

Blessed art thou among women

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Date: 01 January 2000

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[0 : 00] Now let's turn to God's Word and we look at the passages that we have read this evening and we will also look at one or two other relevant sections of Scripture as well.

If you want a text, perhaps words you find in verse 42 might be appropriate. In a loud voice she exclaimed, Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear.

I'm sure that any series of sermons on Bible women, especially at this time of year, would be seriously deficient if we failed to study the life of Mary, the mother of our Lord.

There is no need to apologise for this. We don't for a moment accept that Mary herself was supernaturally conceived, as certain people do.

Nor do we believe for a moment that Mary was born sinless. We don't believe either that Mary is someone whom we should worship, nor do we for a second accept that we have any right to regard Mary as a mediatrix, as a female mediator.

[1 : 29] We don't accept either that Mary is a virgin. The mind boggles at the very thought, because the Bible tells us that she had other sons and daughters.

She had a son called James, a son called Joseph, and a son called Judas. And she had unnamed daughters. So we don't accept any of these things that so many people seem to accept regarding Mary on account of tradition handed down from past generations.

In the Bible, there are several Marys. In the New Testament, there are at least six. There are several people who suggest that the name Mary means beloved, whilst others suggest that the name Mary really comes from the word Mara, which has a lot of connotations regarding bitterness.

You know that the children of Israel found the waters of Mara bitter to drink. And you know that Naomi, as a result of her bitter experiences, said, don't call me Naomi anymore, call me Mara.

Well, whatever can be said about the derivation of the name Mary, it is certainly true that Mary was beloved of God. And it is no less true that Mary had bitter experiences in her life.

[3 : 20] Mary came from a humble little village. In fact, she came from a background that, even in human terms, had nothing going for it.

Can anything good come out of Nazareth? The question was asked. Mary didn't belong to a family who were, in any sense, prestigious in the community.

She came from a very, very humble home. A very lowly background. And yet, she was beloved of God.

God loved her. And God favoured her above all others. As the Bible says, Blessed are you among women. Even in her own family, Mary knew bitterness.

Because the Bible makes it clear that, Although her children eventually believed in Jesus, For long enough, they refused to believe.

[4 : 27] So Mary knew the heartache of unbelieving children in her own family. But Mary didn't give up on them. And the time came when his brethren, Who had not believed, Came and worshipped too.

This evening, God is saying to us, That no matter where we have come from, He's interested in us, And wants to bless us.

God's blessing does not depend on our coming from advantaged backgrounds. God is as interested in insignificant nations, And towns and villages, As he is in those communities, That are highly regarded by men.

God also comes to us, And says to us, If we have the bitterness, Of unbelieving members of our own family, Bothering us, That we should not give up.

That has happened with Mary, So it might happen with us. That we will yet have the joy of seeing our rebellious children, Come to faith in Christ.

[5 : 38] Mary didn't give up on them. Don't let us give up on them either. Well there are many things that we could say about Mary, Based entirely on what the Bible teaches.

In the Gospel of Matthew and Luke, In the opening two chapters, We read much about this woman. And in other parts of God's word, We have given several other interesting insights, Into her character.

In John chapter 2, The story of the first miracle, Jesus changing the water into wine, There is reference there, To Mary. In Mark 3 and Matthew 12, Mary at one stage thought that Jesus had gone mad, And came to try and reason with him.

And we can learn something from that. And then in John 19, 25, We see there, That as Jesus, Is put to death on the cross, Mary, His mother, Is near at hand.

And finally, In Acts 1, After his ascension, Mary is there, In fellowship, With the people of God.

[6 : 54] And I believe that these glimpses, That we have of Mary in God's word, Have so much to teach us, Here tonight. And I just want to, Mention several things briefly, That I think we can learn, From a character study, Such as this.

The first thing that I want to, Refer to as this, That Mary was clearly special, In the estimation of God. Blessed are you, Among women.

The Lord is with you. The Lord has highly honoured you, And equipped you, For service. And Mary, In her song, Which we'll look at, In a few minutes, Thanks God, For the special way, In which he has dealt with her, As his child.

For seeing her, In her low condition, And bringing her out, Of that low condition. Mary, Is clearly grateful to God, For the special favour, That he has bestowed, Upon her.

