

John 19:25-27 “What Jesus Did for His Mother at the Cross” **2

Main Idea: In John 19:25-27 we see a moving demonstration of the compassion of Jesus. He did something for His mother and for all who would follow Him.

- I. At the cross Jesus comforted His mother (26).
 - A. He fulfilled His duty as a Son.
 - B. He established His dominion as the Savior.
- II. At the cross Jesus commissioned John (27).
 - A. He gave him a new responsibility.
 1. John was to care for Mary.
 2. He was to be a substitute son.
 - B. He introduced a new relationship.
 1. Our bond in Christ is stronger than blood ties.
 2. We are part of an eternal family, the family of God.

Application: We have three responsibilities.

1. Believe that Jesus cares.
2. Become like Jesus in showing His care to others.
3. Begin at home.

Scripture Reading: Matthew 15:1-9

“Honor your father and mother (Exodus 20:12).” It’s not an option, but a privileged obligation. We are to give honor to our parents.

But what does that look like in real life? How do you honor a parent?

We’ll find no clearer answer than the one Jesus the Christ gave. He said He had come to fulfill the Law of God, which includes this command from the Decalogue.

Honor your father and mother.

Jesus did that. He lived a perfect life. Consequently, we can be sure that His treatment of His mother models for us perfectly what it’s involved in *giving honor* to one’s mother.

On this Mother’s Day, I’d like to take a close look at what Jesus did for His mother in the event recorded in John 19.

“John 19?” you say. “That’s the crucifixion account, isn’t it?”

Yes, it is. As you may recall, Jesus’ mother was actually at the scene of the cross. There Jesus did something very significant for her, something that teaches us some powerful lessons about how to honor a parent.

Of course, Jesus didn’t die on the cross merely to give us an example, for as sinners we need more than an example. We need salvation, and that’s what Jesus provided by shedding His precious blood. So to be clear, Jesus didn’t go to the cross merely to give us an example. But...He did give us an example, and we can learn much from meditating carefully on what He did for His mother at the cross.

What do we see when we look at Jesus hanging on the tree? To put it simply, we see One who cares. Indeed, no one has ever demonstrated such care. As the songwriter reflects...

*He cares, He cares, I know He cares.
His heart is touched with my grief.*

**Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

² For an earlier message from this text see the sermon at WBC preached 5/14/06.

*When the days are dreary, the long night's weary,
I know that Jesus cares.*

Yet if we are honest, we may at times wonder. It doesn't always *feel like* He cares, especially when the storm rages in life. It's then we need a fresh reminder of His care. Jesus gave us such a display of His care, at the cross.

While Jesus was being executed as a criminal on the cross, He uttered seven statements which the four gospels record for us. The first thing He said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing (Luke 23:34)." That's what they needed. That's what every sinner needs, including us. Forgiveness. And that's why He came. In fact, He went to the cross to provide the basis for a holy God to forgive sins, by Himself becoming the sin-bearer.

His second statement, recorded in Luke 23:43, reveals what He said to the repentant thief, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise." That's what the cross is all about, not merely an example for this life, but the provision of eternal life for those who will do what the thief did, repent and believe in Jesus.

Each of Jesus' seven sayings is worthy of careful consideration, but it's the third saying to which we will devote our attention this morning. It involves Jesus' mother. Luke is the only gospel writer to record Jesus' first two declarations. John alone records the third.

As we turn there, let's keep something in mind. Whenever we read the Scriptures, we must always be faithful to the author's intent. Our first question must be, not, "What does this verse mean to ME?" but, "What does this verse MEAN?"

In this case, the apostle John recorded Jesus' third saying. Matthew did not. Mark did not. Luke did not. So why did John?

First, because it fits his purpose. He tells his reader in John 20:30-31, "Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."

Each writer was selective. John admits in John 21:25, "Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written."

So John wrote to fulfill a purpose. The account we're about to consider contributes to that purpose. It's intended to lead us to believe that Jesus is the Christ and thereby have life, the kind of life He lived and desires to give us.

A second reason, to tell the rest of the story. John's gospel was the last of the four to be written. The apostle penned this biography of Jesus some sixty years after the Lord returned to heaven, and throughout it he fills in details about Jesus not recorded by Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

There's a third reason why John recorded Jesus' third saying. It involved *him*. Jesus spoke the third saying directly to His mother *and John*.

Jesus' third saying on the cross, which John records in John 19:25-27, shows in a very practical way that He cares for the needs of His own, and wants us to do the same.

