

Rejoice



**Mid-Week Advent Service
2025**

Stand

P O Lord, open my lips,
C and my mouth will declare Your praise.

P Make haste, O God, to deliver me;
C make haste to help me, O Lord.

C Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

P Praise to You, O Christ, King who comes to save us.

Psalm

Psalm 98

¹ Oh sing to the LORD a new song,
For He has done marvellous things!
His right hand and His holy arm
have worked salvation for Him.

² The LORD has made known His salvation;
He has revealed His righteousness in the sight of the nations.

³ He has remembered His steadfast love and faithfulness
to the house of Israel.
All the ends of the earth have seen
the salvation of our God.

⁴ Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth;
break forth into joyous song and sing praises!

⁵ Sing praises to the LORD with the lyre,
with the lyre and the sound of melody!

⁶ With trumpets and the sound of the horn
make a joyful noise before the King, the LORD!

⁷ Let the sea roar, and all that fills it;
the world and those who dwell in it!

⁸ Let the rivers clap their hands;
let the hills sing for joy together

⁹ before the LORD, for He comes
to judge the earth.
He will judge the world with righteousness,
and the peoples with equity.

349 Hark the Glad Sound



1 Hark the glad sound! The Sav - ior comes, The Sav - ior
 2 He comes the pris - 'ners to re - lease, In Sa - tan's
 3 He comes the bro - ken heart to bind, The bleed - ing
 4 Our glad ho - san - nas, Prince of Peace, Thy wel - come



prom - ised long; Let ev - 'ry heart pre - pare a
 bond - age held. The gates of brass be - fore Him
 soul to cure, And with the trea - sures of His
 shall pro - claim, And heav'n's e - ter - nal arch - es



throne And ev - 'ry voice a song.
 burst, The i - ron fet - ters yield.
 grace To en - rich the hum - ble poor.
 ring With Thy be - lov - ed name.

Text: Philip Doddridge, 1702-51
 Tune: Thomas Haweis, 1734-1820
 Text and tune: Public domain

Readings

1 Samuel 2:1-10

And Hannah prayed and said,

“My heart exults in the LORD;
 my horn is exalted in the LORD.

My mouth derides my enemies,
 because I rejoice in Your salvation.

2 “There is none holy like the LORD:
 for there is none besides You;
 there is no rock like our God.

3 Talk no more so very proudly,
 let not arrogance come from your mouth;
 for the LORD is a God of knowledge,
 and by Him actions are weighed.

4 The bows of the mighty are broken,
 but the feeble bind on strength.

- 5 Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread,
but those who were hungry have ceased to hunger.
The barren has borne seven,
but she who has many children is forlorn.
- 6 The LORD kills and brings to life;
He brings down to Sheol and raises up.
- 7 The LORD makes poor and makes rich;
He brings low and He exalts.
- 8 He raises up the poor from the dust;
He lifts the needy from the ash heap
to make them sit with princes
and inherit a seat of honour.
For the pillars of the earth are the LORD's,
and on them He has set the world.
- 9 "He will guard the feet of His faithful ones,
but the wicked shall be cut off in darkness,
for not by might shall a man prevail.
- 10 The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces;
against them He will thunder in heaven.
The LORD will judge the ends of the earth;
He will give strength to His king
and exalt the horn of His anointed."

P O Lord, have mercy on us.

C Thanks be to God.

Galatians 4:4-7

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. ⁶ And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" ⁷ So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

P O Lord, have mercy on us.

C Thanks be to God.

Stand

Luke 1:26-38

²⁶In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favoured one, the Lord is with you!" ²⁹But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. ³¹And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus. ³²He 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, ³³and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end."

³⁴And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"

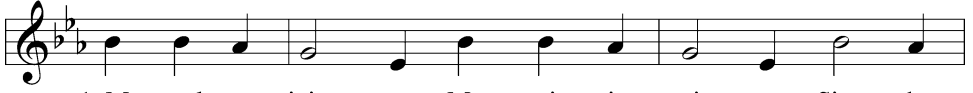
³⁵And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the Child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. ³⁶And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. ³⁷For nothing will be impossible with God." ³⁸And 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.

Responsory (Advent)

- P** Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch.
- C** **This is the name by which He will be called: The Lord Is Our Righteousness.**
- P** In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely.
- C** **This is the name by which He will be called: The Lord Is Our Righteousness.**
- P** Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.
- C** **This is the name by which He will be called: The Lord Is Our Righteousness.**

The Song of Mary (*remain standing*)

933 My Soul Rejoices



1 My soul re - joic - es, My spir - it voic - es— Sing the
2 His arm now bar - ing, His strength de - clar - ing— Sing the



great - ness of the Lord! For God my Sav - ior Has shown me
great - ness of the Lord! The proud He scat - ters, Their rule He



fa - vor— Sing the great - ness of the Lord! With praise and
shat - ters— Sing the great - ness of the Lord! Op - pres - sion



bless - ing, Join in con - fess - ing God, who is sole - ly Might - y and
halt - ed; The meek ex - alt - ed. Full are the hun - gry; Emp - ty, the



ho - ly— O sing the great - ness of God the Lord! His mer - cy
wealth - y— O sing the great - ness of God the Lord! Here is the



sure - ly Shall rest se - cure - ly On all who fear Him,
to - ken All that was spo - ken To A - br'ham's off - spring



Love and re - vere Him— O sing the great - ness of God the Lord!
God is ful - fill - ing— O sing the great - ness of God the Lord!