Mary regards herself, As being highly honoured, As being specially, Privileged. But you know, We could argue, This evening, That special, Although Mary's circumstances, Undoubtedly were, That special, Although the blessing, Undoubtedly was, There's a sense, In which the same, Can be said of us, If we're the Lord's people.

[8 : 30] If we're God's people tonight, We're also special, In the estimation of God. We are his, Treasured, Possession.

We are his, Prized, Possession. He regards, His people, As belonging, To himself. Christ regards, Every member, Of his family, As being, One with himself, In every way.

And although Mary, Received, This special blessing, Of having Christ, Literally, Physically, Formed, Within, Her womb.

All, God's people, Spiritually, Are exhorted, To have Christ, Formed, Within, Their souls. Christ, Is to be, Formed, In our souls, If we are the people, Of God, God, God, God, Chose Mary, And dealt with her, In a special way, He's done the same, For all his people, What does the Bible say?

The Bible says, That the gospel, Is not so much, For the mighty, And for the wise, And for the noble, Not many, Mighty, Not many wise, Not many noble, Are called, Although one preacher, Speaking of that text, Said we should be thankful, That it says not many, And it doesn't say not any, Because if it said not any, Then that would leave, The mighty, And the wise, And the noble, Out of it all together, But what the Bible says, Is not many mighty, Not many wise, Not many noble, Are called, But God has chosen, The weak, God has chosen, The mean, Things of this world, God has chosen, The despised, God has chosen, The ignoble, And made them, Princes and princesses, In his own, Royal family, So this evening, I would say, That just as Mary,

[10 : 41] Is special to the Lord, So, All his people, Are special, To the Lord, And I would ask, Do you belong, To the Lord, Are you special, To him, Can you say, That his favour, Spiritually, Rests on you, Even as Mary could say, That his favour, Rested on her, The second thing, I simply want to mention, About Mary, Is her sanctity, She is clearly, Someone who is suitable, For the task, That the Lord, Is giving her, Gabriel, Says, This tour, In the address, That we read of, There in Luke, Chapter 1, The Lord, Is with you, You are clearly, A vessel that is fit, For the master's use, You are clearly, Someone whom, The Lord's regards, Has been suitable,

To give, His son, Life, To bring him, To birth, To have him, At your breast, To bring him up, In the world, Clearly, Mary, Was a believer, And Elizabeth, Tells us, That she was a believer, In verse 45, Blessed is she, Who has believed, That what the Lord, Has said to her, Will be accomplished, Someone said, I don't know who, So I'll call him someone, Mary, First conceived, Christ, In her heart, By faith, Before, She conceived, Christ, In the womb, She conceived, First, In her heart, By faith, Before she ever, Conceived him, In her womb, Mary, Mary didn't laugh, When she was told,

What was going to happen, Nor did she question, In an unbelieving way, Yes, She questioned, In order that she might, Understand more, And when she asked, The question, And received the answer, She accepted, The answer, That the angel gave, How can I have a child, Since I'm a virgin, She asked, A perfectly understandable question, Who wouldn't ask it, But she doesn't ask it, In an unbelieving spirit, She asks it, Because she genuinely, Wants it to be answered, And the answer comes, The Holy Spirit, Will come upon you, And the power of the most high, Will overshadow you, So the Holy One, To be born, Will be called, The Son of God, Did she laugh, Did she shake her head, Did she respond,

In an unbelieving way, No, What did she say, I am the Lord's servant, May it be to me, As you have said, There we see, Her sanctity, So clearly, Her holiness, She is clearly, Someone, Who knows the Lord, And accept, The Lord's will, For her life, Does she not say herself, My soul, Glorifies the Lord, And my spirit, Rejoices, In God, My, Saviour, That's the saint, The person, Who can say, God, My saviour, Are you a saint?

Not asking, Do you support, The local food party? When I ask, Are you a saint? I am simply asking, Are you a believer in Christ?

[14 : 34] Is God your saviour? If God's your saviour, You're a saint. And if God's not your saviour, Whatever else you are, You're not a saint, In the biblical sense, Of the word.

