

*Instead of their shame  
 my people will receive a double portion,  
 and instead of disgrace  
 they will rejoice in their inheritance;  
 and so they will inherit a double portion in their land,  
 and everlasting joy will be theirs.*

<sup>8</sup> *“For I, the LORD, love justice;  
 I hate robbery and iniquity.  
 In my faithfulness I will reward them  
 and make an everlasting covenant with them.*

<sup>9</sup> *Their descendants will be known among the nations  
 and their offspring among the peoples.  
 All who see them will acknowledge  
 that they are a people the LORD has blessed.”*

<sup>10</sup> *I delight greatly in the LORD;  
 my soul rejoices in my God.  
 For he has clothed me with garments of salvation  
 and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness,  
 as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest,  
 and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.*

<sup>11</sup> *For as the soil makes the sprout come up  
 and a garden causes seeds to grow,  
 so the Sovereign LORD will make righteousness and praise  
 spring up before all nations. (Isaiah 61:7-13)*

### **Why Does the Son of Mary Matter?**

Did you look at the cover of the bulletin for today? If you did, did you wonder for a moment if maybe you had stumbled into a Roman Catholic church by mistake? I could understand if you did. It says, “St. Mary, the Mother of our Lord” in big print. That has a pretty catholic ring to it – or it would, if we focused on Mary, and we presented her as a co-worker of Christ in getting us to heaven. But that’s not what we’re going to do today. Mary was special. The Bible says that she was uniquely blessed among all people. But she wasn’t holy or sinless and her willingness to go along with God’s plan did not make her a contributor to getting us to heaven. Rather, God gave her a unique privilege. Mary got to give birth to the Son of God. She got to carry the Savior in her womb. Then she got to raise a real human child who was so much more than just a human child. He was also the almighty God. Mary is special. But her Son is the most important person who ever lived. That’s who we want to focus on today. That’s the only right way to honor the Virgin Mary.

#### **I.**

But what makes her son, Jesus, so special? When we understand that, then we’ll understand what we’re celebrating today. **Why does the Son of Mary matter? Because he makes an eternal covenant with us.** Isaiah says, **“Instead of their shame my people will receive a double portion, and instead of disgrace they will rejoice in their inheritance; and so they will inherit a double portion in their land, and everlasting joy will be theirs.”**

Have you ever experienced shame or disgrace? Have you ever been fired and then walked out of the office or the plant by security while everyone was watching? Have you ever been humiliated in front of your friends or family? I played soccer all four years that I was in college. I wasn’t very good. I almost never got into a game. In all that time, my dad was only able to come to one game, early in my freshman year. During the game, he was standing by the sidelines, talking to me. And I was commenting on the game. I guess two of the older players thought that I was getting too big for my own good. Right there in front of my father, these

two guys turned around and ridiculed me. I didn't know what to say. It was humiliating to be 18 and standing in front of my father and have them do that to me.

Many of us have experienced some kind of public shame or humiliation. Israel also experienced public shame and humiliation. In their case it was a little different. Israel lived at the center of the Middle Eastern world. For centuries they had presented themselves to the nations around them as God's chosen people. And in the early years, the Bible records how fear of them and their God fell on the nations around them. But over the years, Israel remembered the pride of being chosen, but forgot the faith God had chosen them to have. They worshipped idols and abandoned their God. Finally, this chosen people was conquered and sent into exile. For 70 years, they were mocked and ridiculed and tormented.

But then God renewed his love to them and brought them home. Yet, that return is not the main point that Isaiah is making this morning. You see, we picked up this chapter in verse seven. But in the first six verses, Isaiah talks about the ministry of Christ. He talks about how the Holy Spirit would anoint Jesus to preach the good news to the poor. Jesus' ministry is what removed the shame and the disgrace that God's people had experienced. Our text is about the effect that ministry has on his people.

The Son of Mary removes all our shame and disgrace. All the humiliation that we suffer in this life, every insult and embarrassment – it's all the result of sin. In a perfect world, no one would ever suffer public shame or even private humiliation. In a perfect world, we would only experience love and respect from the people around us. But we don't live in a perfect world. So, again and again, people mock us or gossip about us and we feel their eyes watching us. That's sin. And you know what? Our own sin contributes to that shame we experience. I probably was being prideful when I was talking to my dad that day and it probably did gall those upper classman to hear a freshman talking like he was an expert. Even if, in that case, the humiliation was undeserved, how many times haven't I caused my own problems with my sin? We are all guilty of sins and when word gets out, don't we experience humiliation? You ruin your marriage. You steal from work. You tell a lie. And you get caught and you suffer public shame. Or maybe you're just an unpleasant person and you invite abuse. The abuse is sin. But so is your pride, your self-absorption, your failure to pay attention to others and to be sensitive to their feelings.

All that we suffer here comes from sin – the sin that ruins this world, the sin that the people around us commit, the sin that we ourselves are guilty of. But the Son of Mary came to set us free from all that sin. He came to free us from the greatest humiliation of all: God sending us to hell for our sin. That's what we deserve. God should publicly disgrace and condemn us for our pride and sin. But instead, God condemned Jesus. God disgraced Jesus. He did that at the cross. When we think about Jesus dying on the cross, we think of the pain, don't we? We think of nails biting his hands and feet and whips raking his back. Those things did hurt. But the Bible never dwells on the pain. The Bible dwells on the shame of the cross, on the humiliation because in the Bible, dying on a cross is public testimony that God has rejected that person. Jesus suffered God's rejection because that's what we deserve for all that pride and sin.

