



Luke 11:27–28

27 As Jesus was saying these things, a woman in the crowd called out, ‘Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you.’ 28 He replied, ‘Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.’

Reflection

Today’s passage comes from Luke 11:27–28, just two verses which I’ll read for us now,

27 As Jesus was saying these things, a woman in the crowd called out, 'Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you.' 28 He replied, 'Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.'

To set the scene from yesterday, Jesus has just cast out yet another demon in front a crowd of onlookers. Several Jewish leaders in doing so have accused him of black magic, exorcising the demon through the power of Satan. Others in the crowds have demanded further signs. Still others are sitting on the fence, waiting to see how things play out. We left off yesterday with a chilling illustration from Jesus making use of the formerly demon possessed man in front of him by way of illustration, that no

doubt silenced all onlookers.

23 'Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters. 24 'When an impure spirit comes out of a person, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, "I will return to the house I left." 25 When it arrives, it finds the house swept clean and put in order. 26 Then it goes and takes seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that person is worse than the first.'

Essentially with these words Jesus is saying, 'There is no hope for this man in front of me, apart from receiving me into his

heart as his Lord and Saviour. I have driven the demon out, but unless he accepts me in then seven other spirits more wicked than the first will come and take its place. It is the same with you religious leaders and you crowds. Moral effort and outward show will not save you. Neither will apathy or disinterest or sitting on the fence. Things are far more black and white than you know. Humankind is empty without God and the void must be filled. It is either filled by sin that leads to death; or by faith in Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. And just as this man now speaking so joyfully in front of you will either receive me as his Lord and Saviour or end up with eight demons in place of the one, so too will be the fate of every single one of you who does not receive me. I assure you, your final condition will be worse than your

first.

Then today, the unpleasant, unsmiling silence that surely follows these stark words from Jesus is broken by a woman in the crowd. Verse 27,

27 As Jesus was saying these things, a woman in the crowd called out, 'Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you.'

Jesus replies,

'Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.'

And in two verses we have a major, Roman Catholic and Protestant divide.

‘Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you.’

‘Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.’

Down throughout the centuries millions of Catholics have called out after this woman, ‘Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you.’ To Catholics she is the greatest Saint, the Mother of God having perpetual virginity, and like her son immaculate conception and bodily assumption into heaven rather than dying. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states ‘The Church’s devotion to the Blessed Virgin is intrinsic to Christian worship.’ And so millions of Roman Catholics down throughout the centuries have joined this woman in the crowd calling out,

‘Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you.’

In doing so they are fulfilling both Elizabeth and Mary’s prophecies from Luke 1. In Luke 1:42 Elizabeth, John the Baptist’s mother,

42 In a loud voice she exclaimed: ‘Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear!

And then Mary, in Luke 1:48,

From now on all generations will call me blessed,

In reply, Jesus uses a rare Greek word

which essentially means, 'Yes, but'. He agrees, but would also qualify. He amends the woman's beatitude because more needs to be said. Verse 28,

28 He replied, 'Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.'

Jesus' mother is not blessed through the fertility of her womb or because she nursed Jesus as a baby. She is not blessed because of supposed perpetual virginity or immaculate conception or being bodily taken up to heaven instead of dying for which we have no Scriptural evidence whatsoever. Mary is blessed because she heard the word of God and obeyed it as we read in Luke 1:38,

38 'I am the Lord's servant,' Mary answered. 'May your word to me be fulfilled.'

Christianity is not about worshipping Saints and the church's devotion to the Blessed Virgin is not intrinsic to Christian worship. Hearing the word of God and obeying it sits at the heart of Christian worship. As Jesus says,

'Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.'

Mary was blessed because she heard the Word of God and obeyed it, and this beatitude, this promise of blessing, rests on all who do the same. No doubt some in those crowds heard Jesus' words, received him into their hearts and went on to live lives of

obedience to him. And received his blessing. Millions upon millions have since.

Think & Pray

Are you reaching out and taking hold of this promise of God? Are you listening to his word with reverence – hearing it, understanding it, treasuring it? We must hear it with understanding and know what it means. We must hold God's word as the highest authority, the most important voice into our thought life, our emotional life and our decisions. Then we must do what it says.

What has God's word said to you recently? How have you responded? How are you going in obeying him? If you can't list or think of anything then have you

been reading your Bible? Have you been present during those sermons in church? Spend some time this morning turning these words from Jesus over in your mind,

‘Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.’

Then seek his blessing. Pray that by the power of the Holy Spirit he might open up your heart to desire his wisdom, his counsel, his advice, his guiding far more than you currently do. Pray that you wouldn't be able to put down your Bible. That you'd find yourself returning to it again and again throughout the day. That the Holy Spirit would write words of Scripture onto your heart, returning your mind to them again and again throughout the day. Pray that you'd be shaped by them and become

thoroughly obedient to them. And as your life is transformed that our heavenly Father would rain down blessing upon blessing upon you and your family because Jesus promises us that,

‘Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.’