Mary is clearly aware, Of her own, Utter unworthiness, And yet us, She is aware of that, And acknowledges that, She advances all the time, In holiness, Mary never saw herself, As a sinless woman, Never, Mary's spirit, Rejoiced in God, Her saviour, And if Mary was sinless, Why would she need a saviour?

What's the point, Of God being her saviour, If she's sinless? Surely, Her acknowledgement of God, As saviour, Shows that she's a saint, In the same sense, As you and I, Are saints this evening, If God is, Our saviour, And so I must ask, Are we saints?

Are we saints? Is God our saviour? And when we ask questions, Of God, Are we asking them, Out of unbelief, Out of scepticism, Or are we asking them, Because we, Genuinely want to know, And understand, There shall, There shall, World of a difference, Between the, Sceptical question, That's asked, Out of unbelief, And a sincere question, That's asked, Out of a genuine, Desire to know, The third thing, About this woman, She's special, She's a saint, She is submissive, To the Lord's will, There is an amazing, Acceptance, Of the Lord's will, As we listen, To what Mary has to say, We can even say, That she doesn't just, Yield her soul, To the Lord, She's prepared, In a very literal sense, To give him her body as well,

She's prepared, To submit herself, To the Lord's will, For her life, To the degree, That within her soul, Deity and humanity, Come together, God becomes man, Our God contracted, To us man, Incomprehensibly, Made man, There we have, Jesus, The son of Mary, The son of God, If we believe, That Christ himself, Is a miracle, In his passion, And in his works, And in his words, Then we have, No, Reason to doubt, That his incarnation, His becoming man, Also happened, In a miraculous way, In fact, It's impossible,

[17 : 39] To account for a sinlessness, If we don't accept, If we don't accept, The miraculous nature, Of how the word, Became flesh, But the point, That I want to highlight, Is that Mary, Was quite prepared, To submit, To the Lord's will, To such an extent, That this, Actually took place, Within her own womb, She is prepared, To submit, Totally, To God's will, For her life, What about you?

What about me? Are we, Prepared, To submit, Our lives, And everything else, That is, Offset, To the will of God, To submit, Our intelligence, To the one, Whose, Thoughts are above, Our thoughts, And whose ways, Are above our ways, When we talk about, Submitting your, Intelligence, We're not talking, Of sacrifices, Sacrificing your, Intelligence, And stopping to think, Stopping, Thinking, But we're, Submitting, In the sense of, Bringing every thought, Captive, To the obedience of Christ, God's word says, That to obey, Is better than sacrifice, Maybe just now, Some of us might feel, That we're making sacrifices even, As we give to love, At once at Christmas, And sometimes,

We might even be, Giving and, Perhaps wishing that we didn't have to give, Quite so much, I hope not, But that could happen, But the Bible says, That to obey, Is better than sacrifice, That it's the spirit, That submits, To the Lord's will, For our life, That God is interested in, And if we're not Christians, This evening, The first thing, God wants us to do, Submit to the claims of Christ, Accept, His Lord's Lord, With all that, That involves, And if we are, His people, He wants us like Mary, And every step, We take, To yield, To him, And to give our all, To him, Whom we say, We believe, Gave his all, For us, So Mary is special, Mary's a saint, Mary submits, To the Lord's will,

For her life, And then we read, In Luke chapter 1, Of Mary's song, And someone says, That this is a hymn, Of true humility, Before the Lord, I don't want to go into it, In any detail this evening, But in the song, Mary praises God, For what he's done for her, A poor peasant girl, Praising the Lord, Do we praise the Lord, For all that he's been doing, In our lives, In her song, She says, That the mercy of God, Extends from generation, To generation, She acknowledges, The loving kindness, Of the Lord, His mercy extends, To those who fear, From generation, To generation, That includes this generation, In which we find ourselves, Living tonight, Can I ask, Has his mercy, Extended towards you, Of course it has,

Can I ask further, Have you accepted, That mercy, Which has extended, Towards you, In the gospel, That's what Mary, Praised God for, That his mercy, Was to extend, From generation, To generation, Do you praise God, For that, Why should you, Why should we receive, God's mercy, Because Mary goes on, To contrast, The mercy of God, With the judgment, Of God, On those who do not, Fear him, We saw this morning, God did not, Send his son, Into the world, To condemn the world, But to save the world, Through him, We saw that, We have but two choices, We either accept, And are no longer, Under condemnation, Or we reject, And are therefore, Condemned already, Mary says in her song, That the mercy of God, Is to be seen, In sharp contrast, With God's dealings, With those who are proud,

