

The Festival of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary to Elizabeth
St. Luke 1:39-56
July 2nd, 2020
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

Mary Greeted Elizabeth

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

O Lord, send out Thy Light and Thy Truth, let them lead us. O Lord, open Thou my lips, that my mouth may show forth Thy praise. O Lord, graciously preserve me, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

People often wonder why this Festival is celebrated on July 2nd; in part of the hottest days of the year. The answer is found in the last verse of the Gospel reading from the Evangelist St. Luke. The Blessed Virgin Mary remained with her relative Elizabeth for three months. Today's date is actually three months and eight days from the Annunciation of our Lord to the Blessed Virgin Mary. You may remember last week was the celebration of the Festival of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist on June 24th. Today is eight days after the Nativity—the birth—of St. John the Baptist. This is the day of his circumcision according to Jewish custom. This is the day that Elizabeth said that he should be named John and everyone balked because no one in the family had that name previously. They then turned to Zacharias who wrote "His Name is John" and his tongue, which had been mute ever since he doubted the proclamation of the angel nine months earlier, proclaimed the good news of what this child would do. He would be the forerunner of the Christ, our Lord + Jesus.

Therefore, we see a connection between the birth of St. John, who is the forerunner of the Christ, and visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary to Elizabeth, the mother of St. John the Baptist. St. John and our Lord + Jesus are connected to one another. St. John, the Forerunner, prepares the way for the Lord + Jesus. He preaches repentance for the remission of sins. He baptized all those who came to him in repentance in the waters of the Jordan River. He even baptized our Lord + Jesus in those same waters, thereby purifying all water for Holy Baptism, so that all those who believe and are baptized may be cleansed of all their sins. They are baptized into Christ + Jesus, and they are clothed with His righteousness and purity; they are clothed with righteousness of the New Adam.

Our Lord + Jesus, having His way prepared by St. John the Baptist, picks up where St. John the Baptist began. He also comes preaching a repentance for the remission of sins, and through His Apostles, He baptized all those who came to Him in repentance. Therefore, we see the connection between St. John the Baptist and our Lord + Jesus. One comes before to prepare the way, and One comes to fulfill all requirements of the Law of God, and suffer and die in our place on the tree of the holy cross.

Just as these two men are connected, so too are their mothers. The Blessed Virgin Mary and Elizabeth are relatives. They both have received the promise of a baby boy, even though such a thing was impossible for them. Elizabeth was barren and beyond the age of bearing children, yet she bore

the Forerunner, St. John. The Blessed Virgin Mary had not known a man—she was a virgin—even as the Prophet Isaiah had foretold. She could not bear a child, because she was a virgin. Yet, both of these women bore the sons foretold them by the angel Gabriel.

When the birth of the Lord + Jesus was announced to the Blessed Virgin Mary, the angel Gabriel told her that her relative—her cousin—was with child, and had been for six months. What is the Blessed Virgin Mary's response to this sign that the angel told her? She went with haste to the hill country of a city of Judah and Mary greeted Elizabeth. When the two mothers met, the two boys also met for the first time. And St. John the Baptist leaped with joy at the arrival of the Savior—of his Savior and the Savior of everyone in the room and of the whole world. What a joyous event! The Lord + Jesus only conceived by the Holy Ghost a few days earlier, has been brought to the house of Elizabeth and Zacharias by the Blessed Virgin Mary. The Mother of God has brought the Savior of the world to meet the Forerunner, St. John the Baptist, the one who would prepare His way.

Elizabeth understands the situation perfectly. She sees how unworthy she is of the great gifts bestowed upon her. On account of her sin, she is not worthy to bear the Forerunner, St. John. She is even more unworthy to be greeted by the Blessed Virgin Mary on account of Whom is in her womb. She even says as much, "Why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" She is not worthy to be granted such a thing on account of her sinful nature, but by grace she is granted this gift. It is the Lord + Jesus, a few days old in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary Who makes her worthy.

The Mother of God—the Theotokos—is also not worthy of the great gift that she bears in her womb. She is nothing but a lowly handmaiden, who is betrothed to a poor carpenter named Joseph, both of whom are of the house and lineage of King David. This is a sign of how far the house of King David has fallen. On account of the sinfulness of the sons of David—the kings of Judah—they were exiled into Babylon and the temple was destroyed. The descendants of King David never regained their place of honor again. But our Lord + Jesus regards the lowly estate of His handmaiden, the Blessed Virgin Mary; His mother according to His human nature and His servant according to His Divine nature. All generations now call her blessed, for she has given birth to the Lord and Savior of the whole world.

We are also not worthy to receive our Lord + Jesus. We are not worthy to be greeted by Him. But just as Mary greeted Elizabeth. We are greeted by our Lord + Jesus every time we gather in His holy Name. He comes to us and greets us with His holy Word. He preaches into our ears the good news of what He has done for us through His called and ordained ministers. They preach and teach that our Lord + Jesus came to preach repentance for the remission of sins. On account of His perfect obedience to the Law of God, and His innocent suffering and death. We who cling to Him in faith now are made worthy to be greeted by Him when He comes to us with His gifts. He preaches to us the promises of the Gospel, He baptizes us with the water of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, and He gives us to eat and drink of His very Body and Blood in bread and wine. All this to cleanse us our sins, and clothe us with His merits.

St. John the Baptist, whose birth was eight days ago according to the Church's calendar, is circumcised and named today; three months after the Blessed Virgin Mary greeted her cousin Elizabeth. He prepares the way of the Lord + Jesus who is in the womb of the Blessed Virgin when she greets her relative Elizabeth. Our Savior is brought to those who longed for Him in enduring faith. His way is prepared by the one sent to prepare the way for Him. He comes to us who are unworthy, to make us worthy to receive Him and His precious gifts.

His mercy is on all generations that look to Him in faith; who cling to Him and what He has done for them. His mercy is upon all of us gathered here today, for we have come with haste to hear what our Lord + Jesus has done for us. Just as the Blessed Virgin Mary needed to tell someone that she is

bearing the Messiah of the whole world. We run to hear that our sins have been forgiven by Him, even though we are not worthy and we daily sin much. He comes to rescue us who are unable to rescue ourselves. He comes to us with His Gospel promises and His life-giving Sacraments, and draws us to Himself. He regards our lowly estate, and still bestows upon us the good gifts of forgiveness, life and salvation.

Therefore, my dear friends, let us give thanks this day for the first proclamation of the Gospel after our Lord's conception. Let us leap for joy that our Lord + Jesus has come to us in His Word and Sacraments. Let us leap for joy in the womb of holy Mother Church, that we get to gather together as the people of the Lord God, and receive all the good gifts He desires to give us. He has forgiven us of our sins on account of Christ's sacrifice for us, and has saved us from sin, death and the power of the devil, and He will call us out of this vale of tears to Himself in Heaven to live with Him and the angels and saints for all eternity. This news is so wonderful it makes us exclaim with Elizabeth, "Why is this granted to me?" It is granted to us all by grace. Let us give thanks to the Lord God Almighty for visiting us poor, miserable sinners and granting us grace. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory! I will extol Thee, O Lord, and I will praise Thy Name forever and ever. Amen.

The Votum:

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

Soli Deo Gloria!