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May 9, 2013

Mary the Mother of Jesus

“And Mary said: ‘My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. For he has regarded the lowly state of his maidservant; for behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed, for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name.’ Luke 1:46-49

One of the most intriguing aspects of the Lord’s entrance into the world is his humble birth. Paul writes in Galatians 4:4-5: “But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth his son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.” Jesus, the one who made all things and without whom nothing was made (Jn. 1:3), was born to a “...virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin’s name was Mary” (Lk 1:27). Who was Mary? Why was she chosen above others?

The humble character of Mary is sketched very briefly in the Bible. The *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* portrays Mary in these words: “One can hardly fail to be impressed, in studying Mary’s character, with her quietness of spirit; her meditative inwardness of disposition; her admirable self-control; her devout and gracious gift of sacred silence. The canticle (Lu 1:46-55), which at least expresses Luke’s conception of her nature, indicates that she is not accustomed to dwell much upon herself (4 lines only call particular attention to herself), and that her mind is saturated with the spirit and phraseology of the Old Testament. The intensely Jewish quality of her piety thus expressed accounts for much that appears anomalous in her subsequent career as depicted in the Gospels.”

We might say that Mary the mother of Jesus was much like your mother or my mother. There are exceptions to any rule, but the rule is that most mothers are humble, hard-working servants. They are like the virtuous woman described in Proverbs 31:27, “She watches over the ways of her household, and does not eat the bread of idleness.” Mothers are always busy and their children are always foremost in their thoughts. They are always doing good things for their husbands and children.

There is one incident recorded in the Bible that gives us insight into the family life of Joseph and Mary. The family, along with many relatives and acquaintances, went up to Jerusalem at the time of the Passover. The Bible tells us that they did this every year; so this would have been Passover number twelve for Jesus. As they were returning home Joseph & Mary didn’t know that Jesus stayed behind. They thought he was just in the company of people traveling together homeward toward Nazareth. They didn’t discover his absence until that evening after a day’s journey homeward. We can imagine the concern in Mary’s heart, and it is three days later when they finally find Jesus in the temple discussing the Scriptures with the teachers. Mary expresses a sentiment that so many mothers have felt. She said to Jesus, “Son why have you done this to us? Look, your father and I have sought you anxiously” (Lk 2:48). What a relief to have found him. Even though they didn’t fully understand his explanation at the time (Lk 2:49), he was back in his mother’s arms. This is a happy ending every mother can appreciate!

“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.” Luke 2:51