

The Festival of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary
St. Luke 1:39-56
July 2nd, 2025
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

When Elisabeth Heard the Salutation of Mary

In Nomine Iesu!

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

Sermon Text:

“And it came to pass, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit; and she lifted up her voice with a loud cry, and said, ‘Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come unto me? For behold, when the voice of thy salutation came into mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed is she that believed; for there shall be a fulfilment of the things which have been spoken to her from the Lord.’”

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.

My dear friends, in the sixth month of Elisabeth’s pregnancy with the baby, St. John the Baptist, the angel Gabriel visited the Blessed Virgin Mary and announced to her that she would be the mother of the Savior of the world. Even the Name given to her by the angel teaches us that He is the Savior. For, + Jesus means Savior. Those events happened in the “sixth month,” that is, in our March. Which is why the Festival of the Annunciation is celebrated on March 25th. It is nine months before December 25th, the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord + Jesus, the Christ. Counting backwards from March six months, we would arrive in September. In September was the Jewish festival of Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, the day when the high priest would make his annual entry into the Most Holy Place to atone for his sins and the sins of the whole people of Israel by sprinkling blood upon the Ark of the Covenant.

These are the events that are taking place when Zacharias, the father of St. John the Baptist, is offering incense and the angel of the Lord, Gabriel, appears to him to announce the birth of his son to him and his wife, Elisabeth. At the time of the sacrifice of atonement, the announcement that the forerunner to the One Who would atone for the sins of the whole world was being announced. Six months later, the Blessed Virgin Mary also receives an announcement regarding the birth of the Savior of the world. This announcement is made at the time of the Passover festival of the Jews. This would also end up being the time when that Baby that grew in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary, would be sacrificed upon the tree of the holy cross. He would offer Himself up as the spotless Lamb of God for the sins of the whole world.

Having received this announcement from the angel Gabriel, and having heard that her relative Elisabeth, who was barren, was also with a child, made haste to the hill country of Judea, to be with

this child. A child who would go before the Lord + Jesus to prepare His way. Having entered into the house, the Babe that was in the womb of Elisabeth, leaped for joy that the Savior of the world had come into their home. Elisabeth herself was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied about the Baby and the Blessed Virgin Mary. She was blessed because of the fruit of her womb. In her womb was the Lord God in human flesh. In her womb was the Savior of the world, especially of those who believe on Him, just as Elisabeth proclaimed about the Virgin Mary.

She was blessed because of the fruit of her womb, the Baby + Jesus, but she was also doubly blessed, because not only did she carry the Savior of the world, but she also believed on that Baby in her womb. She believed that she carried the Lord and Creator of the whole world, Who would be born of her to save mankind from her sins. She even confesses this in the song which we know as the Magnificat. The song we sang in hymn form in the Office Hymn of the Day. She confessed in that song, the Magnificat, that she was a poor, lowly, handmaiden. In other words, she confessed her unworthiness on account of her sins and trespasses to be the mother of the Lord. But as she confessed in the Magnificat, the Lord did not look upon her low estate. He did not consider her sins and transgressions. He looked past them. For He had come into this world to bear our flesh so that He might offer up Himself as an innocent victim for the sins of the whole world. He came into this world to redeem the world by His own blood.

St. John the Baptist's birth is announced in the month of the Day of Atonement. Our Lord's birth is announced in the month when the Passover lambs were being sacrificed as a memorial of the deliverance of the people of Israel from the Egyptians. St. Luke, the Evangelist, also records at the end of today's Gospel reading that the Blessed Virgin Mary remained with Elisabeth and Zacharias for three months. These events taking place in the sixth month, at the time of the Passover, means that three months later would be the month in which St. John the Baptist was born and circumcised and named. This festival of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary actually falls upon the eighth day after the Festival of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist. In other words, this festival falls upon the day when the forerunner of the Christ receives his name, John, which means "God is gracious." This is the day of his circumcision and naming.

This is the day upon which we celebrate the Festival of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary to her relative Elisabeth, and her husband Zacharias, marks the time when she returned to Nazareth to finish out the other six months of her pregnancy. In six months, we will celebrate the birth of the Baby in her womb, the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord + Jesus, the Christ. But even though we celebrate the events of the narrative of this Gospel six months before Christmas, the narrative itself takes place in the month in which the Passover would have been celebrated.

When the sacrificial lambs were being offered, when the people of Israel had gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover, and eat the Passover meal, is when the Blessed Virgin Mary enters into the house of her relative Elisabeth. The babe in Elisabeth's womb leaping and her crying with a loud voice that the Virgin was blessed of the Lord because of the fruit of her womb, must be understood in context of the surrounding events. St. John the Baptist can leap for joy in his mother's womb because the true Paschal Lamb has come. The true sacrifice for the sins of the whole world has come. The true Deliverer from not just the earthly foe of Egypt, but from the spiritual foe of the devil and Satan, the enemy and accuser of all the world. He has come to free mankind from the prison chains in which the devil has us bound.

The Babe in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary has not looked upon the low estate of His creation. He did not turn away from redeeming us because we are filled with manifest sins and trespasses. Indeed, it was for this very reason, that we can in no wise redeem ourselves, that He turns to us and comes to us in our flesh to redeem us from sin and death, and the power of the devil. This is why Elisabeth exclaims with a loud voice when the salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary filled her ears,

for not only the mother of the Lord was in her presence, but the very Lord Himself. He had come to be the once and for all time sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. He takes His place in the womb of the Virgin while the Passover lambs are being killed as a memorial of the Lord's deliverance from the bonds of slavery. He comes in our flesh to be the One, True Paschal Lamb for us and all mankind, so that all those who like the Blessed Virgin Mary, and like Elisabeth, and John in her womb, and her husband Zacharias, who believe on Him might have everlasting life.

Having heard this good news, having received into this world our Savior and Redeemer, our souls can with the Blessed Virgin, magnify our Lord + Jesus, the Christ. Consider that! The song that St. Mary, the Mother of God, sings is to the Baby in her womb. She sings the Magnificat to the One Who is in her womb Who would be born of her flesh, and be her Redeemer and Savior. Indeed, her soul can magnify the Lord, for she bears the Lord in our flesh in her womb.

We bear the Lord in His Body and Blood in bread and wine when we come to this altar and receive this Blessed Sacrament. There we receive the forgiveness of sins that our Lord + Jesus won for us by His sacrifice upon the tree of the holy cross. Therefore, my dear friends, let our souls magnify the Lord, and rejoice and leap for joy at the salutation of our Lord to "Take and eat" and to "Drink ye all of it." For, our Lord does not look upon our low estate, but freely offers to us the meal which strengthens and renews us by the promise of the remission of sins delivered to us in this Blessed Meal. We do not need to wait three months, or six months, or even nine months. This meal is prepared for us to receive it for the remission of our sins. Let us come and partake of our Lord's Body and Blood, and receive the gift of forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and salvation. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus, the Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Almighty God, be pleased to accompany Thy Word with Thy Holy Spirit and grant that Thy Word would increase faith in us; bring into the Way of Truth all such as have erred; turn the hearts of the unrepentant; and for sake of Thy Name grant succor to all heavy hearts and those who are heavy-laden, that they may through the mercy of the Lord + Jesus Christ be relieved and preserved so that they succumb not to the temptation of despair but rather that they gain the victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil; through the same + Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with the Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

The Votum:

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

Soli Deo Gloria!