

**JUNE 2, 2024; FPCPH; PASTOR ROXIE DAVIS**

**SERMON: MARY, MARY Scripture: Mother Mary: Luke 1: 26-35. Mary Magdalene, John 20: 11-18; Mary of Bethany, Luke 10: 39-42**

(Other Marys to be read at home: Mary, mother of James and Joses (Mark 15: 40; 16:1); Mary, wife of Clopas and perhaps other Mary (John 19: 25; Matthew 27: 61); Mary, mother of leader John Mark, Early Church (Acts 12: 12-14)  
Mary of Rome, acknowledged by Apostle Paul, Early Church (Romans 16: 6).

## **INTRODUCTION**

**It is June.** We are into a new preaching series called Names: Same but Different. We will be looking at a bunch of people in the Bible who have the same name but who have different roles in the Kingdom of God, in Jesus Christ. As we look at these various people, I think we will realize that they fulfill what Jesus teaches us in the Lord's Prayer. Every Sunday we repeat, and perhaps sometimes, without much thought:

"Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed (respect) be thy name; **thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.**" Each of the people whom we will explore are committed to that great work—doing God's will and helping to bring God's kingdom to their earthly living and sharing it with others. We will have the opportunity to view what quality of life and what individual characteristics help God accomplish God's purposes on this earth—bringing "God's will and God's kingdom to daily living on this earth."

## **MARY**

**Today we will look at the Marys in the Bible.** There are 14 different Marys in the Bible, not counting the Miriams who are in the Old Testament, the root name for Mary. I have only **highlighted 3 of the Marys—stories that I think are important. I am only going to speak about the two Marys who are center stage in the purposes of God—Mother Mary and Mary Magdalene.** By reading the Scripture for Mary, sister of Martha, I want to wet your appetite to read more about her because she is a **Mary who is teachable—something that would do us well to emulate.** And **the 4 more Marys** added in light print in your bulletin--have significant roles in the building of God's kingdom and the sharing the good news of Jesus. I am leaving it up to you to **pull out your Bible and read about those Marys.** (Now if you don't have an understandable Bible, there are several **Message Bible** which you can take—they are free. Written by Eugene Peterson, a Presbyterian theologian, who has gone back to the original Greek and Hebrew, putting the Word of God into modern day language.)  
**(This is a commercial to get you reading your Bible).**

## **TODAY**

Just so you know: Mary is the **7<sup>th</sup> most favorite name for girls in our culture.** **How many Marys do we have in the room today?** Raise your hand if Mary (or Miriam) is your first or middle name. **Whatever your name is, do you know what is the meaning of your name?** (Wait for an answer). My name is Roxie—which in the ancient Greek means "dawn of day" or "window of light." I learned the meaning early in my life and found that I wanted to be an uplifting light to others. **In**

**the Jewish tradition**, the meaning of a name is important. I encourage you to find out the meaning of your name. Sometimes it reminds us of the context of our birth or it clarifies who we might become.

Two examples: Several weeks ago I preached the Old Story of Abraham and Sarah and the birth of their first son—Isaac—**Isaac** means laughter because Abraham and Sarah laughed when God revealed they would have their first baby at the age of 90 (Sarah) and 100 (Abraham). Even the name of **Jesus** has meaning. Often in the Jewish tradition, the firstborn in a family is named after the father. However, both Joseph and Mary are told by the angels that the child to be born would be named Jesus which means: “He Saves” —revealing Jesus as the “Savior of the World”, offering salvation—redemption to all of us.

**The name Mary is translated** in Hebrew meaning: “Blessed but also meaning Bitterness.” We will come back to that as we speak about the two Marys for today. In modern day, in our **early years** we perhaps learned the name of Mary in a nursery rhyme: **Mary, Mary, quite contrary, how does your garden grow? With silver bells, and cockle shells, and pretty maids all in a row.** To me, it was a silly nursery rhyme. What did all of that mean? There are various historical explanations of the rhyme. But one of the explanations is that it is a **religious allegory of Catholicism**, with **Mary** being Mother Mary of Jesus. The **Bells** representing the Sanctus (Holy, Holy, Holy) Bells, (*which we will sing during communion at 10:00 worship*). The **Cockleshells**—being the **Badges** of the early pilgrims to the shrine of Saint James in **Spain** (the **Santiago de Camino**) and (some of our people have just returned from there); **Pretty Maids** being the **Nuns**.

**We also probably learned at an early age, “Mary had a Little Lamb.” (Join me)** Mary had a little lamb, its fleece was white as snow and everywhere that Mary went the lamb was sure to go.” (It followed her to school one day, which was against the rule. It made the children laugh and play, to see the lamb at school. ...And it goes on from there.

**Joke:** And to bring us back to Mother Mary, out of this Song comes this joke. “If Mary gave birth to Jesus and Jesus is the lamb of God...Did Mary have a little lamb? **Meaning of the name Mary:** To more serious matters: As I said, In Hebrew—the original name Mary means **Beloved and Bitterness**. Certainly, we can understand “**Beloved**” for Both Marys—Mother Mary and Mary Magdalene. The translation of Mary, “**Bitterness**” is a bit more jarring. Some would say that when Jesus is brought to the Temple on the 8<sup>th</sup> day of his life, for a blessing, **Simeon prophesies about Jesus**, being a light to the Gentiles and glory to Israel, And he intentionally looks at Mary and says: “A sword will pierce your own soul too.” (referring to the crucifixion).