Jesus died for all our lies and cheating and failure to live up to God's law of love. Jesus died for all the time and all the ways that we thought about ourselves and ignored or trampled the feelings of the people around us. Jesus died and paid for it all. And then he rose. When he rose, he proclaimed that we are forgiven. And he promised to take away all our shame. He says that here in this text when he talks about replacing the shame with a double portion. In the Old Testament, the oldest son received a double portion for his inheritance. That was intended to honor him, to set him apart. In Christ, we all have the double portion. In place of all our shame and disgrace, God calls us his own children and he honors us.

Now, how does God take our shame away? He can do that here, in this life. God hears our prayers. God heals our hurts and gives us the confidence to show our face in public again. Sometimes, God even makes the truth come out and we're vindicated. God works through the gospel, and Christians apologize to and forgive each other. But on this side of heaven, that process will always be fragmentary. Shame and disgrace will always haunt our footsteps here. But in heaven, we will be totally free. In heaven, Jesus will wipe away all that once hurt us. On Judgment Day, he will seat us on thrones with him and we will judge the world. He will honor us and then he will give us eternal joy.

When he does that, he shows us the depths and the mystery of God. God hates sin and loves justice. God hates the sin that corrupts us and our world. So God promised to send Jesus, the Son of Mary, to undo it

all. He kept his word, his covenant. And now he has made a new and eternal covenant with us: we will live in joy and honor with him forever.

## II.

So the rest of what Isaiah says this morning describes our life under that new covenant. Only Jesus could make us a part of that covenant and that's what makes Mary worth remembering. God gave us Jesus through her. **Why does the Son of Mary matter? Because he makes us a people who are blessed.**

Isaiah says, **"Their descendants will be known among the nations and their offspring among the peoples. All who see them will acknowledge that they are a people the LORD has blessed."** Who are the descendants of the people Jesus taught? Physically, of course, they're the Jewish people alive today. But that's not what Isaiah means here. He's talking about their spiritual descendants. He's talking about those who inherit their faith. He's talking about us, the Christian Church. We are the people that all nations will acknowledge as blessed. Now, that isn't happening today. But it will happen. On Judgment Day, all people will see that we are God's people. Don't you think that the people on their way to hell will admit that we're especially blessed?

Isaiah uses two images this morning to communicate that blessing. The first is a wedding ceremony. This is a common image in the Bible. The Church is the bride of Christ. Isaiah describes the bride as decked out in jewels. That's a picture of what Christ has given us. He has given us his righteousness. Of all the people who ever lived, of all the people who ever suffered public humiliation and disgrace, Jesus alone did not deserve it. He was perfect in his heart. He was perfect in his love for the people around him. Even when he said harsh things that made people angry, he did it out of love to show them their sin.

We aren't like that. All too often, we're so concerned about ourselves that we don't even see how offensive our words and actions can be. Well, when God looks at us, what does he see? He doesn't see our sin and our self-absorption. He sees the perfect love and humility of Christ. Those jewels are on us. For most women, the dress they wear on their wedding day is the most expensive dress they will ever wear. The righteousness of Christ is the most precious garment we will ever wear. It makes us holy in God's eyes. And there is no better role than being the bride of Christ. The Bridegroom loves us. The Son of Mary came down to this earth and took on human flesh so that he could claim us and live with us forever in heaven.

The other image that Isaiah uses reminds us of how we became the bride of Christ. He speaks of the earth causing seeds to grow. My wife plants a garden every year. She and my kids go out in the spring when the soil is warm and moist and they plant all kinds of seeds. But you know what? They do not make them grow. The seeds simply spring up. The soil makes them grow. It holds water and nutrients and heat and that gives life to those dead seeds.

In the same way, God makes us grow. In this image, we are the seeds. The soil is the gospel. It's the good news about Jesus that we hear in our sermons and that we receive in baptism and communion. When God comes to us in that gospel, he makes us spring up. He gives us faith. And as we return to hear that word over and over again, he makes us grow.

Isaiah says, **"For as the soil makes the sprout come up and a garden causes seeds to grow, so the Sovereign LORD will make righteousness and praise spring up before all nations."** When God gives us faith, he changes us. And that change causes righteousness and praise to spring up before all nations. The gospel goes out into all the world – as it has in our day. In every nation under heaven, God has planted Christians. And in every nation under heaven, we live to proclaim his righteousness, to praise our God. Every day, in every country, we are living and serving our Lord and the world is seeing the miracle God is doing. And it is a miracle that he is doing. We are his people. We are clothed with his righteousness and his praise and that changes us.

All that is true because God chose to enter this world. The Father chose a Jewish girl, who was probably not much older than thirteen or fourteen, to give birth to a Son. The Holy Spirit descended on her in power and caused her to conceive without ceasing to be a virgin. The Son of God entered her womb and took on human flesh. A real human child was born. A real human being lived a perfect life and died in our place and then rose on the third day. But that real human child was also the Son of God. Because he was, all that he did counts for all of us. He paid and he won eternal life and he made us God's people. God has blessed us with eternal promises. God will keep those promises. Amen.