Let's travel to the cross with John. Keep in mind, John was there. Luke wasn't—he got his information from talking to eyewitnesses. But John saw the blood stained earth beneath the Master's cross. He heard the heart-wrenching groans.

Notice what caught John's eye as he reflected on the scene of the cross. It was the sign nailed above the cross that read, "Jesus of Nazareth, The King of the Jews (19:19)." The sign was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. Perhaps John sees the irony that when Jesus was presented to the world as king, people responded with mockery. John alone records that this sign incensed the Jewish leader, but pagan Pilate said it would stay.

John then tells us that four soldiers distributed his clothes, and then gambled for His coat (19:23). Why? John says to fulfill the Old Testament prophecy (Psalm 22:18).

And then comes the third saying. John actually includes three of Jesus' sayings from the cross: "*I am thirsty*" in verse 28, "*It is finished,*" in verse 30, and the saying that preceded those words, in verses 26-27, where Jesus shows us what it means *to honor your mother*.

Jesus demonstrated care in two ways in His third statement from the cross.

I. Jesus comforted His mother (26).

John says there were women at the cross that day. Who were they? Look at verse 25, "Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene."

Some have suggested that since those days women were held in such low regard that these ladies were not in danger. But remember, Jesus was a person the Roman government considered worthy of death. And the orthodox Jews considered Him a heretic. Being associated with a person like that is dangerous. But to the women, it did not matter. As John himself would later explain, perfect love casts out fear.

Who was there at the foot of the cross? First, John says, there was Jesus' mother. Have you ever envisioned Calvary from Mary's perspective? *Mary saw Jesus when He took His first breath, and now would see Him take His last.*

Then there was Mary's sister. The punctuation in some translations makes it appear as if Mary's sister was the same person as Mary, the wife of Clopas (25). However, it's unlikely that there would be two sisters with the same name of Mary. The parallel accounts indicate the second woman's name was Salome (Matt. 27:56). Salome was Jesus' aunt.

You say, "If the second woman's name was Salome, why didn't John record her name?"

Apparently, for the simple reason that it was his mother! Salome was the mother of James and John. In his gospel, John never calls himself by name, nor any of his family members.

So that means that Jesus' mother Mary was likely an aunt to John the apostle.

The third woman was another Mary (the text literally says 'Mary of Clopas'). She was either the wife of, the mother of, the daughter of, or even the sister of Clopas. It probably indicates she was married to a man named Clopas.

The fourth woman was Mary Magdalene. She was the woman out of whom Jesus cast seven demons (Luke 8:2). She could never forget the One who had set her free.

Matthew 27:55 indicates there were "many women" (not just the four John mentions) at the cross that day, expressing their devotion to Jesus.

That's interesting. Where were the men? They, of course, had fled. Only John was there.

That brings us to the third saying. Verse 26, “When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, ‘Dear woman, here is your son.’”

So while hanging on the cross, Jesus fixed His eyes on His mother, then on John. Then He spoke to His mother, “Woman, behold, your son (ESV, NASB)!” Why did Jesus say that? With those words the Lord accomplished two things.

A. He fulfilled His duty as a Son.

Do you see the selflessness, the affection of Jesus? In His hour of greatest need, He thought of others, of *their needs*. In this case, the needs of His mother. Mary's heart was breaking. So He ministers to her by giving her a special message...

“Dear woman, here is your son.”

When Jesus spoke, He fulfilled His duty as a son. The fifth commandment stated, “Honor your father and your mother (Exod. 20:12).” True, Jesus was a grown adult. A grown adult is no longer under the authority of his parents. But the obligation to "honor" is lifelong.

Remember, there were no social security checks in those days. Apparently, Joseph had already died. Mary was a widow nearly fifty years of age. Who would care for her? She's in a vulnerable predicament.

Just think of what Mary had already been through. She had endured the public accusation of having an "illegitimate" child and lived with that stigma all her life. She had grieved the loss of her husband. And now her firstborn was dying the most shameful death the first century Romans could devise.

Yet in her moment of great need, Jesus demonstrates His infinite care for her. He speaks to her, and in so doing honors her, as God's law commands a son to do. He's making sure she will be cared for once He is gone.

He looks at her, then says, “Woman, behold, your son.” Then He looks at John. He's entrusting her to John's care.

One might object, “Didn't Mary have other children? Why didn't Jesus entrust Mary to their care?”

Yes, Mary had other children born after Jesus (their names appear in Mark 6:3: James, Joseph, Judas, Simon, as well as sisters). But they didn't believe in Jesus (John 7:5). Though that would change later after the resurrection, at this time Jesus' siblings were befuddled by Him (Mark 3:21).

