

TEXT SERMONS – SEVEN SAYINGS OF THE SUFFERING SAVIOR

SAYING #3

“MOTHER”

John 19:25-27

“Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, “Woman, behold your son!” Then He said to the disciple, “Behold your mother!” And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home.”

As we draw near to the cross of Jesus Christ again, let us be aware of the entire scene: there are the Roman soldiers going about their gruesome task of crucifying three persons who had been condemned to death; there are other soldiers gambling for Jesus garment; nearby are religious leaders who had called for Jesus crucifixion; beyond them was the mob of sensation seeking spectators. But wait, huddling there near the cross is a mother and a young man looking up at Jesus affectionately.

Look now, away from the people, to the Person on that central cross. His eyes move from side to side scanning the crowd and then He fixes them on a spot below His feet. His lips part and for the third time He speaks. *“Woman, behold your son!” Then He said to the disciple, “Behold your mother!”*

The first of His spoken words were a prayer, “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.” In His second sentence spoken from the cross He had given a promise to a dying thief who believed in Him saying, “Today you will be with me in Paradise.” Now, in this His third statement from the cross He speaks to His mother and to John, a close friend and disciple. This is a most tender scene, the significance of which must not escape us. Let us focus upon this scene and statement to our own profit.

THE AWARENESS THAT JESUS POSSESSED.

Crucifixion was a most horrible and torturous form of death. Think of the intense agony He must have been suffering: He was bleeding from five putrefying wounds, His bodily weight had pulled His bones out of joint and His life’s blood was draining fast away. The sheer physical pain is unimaginable.

Then there was the shame He was suffering by being suspended between earth and heaven without clothing. The writer of the book of Hebrews wrote that He *“endured the cross, despising the shame.”* (Heb.12:2) And then there was the hurling of insults. Matthew informs us that some *“reviled Him”* (Matt.27:39); some *“mocked Him”* (Matt.27:41); the religious leaders chided Him saying, *“He saved others; Himself He cannot save”* (Matt.27:42); while others said, *“If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross”* (Matt.27:40).

And remember that before He arrived at Calvary He had been flogged unmercifully, a crown of thorns had been pressed upon His head and He had been forced to carry His cross part

way up the hill before He collapsed under its weight. The brutality He endured is incomprehensible!

The Consciousness That He Evidenced.

Pain has a way of narrowing our focus, of shutting out others. It causes us to be almost totally self-absorbed. We are occupied with trying to deal with the discomfort and misery that we are experiencing. It is difficult to look beyond our pain and see the pain of others.

But Jesus, although His pain and needs are so overwhelming, still looks beyond Himself and sees the pain and the needs of others. While enduring all the terrible torment He was experiencing, He was concerned about His mother. He is aware of His mother who is about to lose her oldest son. He wants to make sure that she is taken care of and looked after.

This is important to note because some have suggested that when Jesus spoke from the cross He was delirious, not knowing what He was saying. However, the fact that He recognized His mother and thought of her welfare is proof that Jesus was in control of His mental faculties.

He had already prayed for His enemies and had given a helpless thief hope for the future. Now He deliberately surveyed the scene and searched out the two persons who were nearest and dearest to Him, and, recognizing them, spoke directly to them. This is proof that He was not hallucinating or delusional.

In John 19:26 we read that Jesus *"saw his mother, and the disciple."* He was fully conscious, fully aware, fully alert, completely rational. He knew what was happening, He knew who was present with Him, He knew what He must do. His words did not come from a delirious mind.

The Control That He Exercised.

Jesus Christ reigned from the cross! He was in control. He was giving orders, taking care of predicted business, directing His loved ones. His life was not being taken from Him. He said, *"I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again."* (John 10:17,18) He would die when He determined that He had finished everything for which His Father had sent Him and not one moment before.

This was God in human flesh. He had come into the world by a miracle birth; He performed miracle after miracle in His life, raising the dead, walking upon the water, healing the blind, deaf and lame, multiplying bread and fish to feed thousands, calming storms with a word. Now, on the cross, He was not being controlled, He was in control! He said, *"I gave My back to those who struck Me, and My cheeks to those who plucked out the beard; I did not hide My face from shame and spitting."* (Isaiah 50:6)

He had said, *"Do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels?"* (Matthew 26:53) A Roman legion was approximately six-thousand soldiers. Jesus said He could call for twelve legions of angels or more than seventy-two thousand angels to deliver Him. However, He did not! Why? He came to "give

his life a ransom for many." (Matthew 20:28) That was what He was doing upon that cross and He was in complete control of the events. One might ask, "Who was controlling whom?"

THE TENDERNESS THAT JESUS EXPRESSED.

Jesus was performing the greatest work ever done on earth for the human race, paying the redemptive price for sinful humanity. Yet right in the midst of this transaction He looked down from the cross and fixed His eyes upon His mother.

The Concern Of A Mother.

I believe that one of the most touching statements in all of the Bible is in John 19:25 where we read, "*Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother.*"

Mary stood at the foot of the cross. A mother looking up at her Son nailed to an old rugged cross. How she must have suffered to see her son wrongly accused, unjustly tried and now being put to death! Mary standing beneath the cross – no other could have told the story of Jesus like Mary. Yet there are no recorded words from her about this ordeal. Her silence said it all. She, more than anyone on earth knew why the cross. Yet in her sorrow, her silence and submissiveness she spoke volumes.

Perhaps she recalled the words of God's special angel Gabriel:

"Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end." (Luke 1:30-33)

And Simeon's prophecy in the temple when Jesus was eight days old: "*Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, "Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against, yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also....."* (Luke 2:34-35)

Matthew tells us that "all the disciples forsook him and fled." (Matt. 26:56) But Mary stood by - "*there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother.*" Mary stood; Mary stood by the cross. How like a mother! And Jesus saw her.

