

OCTOBER 11 2025 FATHER ERNIE DE CICCIO

A really short Gospel reading today. But as always, with a few words, Jesus is able to say so much: "Blessed are those who hear the word of God, and obey it."

This woman in the crowd yells the word "blessed" to Jesus. But she doesn't say, "Blessed are you, Jesus." Instead, she says, "Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts that nursed you."

And she's right, because Jesus' mother was blessed indeed—to carry in her womb the author of life, to nurse him, to raise him. But as much as Mary was blessed, she also had a sword piercing her soul, her heart. Because she would have to see that child grow up, be nailed to a cross, and die.

But still, we call Mary blessed. Saint Elizabeth says that at the visitation: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb." The Blessed Virgin Mary.

What does it mean to be blessed? Some people think that being blessed means having a life free of problems—"La dolce vita," as we say in Italian. But being blessed does not mean that our life is free of problems. Jesus makes that point: "Blessed are those who hear the word of God, and obey it."

He does not say, "Blessed are those who never have a health problem." He doesn't say, "Blessed are those who become rich." He doesn't say, "Blessed are those who get to travel around the whole world." Or, "Blessed are those who have lots of kids." Or even, "Blessed are those who have no kids."

No—"Blessed are those who hear the word of God, and obey it."

Do we count our blessings that way? Most of the time, we don't think of ourselves as blessed. We think of ourselves as cursed, because we focus too much on the problems, on everything that's gone wrong in our life, or even in the course of a single day.

Time and again, Jesus tries to turn things around: "Focus on the positive!" I know I kind of harp on this in some of my messages, but this is one of the few things we can control in our life. Are we going to be positive, or negative? We can control that.

And Jesus always points us in the right direction. He reminds us that we are blessed—blessed to believe, blessed to have faith, the faith that gives us the courage and strength to go on each day, the faith that wipes away our many tears, the faith that fills us with hope.

We are blessed because we have heard God's word, and we get to hear it every day—whenever we attend this TV Mass, or Mass at church. And on Sundays, we're blessed because we're being fed and nourished by words that are better than the words we hear on the soap operas, or on the news. The words of God, being spoken to us.

Yes, they were written a long time ago, but they're just as new and fresh every time we hear them: "Blessed are those who hear the word of God, and obey it."

Because the word of God is not just poetry meant to make us feel good for a moment. It teaches us how to live our life. And of course, Jesus taught us—by his words, and by his example most of all.

Mary was blessed, indeed, because she carried Jesus in her womb, because she raised him. And she didn't stop being blessed when she had to stand at the foot of his cross. We're blessed just the same.

We may not get to carry Jesus in our womb, but we carry Jesus in our hearts and in our souls. And because we have him there—even if we don't win the lottery, even if we have to end up in the hospital sometimes, even if some of our relationships break down, even if we fail at certain projects—we know that God is with us, holding us in his loving arms.

So rejoice, and be glad. Even with tears on your faces, rejoice and be glad, knowing that always and everywhere, we are blessed by our God.

And all God asks us to do is to continue to listen to him—not to the negative voices that try to drown him out. Listen to the voice of God. And put those beautiful words into practice each day.

And God does not ask that much of us. One commandment: love. Just continue to love, even if it hurts sometimes.

I tell our young people all the time: never close your hearts to love. Because if you don't love, you don't live.

Jesus loved until it hurt. And that's the holy word that he's always giving us: just love. No matter what life throws at you.

That's what it means to obey the word of God: love, no matter what. And then you'll feel even more strongly the presence of Jesus, in your heart, and in your soul.