and greets Elizabeth. And upon hearing Mary’s voice, the baby in Elizabeth’s womb leaps with joy. Filled with the Holy Spirit, the in-utero John knows he is in the presence of His Savior. (cf: Luke 1:15) He is hardly the size of a football, but he is already doing the job that God sent him to do. He has not even seen the light of day, but he is already bearing witness to the true Light of the world. (cf: John 1:9, 8:12) He is pointing to the Lamb of God who is coming to take away the sins of the world. Elizabeth is also filled with the Holy Spirit, proclaiming that Mary is carrying the fulfillment of prophesy, that Mary is the mother of our Lord, saying:

“Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!” (Luke 1:42)

You might say that the previously barren Elizabeth is the first to worship the Christ Child. She recognizes that Mary is more blessed than she is herself. She proclaims that the fruit in the womb

of Mary is the cause of her blessedness. Mary's blessedness is the result of an act of divine grace which God gives to her as a gift.

The next time you are tempted to believe that the preached Word of God does not work on children or that babies can't believe, remember that John was preaching three months before he was born! And the next time you are tempted to believe that life does not begin at conception, pull out St Luke's Gospel and read our text. Mary had conceived less than a week earlier. The baby inside Elizabeth's womb is not reacting to a blob of cells. He's reacting to the living incarnate Jesus. The word *Incarnation* literally means "*in the flesh.*" Theologically it is "*the doctrine that in Jesus of Nazareth, God took on human flesh and became the divine God-man.*" (cf: Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible, 1025–1026) You just confessed it earlier in the Nicene Creed that Jesus:

"... for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary and was made man..." (LSB, 191)

All life is a precious and miraculous gift from God – beginning at conception until natural death and Jesus' conception, life and, death testify to this fact. The facts won't change the mind of the unbeliever. But for the Christian, to deny that life begins at conception is to deny the authority and inerrancy of Scripture. It's to deny that Jesus was in fact conceived by the Holy Spirit and born the Holy Son of God who came to redeem mankind from their sins on the cross.

The Fruit of Mary's womb is God's own Son who left heaven's glory, put on human flesh to join mankind suffering the misery and heartache of this broken and fallen world, to love you and to save you from your sin. While you face pain and suffering in all sorts of ways in this world, there is something much worse than human suffering and death. It is the curse of sin.

I do not have to name your sins. You know them. You live with them every day. Like Adam and Eve in the Garden, maybe you try to hide your guilt. Or perhaps you attempt to make amends for as many of your sins as you can. But all your earthly penance cannot free you from your responsibility and guiltiness. The Old Testament sacrifices do not help. God takes no pleasure in them. (cf: Hebrews 10:8)

The devil works overtime, hoping that you become confident in your transgression, conforming to the patterns of the world. There are many who have been deceived into believing that God really does not care if they try to resist sin or not. But in the very same chapter as our epistle text, the writer to the Hebrews gives this stern warning:

"For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries." (Hebrews 10:26–27)

This means – if you allow sin to rule over you, *intentionally* keep committing the same sin, thinking that God's going to continually forgive you – you are wrong. You grieve the Holy Spirit and will lose Him. (cf: Formula: SD, art. ii, par. 69)

But to all who are truly repentant, God offers mercy and forgiveness for the sake of Jesus: for one-time sins and those sins that you repeatedly struggle against. For doubting God and His Word. For not recognizing the sanctity of life. God *always* forgives the contrite heart; however, when there is *no* guilt and shame and you are allowing sin to rule over you, *this is not* repentance but being confident and secure in your sin. (cf: LW 5, 151-152)

This is why we pray in the Lord's Prayer; *"Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."* The original language, it says: *"... deliver us from the evil one."* The devil is always on the attack. He never stops or becomes tired. His goal is to deceive you and drown you in the pleasures of the flesh and world. His goal is to make you confident that you can heal yourself from your tribulation. But you cannot. Do not be strong in yourself, but rather, be strong in the Lord. Put on the full armor of God. (cf: Ephesians 6:10–11) Examine yourself against the Ten Commandments and repent of your sins. Approach God with a contrite heart begging for forgiveness for the sake of the Fruit of Mary's womb, Christ Jesus.

Seven hundred years before Jesus' birth the prophet Micah proclaims God's Word of promise that a new Ruler, a Savior would come from Bethlehem bearing God's authority, shepherding His people, bringing them peace and security. In our epistle text we heard Micah's prophesy fulfilled:

"When Christ came into the world, he said..." "Behold, I have come to do your will, O God..." "And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." (Hebrews 10:5, 7, 10)

The blessed Fruit of Mary's womb came into the world to do the Father's will. In His life and perfect obedience to the Law, He fulfilled the Law and all prophesy, ending the Old Testament sacrificial system and establishing a new covenant in Jesus' shed blood. On Calvary's cross the He bore God's entire wrath against sin, being pierced for your transgressions and crushed for your iniquities. The chastisement He endured has made peace between God and you. With His wounds you are healed. (cf: Isaiah 53:5)

As the perfect Sacrificial Lamb, Jesus accomplished God's will, becoming your Good Shepherd, bringing you peace and security. For the sake of Christ Jesus, you are transformed from a poor miserable sinner to one who is clean and holy. He transforms you by His means of grace delivered in Word and Sacrament. As Micah proclaimed:

"He shall be your peace." (Micah 5:5)

And He is your peace. Christ Jesus is your peace from all sin, guilt, and misery in this miserable and sinful world. It is a precious gift. The virgin Mary recognized that gift and as a humble servant, she believed. She responded in faith with a song of praise. True faith always bears fruit. Faith always responds with rejoicing, praise, and good works toward your neighbor.

In Baptism you were given the gift of faith, the Holy Spirit, and were sanctified. Sanctification is a special work of the Holy Spirit and is the result of an act of divine grace which God gives to you as a gift. The first part of sanctification is the Holy Spirit making you holy solely for the sake of the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. (cf: Hebrews 10:10) The Spirit bestows upon you all the gifts that Christ won on the on the cross on your behalf, empowering you to lead a godly life.

The second part of sanctification is the Holy Spirit enabling and directing you to bear fruits of faith and fruits worthy of repentance – meaning changing the way you live before God, the world, and your neighbor. Living, not as the world lives, but as one set apart as God’s child. Not because it will add toward your salvation. No. Jesus paid that price – once time for all time. It is living as God’s own child out of love for the One who died for you and is your peace.

Mary heard the message from God and believed. She simply acknowledged God’s gift. And so do you. The blessed fruit of Mary’s womb has won for you forgiveness, life, and salvation, and has made you holy. And as Mary rejoiced to God, you and I do the same. Rejoice in the Lord always, living sanctified lives worthy of being called children of God.

Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understand, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus,
Amen.