Text: Stephen P. Starke, 1955

Tune: Giovanni Giacomo Gastoldi, c. 1556-c. 1622

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Tune: Public domain

Sermon (*Remain standing as the Sermon is announced, then sit*)

WHO'S MARY?

Luke 1:26-38

Dear friends in Christ,

Who was Mary? The Bible tells us a lot about her, especially in Luke chapter 1. We are introduced to Mary as we see the angel Gabriel being sent “**from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth.**”

The word angel comes from the Greek meaning “messenger.” Gabriel has a message. He’s been sent. Where is he going? “**To a city in Galilee called Nazareth.**” Angels live in eternity, in the presence of God, and don’t visit us very often. But when they do, it’s very, very important. So this angel leaves heaven and breaks into our world of space and time to visit a particular person. This same Gabriel had been sent to the prophet Daniel centuries earlier to tell him the time had come for the captives in Babylon to return home. Gabriel was on a similar mission here, for the time had come for the Messiah to appear and set free all who are in bondage to sin. It had to be this way, because the Messiah must be a flesh-and-blood human sacrifice to take away the sins of the world.

Now, Nazareth is a town way up north, far from the main places and people like Jerusalem. Nazareth is never mentioned in the Old Testament and was hardly the kind of place to expect the Messiah. The Jews from there were a bit different and spoke with an accent. You might call them the bushies of their time. Remember how Philip had found Nathanael and said to him, “*We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph,*” and Nathanael replied, “*Can anything good come out of Nazareth?*” (John 1:45-46). Nazareth wasn’t known as a happening spot.

But isn’t it just like God to create something out of nothing? As the angel himself says, “**With God, nothing is impossible.**” He who made the sea could change it to support Jesus’ feet—and Peter’s! He who created gravity could suspend it so Jesus could ascend into heaven. And He who imposed death on sinful mankind could reverse it, letting Lazarus return to life and Jesus Christ, God’s Son, rise from the grave after dying for our sins, so that everyone who believes in Him, as Mary did, may live in the confident hope of eternal life. “*O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?*” the Apostle Paul once wrote to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 15:55).

So Gabriel is sent to a woman named Mary. How old is she? We do not know. All we are told is that she is a *virgin*. That would mean she is a young woman of

marriageable age, presumably well brought up by her family in the faith and physically mature enough to bear children. This had been foretold by the prophet Isaiah: “*Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel*” (Is. 7:14). She was a good Jewish girl in the sense that Abraham was the father of the Jews: “*He believed the Lord, and He counted it to him as righteousness*” (Gen. 15:6). That is, she believed in the promises of God that one day He would send a Messiah, the Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world. Paul says in Romans 2 that a true Jew is one like Abraham, who lives by faith (2:28-29). So I think we can say that young Mary had heard the Scriptures read in the synagogue and believed them, and surely she was praying for the Messiah who was to come.

Such was the prayer of every mother in Israel, for God had promised a Man born of woman to destroy the serpent. In fact, when Cain was born, Eve thought that he was the promised one. How wrong she was! It took many, many centuries and endless genealogies before Jesus was born.

Here is Gabriel in front of Mary. I suppose there were lots of virgins in Nazareth at that particular time, maybe even a few named Mary. But Gabriel was sent to this one particular virgin named Mary. Was there some intrinsic virtue, some quality in her to attract the attention of the Lord? The Bible doesn't say. But what it does say is that “*all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*” (Rom. 3:23). That “all” includes Mary. We acknowledge her as a saint, for so she is. But like the rest of us Christians, she is at the same time a saint and a sinner, just like the rest of us. Her choosing by God the Father to bear His Son, Jesus, was by grace alone.

People have a lot of strange ideas about Mary, especially in the Church of Rome—making her out to be things that she's not, things the Bible doesn't say about her, even things the Bible rules out.

Think of the Roman Church, which holds the notion it calls the “immaculate conception.” This is not about Christ, who, of course, was born without sin, nor does it apply to Mary. It applies to Mary's mother. This is so that the cycle of sin, which is passed from parents to children through the reproductive process, had to be broken. So for Mary to have been holy and the mother of Christ, Rome says, she herself had to be born without sin, which meant her mother had to conceive her without sin. Thus, one story has Mary's mother, Anne, conceiving *her* without sexual intercourse. No. Sorry. What about Anne's mother before her, and so forth and so on, like a hall of mirrors right back to the Garden of Eden? Paul, himself a saint and sinner, tells us in Romans 5, “*Sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned*” (Rom. 5:12).

