

**GOD'S GRACE TO MARY – PART 1**  
**(SUNDAY, DECEMBER 22, 2013)**

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**SCRIPTURE: GEN. 6:1-12; LUKE 1:26-55**

**INTRODUCTION**

A little over one week ago as reported by the the Daily Herald thousands upon thousands of worshippers came to Des Plaines and the Maryville campus to celebrate the feast day of Our Lady of Guadalupe. "A 12-foot tall replica statue of Our Lady of Guadalupe sits in the shrine of the Maryville Campus, which is the only place in the world outside of the Basilica in Mexico City where people can satisfy their mandas [vows made to Mary], according to the church."

"Every time I come here, I come to pray for my family," said Maira Murguia, 18, of Round Lake Beach. "She helps me when I'm in a struggle. I come here to say thank you."<sup>1</sup>

Where the name Guadalupe comes from is not entirely clear. It might be a Spanish mis-translation of the local Aztec dialect.<sup>2</sup> But the name Guadalupe is connected to the date of Dec. 9, 1531 when a Catholic convert, Juan Diego, supposedly had a vision of the Virgin Mary near what is present day Mexico City. The Bishop who first heard Juan's story was skeptical. Three days later, Diego had another vision of Mary and asked for a sign that would convince the bishop. Mary supposedly told him to fill his cloak with roses. When Juan unrolled his cloak before the bishop, a permanent image of the Virgin Mary was imprinted on his cloak. This image is known as Our Lady of Guadalupe. A sanctuary was built in 1533 and in 1709 a basilica was constructed that displayed Juan Diego's cloak and its famous image.<sup>3</sup>

There is a great deal of misconception about Mary based on Catholic tradition and the many supposed appearances of Mary reported to have taken place all over the world. The result of all this confusion truly is very sad. Mary rather than Jesus receives the focus of attention from so many who have been taught this false theology. Our hearts should grieve in hearing the distortion of the true Mary of Scripture and how blasphemously she is ascribed nearly with the same attributes as our Lord. Some would actively seek that

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<sup>1</sup> Christopher Placek, Daily Herald Article, updated on 12/12/13.  
<http://www.dailyherald.com/article/20131211/news/712119702/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.catholic.org/about/guadalupe.php>

<sup>3</sup> Elliot Miller and Kenneth R. Samples, *The Cult of the Virgin*, 88-89.

Mary be identified as a co-redeemer and co-mediator with Jesus Christ. It is difficult to express how shocking are some of the statements made about Mary.

Given this very sad state, I want to present from God's Word that which we should know and believe about the important role of Mary in the incarnation of Jesus Christ.

What does Scripture teach about Mary? She was a humble sinner to whom God showed His saving grace and chose her as an instrument to bring the Son of God into this world. Rightfully she is the most blessed among women. But to identify Mary as more than Scripture states is dangerous and even blasphemous.

**Let us consider the grace given to Mary. Even more let us rejoice in the salvation and the abundance of grace found in the Lord Jesus Christ.**

We will consider today from Luke 1 and 2 several important truths about Mary and God's grace.

## **1. LUKE 1**

Where is Mary mentioned in the word of God? There are five significant places in Scripture where we read of Mary.<sup>4</sup>

- 1) She is mentioned in both Matthew 1 and 2 and Luke 1 and 2 in connection with the birth of Jesus Christ and his earliest days.
- 2) John 2 records the account of Jesus' first miracle and his interaction with Mary in conjunction with this miracle. (John 2:3, etc.)
- 3) Matthew 12 and parallel accounts in Mark and Luke record an incident where Mary and her other children were looking for Jesus. Jesus declared, "For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother." (Matthew 12:50)
- 4) Mary is recorded by John as one of the witnesses of Jesus' death. She stood at the cross. (John 19:25)
- 5) The final mention of Mary in the NT is found in Acts 1. Mary was one of the 120 believers who continued in one accord in prayer and supplication waiting for the Promise of the Father in the coming of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 1:14)

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<sup>4</sup> Is a sixth account, the vision of Rev. 12?

Let us give attention now to Luke 1 and what we read about Mary and the grace of God given to her.

First, let us consider Luke 1:26-28. Here we see that in the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, the angel Gabriel was sent by God to Nazareth to Mary who was a virgin and was betrothed to Joseph.

Look at the words of Gabriel to Mary in verse 28.

**Luke 1:28** And having come in, the angel said to her, "Rejoice, highly favored *one*, the Lord *is* with you; blessed *are* you among women!"

Here we see three things about Mary.

First, Mary is identified as being highly favored. The verb translated as highly favored is used only one other time in the NT in Ephesians 1:6.