The Compassion of a son.

The considerateness of Jesus for His mother is a model of love for all and for all time. We see Him being forgetful of His own excruciating sufferings to provide for His own mother. He understands her own loneliness because He was known as the lonely Galilean. She was a widow and since Jesus is the oldest son He was responsible to take care of his mother in her old age. Jesus is fulfilling the most basic and sacred obligation that any son ever had by living out the 5th Commandment found in Exodus 20:12: "*Honor your father and mother...*" Even while performing redemption, Jesus was faithful to His responsibilities as a son.

The first time Mary is mentioned in the Gospel of John she is attending a wedding at Cana. Now she is preparing for a burial at Calvary. We can assume that she is a widow since we

don't hear about Joseph again after the trip to Jerusalem when Jesus was twelve. As the first-born son, Jesus was responsible to make sure she was cared for. He was not willing to die and leave anything undone that He ought to do and so He arranged for His mother's care and welfare.

THE BUSINESS THAT JESUS ADDRESSED.

When Jesus was twelve years old, He was temporarily missed by His mother and father and they found Him in the temple discoursing with the learned teachers of religion there. *"So when they saw Him, they were amazed; and His mother said to Him, "Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously." And He said to them, "Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?"* (Luke 2:48,49) Now, before He expires, He must be about the business that relates to His mother.

The Role He Assumed..

Jesus, seeing these two who He loved so much, said to them "Dear woman, here is your son" and to John , "Here is your mother." These words are very personal and they may even seem unusual. But they reveal a very loving Jesus, love flowing from a death instrument, a cross. He proved His love for His mother and yes, He proved His love for us! This dramatic scene teaches us about our roles as children and our responsibility to our parents.

Jesus was the older son in the family and normally His younger brothers would be given this role, passed down from their oldest brother. We know that Mary had other children, but we also know that they were very suspicious and unkind toward Jesus. That is, until after the resurrection when we find them with the other followers of Christ in the upper room in Acts 2:14: *"They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers."* But perhaps the problem was that they were not there. It might also have been that His brothers were not yet believers, not until after the resurrection, and Jesus wanted to entrust her to a believer. Jesus entrusted her to John.

Are you following the example of our Lord in caring for your parents? How do you treat your mother and father? The Bible says, *"Listen to your father who begot you, and do not despise your mother when she is old."* (Prov.23:22) I am disturbed to see a growing disregard and disrespect, on the part of some children and young people, toward their parents. But from the pulpit of the cross, and in His dying moments, Jesus preaches a sermon to all ages about our responsibility to our parents. May God help each one of us to hear and heed that sermon!

The Responsibility He Assigned.

John, who leaned upon Jesus' shoulder at the Last Supper in the Upper Room, was also at the cross. Although not named in the narrative, most scholars agree it was John. That is why John could write about this private moment by the cross. Seeing him, Jesus assigned to John the responsibility and privilege of caring for Mary. *"From that time on, this disciple took her into his home."* (John 19:27) Jesus did not have any earthly possessions to give to His mother. The soldiers had gambled for His beautiful robe. What could He give her? He gave to her a caregiver, the loving and caring disciple, John.

The Jews honored family life to the highest degree. They believed that the family was a

divine institution and therefore, had a great sense of responsibility to care for one another. They strictly obeyed the command to “*Honor your father and mother.*” (Exodus 20:12) In this, as in all other matters, Jesus was a wonderful example. Even the work of the world’s redemption did not keep Jesus from fulfilling His loving obligation to His bereaving mother.

John also is a model for us. He models obedience. He took Mary home to a house in Jerusalem and according to legend, took her with him when he later moved to Ephesus. John did not question Jesus by saying, “What about your brothers and sisters? Can’t they take care of your mother?” His obedience was immediate, joyful and sacrificial and is a good example for us to follow.

SUMMATION

Let us not miss the point in this touching scene on Calvary. It is this: in His dying moments, Jesus did not forget His earthly relationships. This must have been of the greatest encouragement to Mary throughout the remainder of her life. As she, accompanied by John, went down the hill of Calvary that day, I believe she took great comfort in the fact that Jesus had singled her out, that He remembered her!

Mary had not had an easy life. Perhaps as she stood at the foot of the cross that bore her Son, memories had flashed through her mind – the memory of the angel’s announcement that she, a virgin, would become the mother of the Savior; memories of the night of Jesus’ birth in the stable because there was no room in the inn; memories of their escape from Herod’s edict to kill the firstborn and their hurried journey to Egypt; memories of Jesus’ first sermon in His home synagogue in Nazareth after which the congregants tried to kill Him; memories of the last few days when He was arrested, tried, scourged and falsely condemned to die on that cross back up the hill down which she was now walking.

No, Mary’s life had not been easy. But this had been her darkest day. However, as she descended that gruesome hill called Calvary, she had a treasure tucked away in her heart that would see her through the remainder of her life until death ushered her into her Son’s presence again. That treasure was the memory of Jesus looking down at her and speaking to her and she looking up into His blood-stained face. Their eyes met – she saw His love as for a fleeting moment volumes passed between them. That, was the treasure that would comfort her the remainder of her life. However, there is another comforting thought that Mary treasured. She saw her Son, but she also saw her Savior! She knew who He really was and she had trusted Him as her Savior. Have you?

CONCLUSION

Yes, Jesus, on the cross, remembered His mother but He also remembered you and me. He gave His life to save us. However, all that He did was in vain as far as you personally are concerned, unless you repent of your sins and open your life to Him as your Savior and Lord. We need not go physically to the geographical spot called Calvary, but we can kneel before Him right where we are and embrace the embraceable Son of God and someday we can see Him, kneel before Him and thank Him for making us a part of His family!

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