[22 : 19] In their inmost thoughts, With those, Who will, Set themselves up, God will bring them down, And God will lift, The humble, Mary's song has, Mary's magnifica, Has so, So much, To teach us, Mary tells us too, That the manifestation, Of God's mercy, In Christ, Is the fulfillment, Of the promises made, By the prophets of old, Do you recognize, In Jesus Christ, The fulfillment, Of all the messianic, Prophecies, Of God, Do you tonight, Have a new song, In your heart, Rejoicing, In God, Your saviour, Mary's magnifica, Speaks to us clearly, Of how important it is, That we in our lives, That we, Not only glorify God, But that we actually know, What it is to enjoy God,

Mary's magnifica, Shows that, It is the favour of God, That makes us rich, And that adds no sorrow, And Mary's magnifica, Magnifica, Also, Also, Speaks to us, Of how very, Passionate, A matter, Salvation is, Now, Now, I'm not going to, Elaborate further, Further on the magnifica tonight, Tonight, But clearly, But clearly, As Hannah, As Hannah, Had a song, We studied, We studied that song, A four-day ago, So here, Mary also, Has a song, And if we're the Lord's people, We too have a song, This is my story, This is my song, Praising my saviour, All the day long, If I know anything, Of God's mercy to me in Christ, If I know anything, Of what it is, To have God, Lift me up, And fill my hungry soul, With good things, Then, No less than Mary, I have a right, To sing,

Of the Lord's grace, And of the Lord's goodness, Towards me, So I have to ask, Has the Lord put this new song, In your mouth, And in your heart, The song of Mary, Well, What have we seen so far, Mary was special, We've seen that, Haven't we, Mary was a saint, Mary was prepared, To submit, To the Lord's will, Mary had this, New song on her lips, Because of the joy, That she knew, In her heart, And Mary was prepared, To devote herself, To serve, Her Lord, Mary didn't just, Give him birth, Mary was prepared, To bring him up, To love him, And to care for him, She presented him, At the temple, As we saw, In our reading, And she could only afford, To bring a pair of pigeons, She didn't have much, Of this world's goods, Her husband,

His stepfather, If you call it that, That was someone, Who had to, Eat out a living, As a carpenter, Make ends meet, But Mary, Mary, Did what she could, For her Lord, Mary, Looked after him, Lovingly, And willingly, And Mary, Fulfilled, All her parental obligations, Towards her son, And Mary, Was someone, Who, Delighted, In her soul, As she saw her son, Grow, Spiritually, And physically, And in favour with man, And with God, I think I got that, The wrong way around, But we read there, At the end of verse, 52, Of chapter 2, That, After the incident, In the temple, At the age of 12, Which was a very interesting incident, At which we look at, No doubt, In some other occasion, Mary was the one, Who seemed to realise,

More than anyone else, The spiritual significance, Of what happened, You remember the story, There we have it, The boy Jesus at the temple, Luke 2, 41, Through to 52, The story of how, He went up to the temple, And of how, His parents, Didn't realise, That he was no longer, In their company, And how they went back, And found him, In the temple courts, And his mother said to him, Son, Why have you treated us, Like this, Your father and I, Have been anxiously, Searching for you, Why were you, Searching for me, He asked, Didn't you know, I had to be in my father's house, But they did not understand, What he was saying to them, Now, If that was all we were told, We might conclude, That, That, That Mary was at fault here, And of course, There's a sense in which she was, Mary like all of us, Couldn't take it all in, But this to me, Is the significant bit, Then he went down to Nazareth with them, And was obedient to them, But his mother,

[27 : 27] Pressured, All those things in her heart, And I think that phrase, Pressured all those things in her heart, Is telling us, More than it might appear to be telling us, On the surface, I think it's telling us, That she really, Came to understand, And love, All that her son stood for, She began to see, More and more, As time went on, The spiritual significance, Of having such a son, Entrusted to her, And she was prepared, It would appear, For 30 years, To lovingly, Care for, This special son, And what a joy, It was to have given her, As she saw Jesus, Growing, Developing, In wisdom and stature, And in favour, With God, And man, She was a model mother, From birth, Till the time,