**Eph. 1:6** to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us **accepted** in the Beloved.

What is the great truth of God's grace? It is that it is undeserved. It is freely given by God to those whom He chooses according to His glory and wisdom.

Mary is given greeting that God has extended undeserved favor to her. This was not giving Mary something she deserved. It would not be grace if it were earned.

The undeserved favor spoken of here must begin with Mary's salvation. This is confirmed in the words of verse 47 where Mary rejoices in God her Savior.

The underserved favor of God then also includes the amazing part Mary would play in the incarnation of our Lord and Savior. Mary was given this amazing role not because of anything found in her naturally. No, she was given this calling through God's great choice alone. This is to take nothing away from Mary as being a godly young woman. But if we consider Mary merely from the perspective of her own obedience, we miss that which is most important in her life.

Those of you raised in Roman Catholic homes are no doubt familiar with the prayer to Mary called the Hail Mary.

Hail Mary,

Full of Grace,

The Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou among women,

and blessed is the fruit

of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary,

Mother of God,

pray for us sinners now,

and at the hour of death.<sup>5</sup>

The first part of this prayer comes from Luke 1:28. The expression “full of grace” is a mistranslation based on the Vulgate. Mary is not a bestower or a giver of grace.<sup>6</sup> Rather she was one who was given God’s undeserved grace. We do not seek the grace found in her but rather the God of all grace.

Another faulty use of Luke 1:28 is in the Roman Catholic doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of Mary. This doctrine teaches that Mary from the moment of her conception was preserved free from all stain of original sin. Pope Pious IX in 1854 established this as dogma. This was also the first time a dogma was pronounced solely on the authority of a pope without the official sanction of a council.<sup>7</sup>

So sadly Mary is exalted into something Scripture in no way testifies and this is done at the expense of God’s grace which is not found in seeking Mary but in seeking God through Jesus Christ.

Second, we see from verse 28, the presence of God with Mary. Truly the great work Mary would do was not her own work but something that showed God’s incredible presence. This we see further explained in verse 35.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.ewtn.com/Devotionals/prayers/mary3.htm>

<sup>6</sup> NET Bible note, s.v. Luke 1:28.

<sup>7</sup> Miller and Samples, 32.

**Luke 1:35** And the angel answered and said to her, “*The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.*”

Third, Mary is identified as being blessed among women or the most blessed among women. Her joy is at least twofold. First, she is blessed having received the undeserved favor of God. Second, she is the one God has chosen to give birth to Jesus, the Son of God.

Rightfully we declare Mary as being the most blessed of women. It would be foolish to deny this in anyway. But it is also foolish and dangerous to seek Mary’s help or aid in prayer or in the making of vows. There is absolutely nothing in Scripture that would ever support such actions.

A second verse to consider from Luke 1 is verse 30.

**Luke 1:30** Then the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.

The testimony of Gabriel recorded in this verse emphasizes the grace of God given to Mary. The word favor could also be translated as grace.

The language of verse 30 is very similar to what we read earlier from Genesis 6.

**Gen. 6:8** But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.

The expression of finding grace is only used here in the NT but it is very common in the OT.

**Ex. 33:13** Now therefore, I pray, if I have found grace in Your sight, show me now Your way, that I may know You and that I may find grace in Your sight. And consider that this nation *is* Your people.”

The usage here helps bring unity to God’s great plan of salvation that was announced in the garden after the fall of Adam and Eve. When the entire world was so filled with wickedness that God determined to destroy all that he made, God chose to extend his grace to Noah. The plan of redemption continued through God’s calling of Israel leading to the dramatic calling of Joseph and Mary. What unites this plan is God’s calling and the grace He extends to all His people.

Third, let us consider verse 38.

**Luke 1:38** Then Mary said, “Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her.

I have emphasized, I believe most correctly, God’s undeserved favor to Mary. This we see in the salvation extended to Mary and also the great calling given to her to be the mother of Jesus Christ. We see the grace of God then reflected in her life in her faith, humility, and words of praise. In this there is a powerful example for you and for me.

The humility of Mary is demonstrated in how she identifies herself. She is a maidservant of the LORD. The word translated as maidservant is only used 3x in the NT. It literally is a word that means female slave. It is the female equivalent to the term that Paul so often used for himself.

The calling given to Mary was not an easy calling was it?