The pope also presents Christ as a stern, unforgiving judge who punishes sin and sends people to hell. If you want to approach Him, you go through His mother, who, supposedly, unlike Christ, is soft and warm and welcoming. So you pray to Mary to get to Jesus. No again. Scripture says, “*There is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus*” (1 Tim. 2:5).

Article XXI of the Augsburg Confession addresses this issue. We are to remember the saints and celebrate their lives as examples of Christian behaviour. The *Lutheran Service Book* lists August 15 as the saint’s day of St. Mary, Mother of our Lord, among “Feasts and Festivals” (*LSB*, p xi). We name churches after saints. Luther himself was a pastor of the Church of St. Mary in Wittenberg, Germany. We honour the saints, but we don’t pray to them.

Mary was a human being like the rest of us, but “**the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God.”**” Mary found favour the same way all the saints did: by grace alone. Take Noah, for example: “*But Noah found favour in the eyes of the Lord*” (Gen 6:8). Some Bible translations, such as the King James Version uses the word “grace.” Same for Noah, same for Mary, same for the rest of us who are being redeemed. In the Small Catechism, Luther counsels us to pray to God as dear children ask their dear father. God loves you! He loves you so much that He sent His only-begotten Son to die for you. All by grace. Beautiful, one-sided grace that draws us to Jesus by Word and Sacrament. All glory to God alone!

And all because of that Son, who’s the reason the Bible teaches us about Mary in the first place. The angel talks about this Son to be born to her. He is to be called Jesus. That’s the Aramaic form of the Hebrew name *Yeshua* or *Joshua*. You know, lots of people cling to rules and regulations. They like Moses, who laid down the Law. Dos and don’ts—this is wrong, that’s forbidden! But Moses, who represents the Law, never made it into the Promised Land. It was Joshua, a clear type of Christ, who led the people of Israel across the Jordan and into Canaan. In the same way, Jesus, whose name means “God saves,” did everything for our salvation—fulfilled all the dos and don’ts and then went to the cross for our didn’ts and dids—and gives us that salvation as a free gift.

The angel goes on to say that Jesus will be great. Both true God and true man. You can’t get any greater than that! “**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 so it came to pass that Jesus was born of Mary, and all the angel’s words were

fulfilled. Now Jesus rules and reigns over all things. His kingdom has come, and you are in it! In the name of Jesus. Amen.

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

900 Jesus! Name of Wondrous Love



- 1 Je - sus! Name of won-drous love, Name all oth - er names a - bove,
2 Je - sus! Name de - creed of old, To the maid-en moth - er told,
3 Je - sus! Name of price - less worth To the fall - en of the earth
4 Je - sus! Name of mer - cy mild, Giv - en to the ho - ly Child



- Un - to which must ev - 'ry knee Bow in deep hu - mil - i - ty.
Kneel-ing in her low-ly cell, By the an - gel Ga - bri - el.
For the prom - ise that it gave, "Je - sus shall His peo-ple save."
When the cup of hu-man woe First He tast - ed here be - low.

- 5 Jesus! Only name that's giv'n
Under all the mighty heav'n
Whereby those to sin enslaved
Burst their fetters and are saved.

- 6 Jesus! Name of wondrous love,
Human name of God above;
Pleading only this, we flee
Helpless, O our God, to Thee.

Text: William W. How, 1823-97, alt.

Tune: Geist-reiches Gesang-Buch, 1704, Halle, ed. Johann A. Freylinghausen, alt.

Text and tune: Public domain

Stand

Canticle

- P** Let my prayer rise before You as incense,
C and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.

Prayer

P O Lord, support us all the day long of this troubled life, until the shadows lengthen and the evening comes and the busy world is hushed, the fever of life is over, and our work is done. Then, Lord, in Your mercy grant us a safe lodging and a holy rest and peace at the last, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

C Amen.

Lord's Prayer

C Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be Thy name,
Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done on earth
as it is in heaven;
give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those
who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For Thine is the kingdom
and the power and the glory
forever and ever. Amen.

Benedicamus

P Let us bless the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

Benediction

P The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

C Amen.

Sit

537 Beautiful Savior



1 Beau - ti - ful Sav - ior, King of cre - a - tion, Son of
2 Fair are the mead - ows, Fair are the wood - lands, Robed in
3 Fair is the sun - shine, Fair is the moon - light, Bright the
4 Beau - ti - ful Sav - ior, Lord of the na - tions, Son of



God and Son of Man! Tru - ly I'd love Thee, Tru - ly I'd
flow'rs of bloom - ing spring; Je - sus is fair - er, Je - sus is
spar - kling stars on high; Je - sus shines bright - er, Je - sus shines
God and Son of Man! Glo - ry and hon - or, Praise, ad - o -



serve Thee, Light of my soul, my joy, my crown.
pur - er, He makes our sor - r'wing spir - it sing.
pur - er Than all the an - gels in the sky.
ra - tion Now and for - ev - er - more be Thine!

Text: Münsterisch Gesangbuch, 1677, Münster; tr. Joseph A. Seiss, 1823-1904

Tune: Silesian, 19th cent.

Text and tune: Public domain

Acknowledgments

Vespers from Lutheran Service Book

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