So Jesus, Mary's firstborn, delegates the care of His mother to John. John had a double qualification for this honor. First, not only was he part of the inner circle, he was perhaps Jesus' closest confidant. He was known as "the disciple whom Jesus loved." Second, he was Jesus' cousin. Again, Mary, his mother's sister, was his aunt.

Don't miss the significance of this. Jesus, though forsaken and in agony on the cross, is still honoring His mother and thereby fulfilling His duty as a son.

Is there a lesson here for us? There is. By His actions the perfect Son of Man set an example for children of all ages. We too are to honor our parents. We too have a duty to care for them.

Are you honoring your parents? Are you mindful of their needs and involved in their lives? More about this in a moment.

Notice something else Jesus accomplished by these these words from the cross...

B. He established His dominion as the Savior.

“Dear woman, here is your son,” He said. The KJV renders it, “Woman, behold thy son!” Notice how Jesus addressed Mary. Not “Mother,” but “Woman.” Is that significant?

The Roman Catholic church insists that Mary is the mediator of the grace of Christ. They call her the “Mother of God” and the “Queen of heaven.”

But that’s not a position given to Mary in the Scriptures. In fact, Jesus’ words to her from the cross establish His dominion as the divine Savior, as *her* Savior.

Notice how He addresses her. “Woman,” He calls her (NIV, “dear woman”), a term of affection, certainly not harsh, but not ‘Mother.’ It is similar to our word ‘Lady.’

William Hendriksen comments, “It was very kind of Jesus to emphasize by the use of the word *woman* that Mary must no longer think of him as being merely her son; for, the more she conceives of him as her son, the more also will she suffer when he suffers. Mary must begin to look upon Jesus as her *Lord*.”³

There’s no question Mary’s heart was breaking—any loving mother’s heart would at such a time. But as great as the suffering was for Mary, Jesus was helping her grasp the purpose of what was breaking her heart. He was telling her to look beyond their physical relationship. She must not see Jesus merely as her son, the one she bore and raised, but now as her Lord.

“Yes, even then she will suffer,” writes Hendriksen, “but this suffering will be of a different nature. She will then know that though indescribably terrible, his agony is, nevertheless, glorious because of its purpose. She will then begin to concentrate on its redemptive meaning... Mary’s merely emotional suffering—as any mother would suffer for her son who was being crucified—must be replaced by something higher and nobler, that is, by adoration!”⁴

Then notice what Jesus told Mary next. “Here is your son,” is the NIV’s rendering. In the Greek text, there’s simply the word “Look” followed by the words “your son.” The AV’s translation captures the literal sense, “Behold thy son!”

Who is “the son” Jesus is telling Mary to behold. There may be a double sense here. He may be calling her attention to Himself, “Dear woman, look at your Son,” referring to her firstborn Son hanging on the cross. Certainly, this is the need of every descendant of Adam. We must behold the Son and put our total trust in Him.

But I don’t think that is primarily what Jesus is telling Mary to do when He said, “Dear woman, behold your son.” This is “son” beginning with small ‘s’. Mary has another family member, another ‘son’ if you will. It’s the man standing next to her, the one that Jesus will address next. With the words, “Dear woman, here is your son,” Jesus is telling Mary to look at John, her spiritual son in the family of God.

In a very real sense, Mary’s relationship with Jesus changed that day. Jesus was her biological son, but...“from now on, not I, but John will be your son.” (as Jones observes)

Russell Jones offers this helpful insight, “He speaks as Lord. He issues commands to Mary and to John, as if He were a king on His throne. He makes

³ William Hendriksen, *John*, p. 433.

⁴ W. Hendriksen, p. 433.

assignments, affecting position and responsibility, to His mother and His disciple and Himself.”⁵

Don’t miss this point. If we see Jesus as a victim on the cross, dying helplessly due to the brutal aggression of wicked men, we don’t understand what really happened. On the cross, Jesus is suffering at the hands of cruel men, yes, but He is also in absolute control. He is what He has been from eternity past, the Sovereign Lord. Yes, He is dying, but that’s because He chose to die. That’s why He came to earth as the God-man. He is a King dying to rescue His helpless and unworthy subjects.

But even as He dies, He gives commands to His subjects.

Again I agree with Russell Jones who said (37), “What was Jesus doing to Mary? Jesus was denying special position or privilege to her because of her peculiar earthly relationship to Him. He was placing her on the same human plane with the rest of those whom He loved.”

Mary needed to do what you and I must do, submit her life to the Lord Jesus Christ.