Leon Morris writes:

She was not yet married to Joseph. His reaction to her pregnancy might have been expected to be a strong one and Matthew tells us that he did in fact think of divorcing her (Matt. 1:19). Again, while the death penalty for adultery (Deut. 22:23f.) does not seem to have been carried out often, it was still there. Mary could not be sure that she would not have to suffer, perhaps even die. But she recognized the will of God and accepted it.<sup>8</sup>

God’s grace is not given to you because you deserve it or have earned it. But if you have been extended God’s grace it does demand that you submit entirely to God’s calling. There is no room for your own personal will. Rather the only proper response is, “Let it be to me according to your word.”

Fourth, we observe the great prayer of praise offered by Mary that we find in verses 46-55.

It is often believed that Mary was a teenager when she was given her most incredible calling. We of course do not have any age noted in our Bible, but it was typical that a woman was in her teenage years when she would first be betrothed and then later married.

Whatever Mary’s age, we see reflected in her words of praise great maturity and consideration of God’s great plan of redemption.

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<sup>8</sup> Leon Morris, *Luke: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 3 of Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. IVP/ Accordance electronic ed. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 91.

I have already pointed out Mary's own confession of a need of a Savior. We see again in verse 48 a testimony to her humility before God, using the same word **maidservant**. The prayer further demonstrates Mary understood that the coming of Jesus Christ was in fulfillment of God's great covenant promise made with Abraham.

The testimony of her prayer shows first how God had opened her blinded eyes. Secondly it then shows her spiritual maturity and understanding of God's glorious plan of salvation.

## 2. LUKE 2

Let me point out three verses from this chapter that are important in considering Mary and her great calling. Two of the verses are quite similar – verses 19 and 51. We will consider these verses first and then one other verse.

At the beginning of Luke's gospel he emphasizes the historicity of what he writes. Look at Luke 1:2.

**Luke 1:2** just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us,

One of the most important eyewitnesses is certainly Mary.

Two times in Luke 2, we have a statement showing how Mary not only remembered but reflected on all the great events she directly witnessed.

Verse 19 – Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart.

Verse 51 - Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them, but His mother kept all these things in her heart.

This is a very important testimony in the face of great unbelief even on the part of those who write extensive commentaries on Scripture.

Raymond Brown is a very famous Catholic theologian who wrote a large one-volume commentary on the account of Christ's birth and a two-volume account on his death.

He writes that the accounts of Matthew and Luke are not only different but in fact contrary to each other in a number of details. In other words, they both cannot be fully historically accurate. Two pages earlier he writes that the Bible contains fiction, parable, and folklore, as well as history.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Raymond Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, 34 and 36.

Such a “scholarly” opinion is shown to be fiction based on the testimony of Luke and Mary. Mary importantly is a key witness to the entire life and ministry of Jesus and to the great beginning of the early church in the book of Acts. There is little doubt that Mary was one of the key eyewitnesses that Luke used in the writing of his gospel.

Let me share one final text from Luke 2.

In verses 34 and 35 we have the words of Simeon specifically for Mary.

**Luke 2:34** Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, “Behold, this *Child* is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against **35** (yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.”

The ministry of Jesus would bring both peace and a sword. There is always a battle and Mary particularly needed strength. (This is the last chapter where Joseph is specifically identified as being alive. By the time Jesus would begin his public ministry, he most likely had died.) Behold, Jesus will be the cause for the fall and resurrection of many in Israel. Jesus will divide the nation according to those who accept Him as Messiah and those who would reject the chief cornerstone. Jesus will be a sign which will be opposed. Indeed those who opposed God’s work of salvation, showed it through their opposition to Jesus and His work. The grammar of the text reveals a continuous opposition – one that continues even today.<sup>10</sup> Mary, herself, would not escape the confrontation and battle. A long sword or javelin would also pierce her own soul. One commentator lists **10 different possibilities** as to the exact meaning of Simeon’s words to Mary, which we will not discuss.<sup>11</sup> Luke never directly comments on these words later in the book, but we certainly do know that the ministry of Jesus certainly involved great pain for Mary climaxed in the crucifixion.

Her role was a marvelous expression of God’s grace to her. Her role would be very challenging and painful. When has serving God ever been different?

### **CONCLUSION:**

We have considered us the grace given to Mary. Even more let us rejoice in the salvation and the abundance of grace found in the Lord Jesus Christ.

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<sup>10</sup> See Robertson’s Word Pictures on this verse.

<sup>11</sup> See Bock p. 248-250.

Do we make a similar error as Catholics in turning to other comforts, other reservoirs of grace?

Humility

Maturity

Challenge

**Prayer**

**Hymn 155**

**BENEDICTION – JUDE 24, 25**

Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, And to present you faultless  
Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, To God our Savior, Who alone is  
wise, Be glory and majesty, Dominion and power, Both now and forever. Amen.