Why Do We Call the Virgin Mary "Blessed" and the "Mother of God"?

"And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, and she exclaimed with a loud cry, 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?'" **(Luke 1:41-43, ESV)**

So, to repeat the question in the title above, why do Lutherans call the virgin Mary "blessed" and the "mother of God"? This sounds like something that Roman Catholics say. Well, I'll let the Roman Catholics explain their reasons for using their jargon. But Lutherans do speak of Mary this way in the *Book of Concord* (also known as the *Lutheran Confessions*). For example, in *The Augsburg Confession,* she is called *"the blessed Virgin Mary"* (Article 3, Line 2). And in *The Epitome of the Formula of Concord* it says: *"Hence we believe, teach, and confess that Mary conceived and bore not a mere man and no more, but the true Son of God; therefore she also is rightly called and truly is the mother of God"* (Article 8, Line 12).

Well, okay. But why then do the *Confessions* that we unconditionally subscribe to say that Mary is "blessed" and is the "mother of God"? Well, as with all matters of doctrine that we believe, teach, and confess, we say this because it is what the Bible teaches. And the passage above is a clear example.

If you are like me, you may have read this passage from the first chapter of Luke's Gospel for years (as I did) yet missed the deep theology, if not the substance of the actual words, being expressed. For when her relative ***"Mary"*** visited her, ***"Elizabeth"*** said, ***"Blessed are you."*** She also said, ***"… and blessed is the fruit of your womb!"*** And ***"Elizabeth"*** went on to call ***"Mary"*** ***"the mother of my Lord."*** And lest we think that ***"Elizabeth"*** was somehow confused or that she was expressing her own wrongful opinion, Luke tells us that ***"Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit"*** when ***"she exclaimed with a loud cry."***

And see, Mary was "blessed" indeed because she would give birth to the Messianic ***"seed"*** **(Genesis 3:15, KJV)** promised to our first parents after their fall into sin. For this Savior came through the lineage of Adam and Eve, as well as through the line of Abraham, Isacc, Jacob, Judah, and even King David. But only a virgin named Mary would have the immense privilege of giving birth to the world's Redeemer – the Savior who is fully man, a descendant of Adam & Eve (therefore our brother), as well as fully God (therefore our Creator). Mary certainly was "blessed" to have been chosen to give birth to the One who would save her and the entire world. For God's Son became man to save us.

And Mary knew the identity of the baby in her womb even before she visited Elizabeth. For Gabriel the angel had told her that ***"the child to be born will be called holy – the Son of God"*** **(Luke 1:35, ESV).** Therefore, Mary knew that she was the "mother of God" before Elizabeth said so. But Mary isn't the "mother of God" because she's Divine or sinless. She is neither of these. Mary is the "mother of God" because the One who was in her womb and who was born to her is God in human flesh. See, Jesus isn't God because Mary is His mother. For Jesus is the infinite Son of God who has no beginning or end. But through the power of the Holy Spirit, God's Son became Mary's flesh and blood son while not ceasing to be God's Son. It's the mystery of the incarnation – of God's advent into this world via the womb of a virgin named Mary.

Therefore, because Jesus is God in human flesh, the woman who bore Him is the "mother of God." And because Jesus is God in human flesh we can (and do) say that God died on the cross on Good Friday. For while the infinite and everlasting Creator cannot die (just as He cannot be born), yet the Creator in human flesh who was born to Mary two-thousand years ago can (and did) die to pay for the sins of the whole world – bodily rising again to everlasting life three days later.

My friends, Advent and Christmas are wondrous and theologically rich seasons in the church year. And Jesus is at the center. The promised Messiah has come into the world – born to the virgin Mary. Therefore, we have great hope. And it's not inappropriate to talk about the individuals whom God chose to serve Him in His narrative. And it certainly is right to describe these servants using the Biblical words attributed to them – be it "blessed" or "mother of God" or "prophet" or "apostle." And we'll be focusing on four particular men throughout Advent this year in our sermon series entitled "Advent Proclaimers." Yet, the focus during Advent and at Christmas is ultimately not upon these men nor upon the virgin Mary. For Advent and Christmas are all about Jesus. And all thanks be to God for that.

Shay and I wish each of you a most blessed Adventtide and Christmastide. Please watch the church calendar for all the opportunities to worship throughout December.

See you at church,
Pastor

PS – Last month I mentioned the special mid-week worship service slated to begin in December. That service is scheduled for **Wednesday, December 17th starting at 1:30PM.** For now, this service will be limited to St. John's and St. Paul's members. We will meet **at St. Paul's, Laurium.** In case of bad weather on December 17th, a different date will be selected. I will leave a message on the telephone answering machine at St. Paul's as well as on the church's Facebook page should there be a cancellation. Please call me at 906-934-2570 if you have any questions. And please feel free to call me at this number on the morning of Wednesday, 12/17 if you are questioning whether the service that afternoon will be canceled due to weather ~ Pastor.