

Rev. Derek Fairman

5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter C

This day I will continue to explore how Mary is the Ark of the New Covenant by the different names of the old Ark. I mentioned before the Ark of the Covenant, the Ark of the Lord, the Ark of Holiness and the Ark of Splendor. Another possible name is the Ark of the Commandments. The Ark would have been called the Ark of the Commandments because the Ark contained the two stone tablets on which were inscribed the Ten Commandments. The Ark also served to remind the Israelites of the Commandments that God had given them.

In a unique way, Mary was a kind of Ark of the Old Commandments. What do I mean? We should have no doubt that Mary followed the commandments of the Old Law of Moses. We know that in the Lord's Infancy, she had the Lord Jesus circumcised in accordance with the Law, and that when the time came, she also presented the Lord Jesus in the Temple, in accordance with the Law of Moses.

Mary was obedient to the Lord in every way, and her obedience to God's will and to His commandments was reminiscent of the faith of Abraham. We could say that Mary embodied the commandments of the Lord in her whole being. She took the Lord's commands in the Old Law and she made them her own, not just following them begrudgingly but following them with joy. By her taking the commandments of the Lord as her own and by following them in perfect obedience, Mary was a kind of ark or vessel of those commandments, figuratively speaking.

Whenever the angel came to announce the Good News to Mary that God's plan for her was to be the Mother of His Son, she found joy and she told the angel that she was the handmaid of the Lord. The Lord took her in a direction that went beyond the commandments of the Old Law, and yet her obedience to God's will meant that she accepted what the Lord had in store for her. Whenever the Lord Jesus did come, He dwelt in her womb for nine months. Just as the old Ark of the Commandments held the stone tablets within it, so Mary held the very Word of God within her for nine months.

We hear in the Gospel today that the Lord gave His disciples a new commandment: to love one another. That is how others will be able to tell that they are the Lord Jesus' disciples: by their love for one another. This commandment to love one another is new, but is also the fulfillment of all the commands of the Old Testament. The Law and the prophets are summed up in the new commandment to love God and neighbor.

What about Mary? She made the transition, like the Apostles and the other disciples, from the Old Law to the New Law, from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant, from the Old Commandments to the New Commandment to love one another. She did love God and she found a love for everyone. She embodied the Lord's command to love one another.

We also remember that God is love, and that the Lord Jesus is love Himself. For nine months, she held within her womb Love Himself, and the author of all love. If the New Commandment is love, then Mary held within herself the One who is love, so in that way she is the New Ark because love dwelt within her.

However, she also was filled with love, not just for her Son, but everyone, especially those who would follow her Son. Just as she embodied the commandments of the Old Law and followed them, so Mary would embrace the new teachings of her Son and follow His New Commandment. She carried the Lord's New Commandment to love others in her heart and soul and made this New Commandment her own.

This New Commandment was not the only way in which she embodied her Son's instructions. The Lord Jesus also told us: be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. Did Mary not give the Apostles and the other disciples an example of perfection? Of course, she did, and she was perfect in all matters of faith and morals. The Lord also stressed the importance of being holy, just as He was holy. Was Mary not holy? Yes, she was holy and provided the other disciples of the Lord with an example to follow.

We might also think of some of the descriptions that the Lord gave about how to live in the Kingdom of God. We might recall the Lord telling us that in the next life, the saints are chaste as are the angels, who do not marry nor are given in marriage. Did Mary not live the angelic life, along with the Apostles? Yes, Mary lived out her virginal state in perfect chastity. What about the parable about the five wise virgins and the five foolish virgins? Did Mary not embody the wisdom of the five wise virgins, waiting vigilantly for the Lord to rise again after His death? Yes, she possessed the hope and faith in the Lord's promise to rise again.

By her life, especially after the Lord's Ascension, Mary provided the disciples with an example of how to take the Lord's instructions seriously and how to live them. Even her Assumption is a way in which she provided an example: as she was taken up to Heaven, some day we too will make our way to our heavenly home, provided that we are faithful to the Lord Jesus just as she was faithful.

What does this mean for us? It means that we can be sure that Mary watches over us as a spiritual mother, because she embodies the Lord's command to love one another. She is our spiritual mother, and she has a deep and abiding love for each one of us. She will respond to our needs, whatever they may be. Her desire to carry out the Lord's command to love each other is seen in her spiritual motherhood for us.

Beyond that, she also gives us an example to follow. Mary teaches us to be like the five wise virgins, by being the wise Virgin herself, and to be like the angels by living an angelic life. She teaches us to love others by giving us her maternal care. Mary made the commandment of love her own, and we know Mary by her maternal care for us.

As we approach the altar this day, we call to mind again the Lord's command, to love one another. We can be sure that the Mother of God helps us to do that whenever we ask her for help. As she helped the Apostles and the other disciples, so she will help us. Mary embodies this commandment to love one another, and she made this commandment of love her own. She can help us to make the Lord's commandment to love our own, so that we can have the Lord's love in our own hearts and souls.