**Certainly for Mother Mary, this lives out her name as “bitterness.” at the crucifixion. But “bitterness” would also be a word for Mary Magdalene, plagued by 7 demons** (certainly bitter) but then Jesus cures her which is quite the “blessing.” She also lives out her name: Mary.

## **MOTHER MARY**

**First, Mother Mary.** Of course, we see Mary in the birth narrative; she listens well to the angel. “The power of the Most High will overshadow you and the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.” Mary’s humble (look around you in your life--humility is absolutely necessary in the life of faith—in bringing God’s will and kingdom to this earth)—**Mary’s humble response is:** “I am the Lord’s servant. May it be as you have said.” Even when she goes to visit her cousin, Elizabeth (the mother of John the Baptist), Elizabeth says: **“Blessed”**—(Mary means Blessed) “Blessed are you among women and blessed is the child you will bear. “

Mary is **so humbly obedient** that in the Magnificat, Mary says—and we sing: “God has been mindful of the humble state of his servant (referring to herself).” She is humble and with that humility comes her recognition that God is greater than she is and obedience to God’s will is the most appropriate response. That tie between humility and obedience is the same for us when it comes to faith in God. We have an account of Mary and Joseph looking for Jesus, after the yearly **celebration of the Passover in Jerusalem.** Jesus stays back, sitting among the elders, In the Temple. Joseph and Mary hunt for him and when Mary, worried to death, like any human mother, asks him “why have you done this to Joseph and me,” Jesus responds, “Didn’t you know that I need to be in my Father’s house?” I think Jesus is trying to help Mary remember who he really is—God’s Son.

She does remember that-- when she and Jesus and the rest of the disciples are invited to the Wedding in Cana. She knows the power that Jesus has. She tells him that the bride’s family is out of wine (a real disgrace in that day). And Mary is so sure of the “rightness” of Jesus’ actions, that she says with confidence to the servants: “Do whatever he asks of you.” As we all know—the water in the jugs turn into wine. And the last phrase in the narrative of this event: “This was the first of Jesus’ miraculous signs. His disciples put their faith in him.” All prompted by Mary in the role of Jesus’ mother. Mary had already put her faith in Jesus. She knew that he was greater than she was. We see Mary again **close to the cross** at Jesus’ Crucifixion—accompanied by Disciple John and then again at Pentecost—the birth of the Early Church.

It seems to me that her humble obedience turns her into a person who is present, even in the days after Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection, perhaps to **encourage**, that is, to give **courage** to the disciples who are now many more than just the original 12. **Humility; Obedience; Encouragement**—All characteristics who would be very becoming on each of us.

## **SARAH CIRCLE**

You all need to know that the **Sarah Circle in this church, a group of women who gather together once a month to study the Bible, under the Leadership of Judith McLean.** They have studied this past year, Mother Mary along with some other Biblical women. In the book they used, the introduction to Mother Mary says this:

“The Biblical account of Mary tells of a young girl, in danger of complete disgrace (because she is pregnant), who has the courage to say “yes!” to God. Mary’s experience of motherhood includes a bewildering birth, a risky escape to Egypt with Joseph, and a message from prophets that warns

of the death of her son. She meets these difficulties with thoughtfulness and steadfastness”—And I would add “humility and obedience.” May we do the same.

## **MARY MAGDALENE**

Saying that let us just take a brief moment with **Mary Magdalene. Magdalene is not her last name.** But refers to the city from which she hails—Magdala, on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. When Jesus meets her, she has **7 demons.** As was usual with people who were demon possessed, those demons had authority over her, and she was most likely **“loyal” to their temptations.** When Mary Magdalene meets Jesus, she is set free from seven demons. From that day forward, her life is forever changed. **Mary becomes a devoted believer and followers of Jesus,** traveling with Jesus and the disciples as they minister throughout Galilee and Judea.

Out of her own wealth, along with other women, Mary helps care for Jesus and the needs of his disciples. **She is deeply devoted and loyal to Jesus.** (Keep that in mind for your own life). She stays with him at the foot of the cross during his crucifixion, when others—like the disciples—who do not appear there (except for John) She and other women bought spices to anoint the body of Jesus in the tomb. **Mary Magdalene is the first person to see the Risen Lord after his resurrection** (we read that this morning). **She is mentioned in all 4 Gospels. And she is mentioned more often than any other woman in the New Testament.** She has been termed the **first to share boldly about the resurrection.** Believe it or not, Mary Magdalene is never mentioned again after the gospel’s resurrection account—**That’s a whole other story about the Church Fathers.**

**Mary Magdalene is the subject** of much controversy, legend, and misconception. There is no evidence to back up claims that she was a reformed prostitute, the wife of Jesus, or the mother of his child. (as portrayed in Dan Brown’s 2003 novel and movie *The Da Vinci Code* ). **Life Lessons for us from Mother Mary and Mary Magdalene:** Humility and Obedience; Loyalty and Boldness; Encouragement and Courage; Always directed at God and God’s plan for the redemption and salvation of all of us. **Whether our name is Mary or some other name, we all have a role to play in the Purposes and Plans of God.**

May we recognize the blessings and bitterness in all of our lives. Let us not be haughtiness—but humble. May we let Jesus change us into better people, with a better way to live life fully, not being loyal to humans but obedient and loyal to God Almighty. May we realize our role in God’s plan, as we pray the Jesus prayer: **“Our Father, who are in heaven, Hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven.”**