He began his public ministry, She served him, In every way, She could, Can I ask, This evening, Are we doing all that we can, For our Lord, As I said, Mary couldn't give him much, In terms of this world's grace, But she gave him her love, She gave him her care, She gave him all that she had, That's what the Lord, Asks of us, What can I give him, Poor as I am, If I were a rich man, I would bring a lamb, What can I give, Give him my heart, That's what the Lord, Is looking for, He wants us to give him our hearts, That we might enter, Into his service, Can it be said of you, Regarding Christ, He has done, She has done, What she could do, How many of us, This evening, Are serving the Lord,

Even as Mary sought, To serve her, Well if we are, Like Mary, We will almost, Inevitably, Have our, Fair measure too, Of sadness, And of suffering, And of sorrow, So far, So far, Most of what we have, Said, Would speak of, The beloved, Way in which God viewed, Mary, His child, But I mentioned, At the beginning, That although she was beloved, There was bitterness, In her life also, As an infant, As we saw, Jesus was blessed, By Simeon, And what was it, Mary was told, Mary was told, This, By Simeon, There, In verse, Whatever it is, In Luke chapter, Chapter 2, Verse 50, Whatever, That a sword, Would pierce, There we have it, Verse 35, And a sword, Will pierce,

Your own, Soul too, There she is, Presenting this, Eight year old, Loved son of hers, In the temple, And she's told, That a sword, Would pierce, Her heart, Delight, And darkness, At the same time, There she, Realizes, That the son, Is going to suffer, As no other son, Has ever suffered, There were many things, That she had to keep, To herself, That she had to, Treasure, Ponder, In her heart, She knew, That the time, Was going to come, When her son, Would suffer, For the sins, Of the world, There was a sense, In which, She was conscious, Of it, Perhaps increasingly, As time went on, Because the Bible, Tells us, That Jesus,

Didn't just suffer, For our sins, On the cross, The Bible, Tells us, That he was a man, Of sorrow, And acquainted, With grief, A veil, Is drawn over, Much of his, First thirty years, But during, His public ministry, There is much, Evidence of suffering, In this man's, Life, She even, Had the, The very, Human heartache, Of seeing her son, Leave home, Never again, To return, He went away, And when he, Went back, To preach to his, Own people, In Nazareth, They pried, To stone him, They pried, To put him to death, And he went away, And never came back, She had the heartache, The sadness, The sorrow, Of seeing her, Own son, Rejected, By her own people, And how that, Must have, Grieved her, How that, Must have, Cut her, To the queen, And yet, Mary, Recognised, All along, Who her son was,

[32 : 32] She was prepared, To encourage others, To acknowledge, His every word, Has been the word of God, John 2, The story of the miracle, Of the water into wine, Whatever he says, To you, Do you, There in that, Interesting incident, Jesus doesn't even, Call her mother, He calls her, Dear woman, Perhaps indicating, That there was no, A change, In that relationship, He wasn't being, Called and aloof, He wasn't, Cutting her off, He speaks to her, In very warm terms, Dear woman, But by his very use, Of the word, Woman, There is evidence, That now, He has, Gone away from home, Never to return, He has now engaged, On a ministry, From which, He simply, Cannot go back, And there was a time, As I've already said, When Mary, Couldn't understand, What he was doing, When Mary, And her family, And her family, And her family, Came to try, And reason with him,

To try, And talk, Sense into him, Jesus was told, Your mother, And your brothers, Are here, They're looking for you, And Jesus said, Who are my mother, And my brothers, And then he looked, At those who were seated, Around him, And he said, Here are my mother, And my sister, And my brothers, Whoever does, God's will, Is my brother, And sister, And mother, In other words, Belongs, To my family, But she must have, Felt it keenly, There must have been, This genuine confusion, Even this, This suffering, As she, As she sees her son, Go off on a, Into a ministry, That she couldn't, Fully understand, And even though, She knew him, As her saviour, And knew that, It was the work, Of redemption, That he was to be accomplished, That he was to accomplish, Yet, She had to go through, The awful act, At last,

