

Last Wednesday, you heard the reading of Mary being **Overshadowed by the power of the Most High**. We often gloss over this but it is actually quite significant. It is significant because this language of *overshadowing* is the language the Old Testament uses for the Glory and Presence of God. And it is also significant because we hadn't seen this Glory of the Lord in nearly 500 years.

As our liturgy says, we saw this Glory of the Lord in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. And of course, the resting place of this Glory of the Lord was in the tabernacle as it overshadowed the ark of the covenant

But we hadn't seen it since the ark was destroyed and the Glory of the Lord left his people. But now...this Glory of the Lord has returned and overshadows the new and true ark of the covenant. Certainly, you remember this ark of the covenant? Covered in gold. Inside was placed a jar of manna, the rod of Aaron the high priest, and the original tablets of stone upon which God inscribed His words. It was the seat of God Himself and it was glorious.

But it was just a prototype.

The true ark is not a box. It is a woman.

The true ark of the covenant wasn't covered in gold, it was covered in the purity and humility of the virgin Mary.

The true ark of the covenant doesn't hold in it just some manna from the wilderness but holds in her womb the very bread of life who has come down from heaven to give His Body as True Food.

The True Ark of the Covenant doesn't just hold in itself the rod of the High Priest, Aaron (Ex 17:1-5). But it carries the True High Priest (John 17; Heb 5:6) who will "rule the nations with a rod of iron" (Rev 12:5).

The True Ark of the Covenant does not just contain the word of God written on stone tablets (Ex 25:8-16) but carries in her womb the Incarnate Word of God written on flesh.

The true ark of the covenant is not a box. It is a woman. The fullness of God dwelt bodily not in any vessel made with human hands but in a womb.

The true ark of the covenant is named Mary, the Mother of God.

That old ark of the covenant, as grand and glorious as it was, was just a shadow—just a prototype. The language the Scriptures use to speak of Mary is the exact same language that is used to speak of the ark of the covenant.

And this *overshadow* word is the same word that is used to speak of the Glory of the Lord overshadowing the ark of the covenant.

We see in the reading of the visitation, that Mary takes a trip into the hill country of Judah. In 2 Samuel, we see that the ark of the covenant made the exact same trip.

And on that trip when ark of the covenant once came to David, he said “**How can**

**the ark of the LORD come to me?”** (2 Samuel 6:9). Now Mary comes to Elizabeth who says the same thing **why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?**

Then David brought the ark of the covenant back with shouting and blessing (2 Sam 6:15). Now, as the true Ark is welcomed into her home, Elizabeth exclaims, **“Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!”** And this word that Luke uses for Elizabeth exclaiming is only ever used in the Old Testament in connection with the Ark.

Then David, dressed as a priest danced before the ark of the covenant (2 Sam 14, 16; 1 Chr 15:29) as John the Baptist son of the priest dances in the womb of Elizabeth as Mary approached. Then the ark remained there for 3 months (2 Sam 6:10-11) as Mary also stays with Elizabeth 3 months.

Mary is the Ark of the Covenant in whom all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell. As the ark, she is the burning bush which holds divine fire but is yet unconsumed. She is the one who can contain the uncontainable God. She bears Him who bears us all. In her womb revived fallen Adam and wipes the tears of eve.

Mary teaches us why all of this matters when she sings her *Magnificat*, this song of great reversal. The whole *Magnificat* is one of reversal where everything is flipped

on its head. That **the Mighty one has done great things** to her so that **His name might be holy**. God has **exalted the humble, filled the hungry, cast down the mighty, and sent the rich away empty**. This is the significance that Mary teaches us, that now in this new ark of the covenant, God has been made man so that man might become like God. That now in this new ark of the covenant, named Mary, the great reversal of all things has begun.

Lutherans often shy away from speaking of the Mother of God because of the abuses of the Roman Church. Let this not be so among you. It matters how we speak of Mary because the way we speak of Mary makes a difference in how we speak of Jesus. The Augsburg Confession teaches that we hold the Divine Service in greater reverence and devotion than do our Roman Catholic brothers and sisters. In the same way, we also hold Mary in greater reverence than they do because we hold her in the reverence which God has given her and which she herself demands. Let us rather hold in her in higher reverence than they do by speaking of her as the Scriptures do:

**Hail Mary full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb!** She truly is blessed among women because of the Fruit of her womb.

To Him who is virgin-born be all **T** glory forever and ever.

Let us stand that we may sing this song of the blessed virgin.