Hi,

The third Saturday in isolation and, I admit, it gets a bit discouraging at times as the days pile up. I know how hard this must be on some of you . . . but it is Palm Sunday weekend and the beginning of Holy Week. This one will be a lot different from any others we’ve shared, but we can still pray and worship together from day to day.

Here’s a few updates:

* **My Sunday class will meet on-line tomorrow, at noon**, not 11am. **It will be on** [**my Facebook page**](https://www.facebook.com/scottengle), just like the weekday classes that have met the last two weeks. You do not need a Facebook account to view the class, but you will need an account to comment. Just follow the link to my page. If you and I are not friends on Facebook, just send me a friend request and we will be. We will be walking through Holy Week in the class, with lots of maps and photos.
* We invite you to download the EasterNow app and journey together as a church family through Holy Week towards the cross of Good Friday and the celebration of Easter Sunday. Experience the events of Holy Week in real time through the convenience of your phone. [Click here for more information on the app and all of the Holy Week worship times](https://www.standrewumc.org/news/holyweek).
* I’ve attached the Bible Study for tomorrow, Palm Sunday.
* The links to my on-line classes, the video recordings of the classes, the class audio podcasts, and the archive of these daily emails can all be found at [www.scottengle.org](http://www.scottengle.org/). This week’s videos and podcasts are all uploaded.

You don’t have to spend much time on Facebook to see the strain that this crisis is putting on many mothers. Certainly, once this is over, schoolteachers will be appreciated as they have never been before. So, today, let’s reflect on the story of a mother.

***Luke 1:26-31***

**In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. And he came to her and said, “Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.” But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus.**

***John 19:25b-27***

**Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, “Woman, here is your son.” Then he said to the disciple, “Here is your mother.” And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.**

***Acts 1:12-14***

**Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a sabbath day’s journey away. When they had entered the city, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying, Peter, and John, and James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers.**

Other than her place of honor in the annual Christmas pageant, Mary is largely ignored by Protestants. Part of this is Protestant reaction against the extreme Roman Catholic veneration of Mary. Part of it may be simple neglect. Regardless, it is time for Protestants to recover our appreciation for and understanding of the Blessed Virgin Mary while avoiding the extremes.

*Birth, Life, Death . . . Resurrection*

Of all the people who crossed paths with Jesus during the course of his life on earth, only his mother, Mary, was with Jesus each step of the way. In the Gospels and Acts, Mary appears at key points in Jesus life. Of course, as wonderfully told by Luke, Mary’s story begins with God’s choice of her to be Jesus’ mother (Luke 1:27-56; 2:1-40). Despite being unmarried and thirteen or so, when God calls Mary she responds in faith and obedience. Martin Luther wrote that Mary is the embodiment of God’s grace; a grace that enables faith. In a recent essay, Timothy George wrote, “Mary was a disciple of Christ *before* she was his mother . . . She is called blessed not because of her virginity or even her humility, but because she was chosen as the person and place where God's glory would enter most deeply into the human story.”

In the one Gospel story from Jesus’ youth, Mary upbraids him for abandoning the family in Jerusalem when he went to the temple alone (Luke 2:41-52). Jesus was respectful to his mother, but his words must have cut right into her heart. Jesus’ first public miracle results from Mary’s insistence that Jesus help out at a wedding feast (John 2:1-5). Later, perhaps fearing that Jesus had lost his mind, Mary seeks to protect him from the crowds (Mark 3:20-35), only to hear Jesus redefine his family as those who do God’s will. Only a parent could fully appreciate the hurt Mary must have felt. These three episodes illustrate that being Jesus’ mother must have been difficult at times – long before Mary had to confront her son’s horrifying and humiliating death on a Roman cross.

At Jesus’ crucifixion, when the crowds have all left, Mary is still there, with John and Mary Magdalene (John 19:25-27). While hanging on the cross, Jesus commends his mother to John’s care. By doing so, Jesus ensures that not only will his mother not be left destitute and alone, but that she will also be explicitly welcomed into the new family that Jesus has created. She stays with the disciples after Jesus’ resurrection and ascension and is with them in Jerusalem as they all await the arrival of the promised Helper and Comforter (Acts 1:12-14).

*The Serene Contradiction*

Kathleen Norris speaks of Mary as a “serene contradiction.” Norris writes, “I think that many Protestants, if they think about Mary at all, get hung up on what they are supposed to believe about her. And she doesn't make it easy. . . . The point about Mary is that she is [many] things, and more, always more. She is poor yet gloriously rich. She is blessed among women yet condemned to witness her son's execution. She is human yet God-bearer, and the Word that she willingly bears is destined to pierce her soul. Had we a more elastic imagination, we might be less troubled by Mary's air of serene contradiction.”

Perhaps the place for us to begin recovering our appreciation of Mary is to see in her a magnificent model of total trustful devotion to God. When an angel comes to her, announcing that God has chosen her, Mary’s reply is simple: “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word” (Luke 1:38). Mary responds to God with trusting obedience, knowing the “real-world” consequences of an unmarried pregnancy. Her devotion to her son would endure all the way to his crucifixion and death. Christ may have been abandoned, even by Peter, but Mary stayed true. The faith of all was preserved in this one person, this Blessed Mother.

*In keeping with prior weeks, Saturday is a recommendation-free zone.*

‘til Monday, grace and peace,

Scott