Of seeing her son, Nailed, To that awful cross, Near the cross, Of Jesus, We read, In John 19, Stood, His mother, And his mother's sister, Mary, The mother of Clopas, And Mary of Magdala, When Jesus, Saw his mother there, And the disciple, Whom he loved, Standing, Nearby, He said to his mother, Here is your son, And to the disciple, Here is, Your mother, And from that time, The disciple, And it seemed to have been John, Took her, Into his own home, The priest calls this, The word of, Affection, That came, From the cross, But here, As she stands, Courageously, Beside the cross, We can only, We can only attempt,

To, To understand, The sorrow, And the suffering, That she must have, Experienced, In her soul, There is, There is the son, Whom she was so privileged, To bring into the world, There is the son, Whom she knows, To be her saviour, And is despised, And rejected, He is desolate, And derelict, He is dying, The people are blaspheming, In every sense, The lights have gone out, But Mary's land, Hasn't been extinguished, Nor has her faith, Nor has her hope, She is no stranger, To sorrow, But there has been, No sorrow like this sorrow, And there she stands, Silently suffering, As she sees, The effect, Of her own sin, And the sin, Of all for whom he died, On her son, What suffering,

Can be deeper than that, The conviction, The brokenness, That she must have, Known in her soul, How passionate, It must have been, How important, It must have been, As she realized, That he is there, For her, As he is, For all his people, And that, What her sins deserved, He, Lovingly, Takes in her place, Let me ask you, This evening, As I, Ask myself, Do you know anything, Of this sorrow, As you see, What your sins, Have done, To the son of God, Do you know anything, Of what it is, To shed tears, In your soul, Tears, Of sadness, And at the same time, Tears of joy, As you realize, That he suffered, For your sins, Because he loved you, And was prepared, To go all the way, To preach, For you,

[37 : 44] Does the story, Of Bethlehem, Take you to Calvary, Does the child, In the manger, Take you, To the man, On the cross, And as you survey, His life, And see him, Bearing your sin, Himself, In his own body, To that cross, Do you know anything, Of what it means, To enter with him, Into the fellowship, Of suffering, For his sake, Well it's clear, And this is the last point, The very last, It's clear, That Mary, Not only understood, What was happening, But accepted, That salvation, Which her son, Had come to bring her, Because the last, Sight, We have of Mary, Is in Acts chapter 1, Where we read, That after the ascension,

The disciples, Returned to Jerusalem, And all joined in prayer, In an upper room, Along with the woman, And Mary, The mother of Jesus, And his brothers, The last glimpse, We have of Mary, In the Bible, Is of a woman, Who's worshipping her God, There in the upper room, Worshipping that son, Of hers, Whom she knows, To be the son of God, Joining together, Taking her place, With God's people, Praising his name, For what I would do, Has this sight, Ever been seen, Of you by God, Has God, Ever seen you, Where he saw Mary, With his people, Praising his name,

Participating, In the prayer meeting, To the glory of Christ, And patiently waiting, For the Lord, To come, And show them, What he wanted them to do, In this, That lay ahead, Is that where he finds us, This evening, They were waiting there, For the spirit, That when the spirit, Would come, They would go and serve, This, With an ascended Christ, As he views, This congregation tonight, Pulpit and, And seat alike, Does he see us, As a people, Who like Mary, And the disciples, And the woman folk, Are joining together, In prayer, Praising the Lord, And prepared to do, Whatever he wants us, To do, Mary was special, So are we, If we're the Lord's people, Mary was our saint,

So are we, If we're the Lord's people, Mary was submissive, So must we be, If we're the Lord's people, Mary served the Lord, So must we, If we're his people, Mary knew suffering, And so will we, If we are prepared, To identify ourselves, Fully with Christ, Mary was seen, By God, And is still seen, By God tonight, With his people, Praising his name, Is that where he sees you, Is that where he sees me, This evening, May it be the case, For his glory is sake, Amen, Lord, May it be thankful, For your word, And even although, We may have, Glossed over certain, Passages this evening, That we might have considered, We pray that enough, Has been said, That would encourage us, To seek, To follow, Mary's example, In so far as she, Followed her Lord,

Give us all grace, So to do, For Jesus' sake, Amen. Amen.