And she did. Do you remember what happened in the upper room after Jesus ascended into heaven? Where was Mary then? Acts 1:14 says she was *with*, not above, the group of 120 followers of Jesus in Jerusalem. Mary needed to be saved, too, and by divine grace, she was. She learned that though in His humanity Jesus was her son, she needed to believe in Him and the atoning sacrifice He had come to make on the cross.

And she did. She came to know Jesus, not just as *son*, but as *Savior*.

Jesus cared for Mary so much that He addressed both of her needs. For His widowed mother, He fulfilled His duty as a Son, entrusting her to John’s safe-keeping. For one who needed deliverance from sin, He established His dominion as Savior.

To put it simply, on this day Mary lost a son to find a Savior!⁶

In a very real sense, this must happen in our lives too. By that I mean this. I can hardly remember a time in my life when I didn’t believe in Jesus. I grew up hearing stories about Jesus, about His good life, about His teaching, even about His death on the cross and resurrection on the third day. But one day, the Spirit of God graciously worked in my heart and I knew the way I viewed Jesus needed to change. I needed to stop viewing Jesus merely as a great and wonderful person, embrace Him as my Savior, and submit my life to His Lordship.

Has that change happened in your view of Jesus? Is He *your* Savior and Master?

So Jesus comforted His mother at the cross. But there’s more. There’s something else that Jesus accomplished in His third saying from the cross.

II. Jesus commissioned John (27).

Verse 26 ends with a comma in the NIV, for in verse 27 Jesus continues the third saying. Having addressed Mary, He now speaks to the apostle John.

Verse 27 begins, “And to the disciple” [KJV ‘Then saith he to the disciple’]. In John’s gospel the apostle John refers to himself as ‘the disciple’ or ‘the disciple whom he loved’ (as in verse 26). There from the cross Jesus delivers a message to John.

⁵ Russell Jones, p. 35.

⁶ Jones, 39

Let me remind you that just hours before this, John had fled from Jesus into the darkness, as did the rest of the disciples. But see him now, my friend. John has come back to Jesus. He's identifying with his Lord at the cross.

You say, "I've blown it. Jesus wouldn't want me."

Oh my fellow sinner, look at John! And listen to the message Jesus gave to him, a commission. "Here is your mother." In the NASB and ESV, "Behold, your mother!" In the AV, "Behold thy mother!"

What did Jesus mean by those words? It will help us to ask the followup question... What did *John* take Jesus to mean? To find the answer, we simply need to look at John's own narrative in verse 27, "From that time on, this disciple took her into his home."

Something very important transpired that moment in the shadow of the cross. By saying those words to John, Jesus accomplished two things. First...

A. Jesus gave John a new responsibility.

"Here is your mother," the Master told the twenty-something-year-old John. He's given the beloved apostle a sacred charge.

Notice the beginning of verse 28, "Later [KJV says 'after this'], knowing that all was now completed..." Jesus knew the hour had come. His work on the cross was now finished and He would shortly bow His head and give up His spirit, which He did in verse 30.

But there's one important detail on the Savior's heart, and now He addresses it. He makes it clear that...

1. *John was to care for Mary.* This was no insignificant matter. It was a responsibility that Jesus as son took very seriously, the care of His mother. And now He commissions John to provide that care.

2. *He was to be a substitute son.* From now on, it will be John's task to protect Mary, to provide for her physical and emotional needs, to *honor* her in behalf of her firstborn.

And John did just that. One tradition says that John had a second home in Jerusalem, where Mary lived with John for eleven years, until she died. Another tradition says that John eventually took Mary with him to live, and eventually die, in Ephesus.

Which account is true? We can't be sure, but the important thing is that John fulfilled his responsibility. From the day he heard his Master's words, "Look, your mother!" until the day she left the earth, John cared for her.

John himself verified his obedience in the very next sentence of his God-breathed text, verse 27b, "From that time on this disciple took her into his home." "To his *own* home," says the ESV.

But there's something else here. Yes, it's amazing to consider the compassion of Jesus on the cross. We see it in His words of comfort to Mary and in His words of commission to John. But did you realize the Lord was telling us something here as well?

I believe He was. With these words to John...

B. Jesus introduced a new relationship.

And not just between Mary and John either. John had another reason for recording this third saying of Jesus, and it's linked to what he heard Jesus say the night before He was crucified. John himself recorded these words of Jesus in John 13:34-35:

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

The significance of Jesus’ third saying from the cross goes much further than Mary’s care, as important as that was. Jesus is establishing something new, a new family, and a new responsibility that exceeds any other earthly tie.

Listen again to our text, and notice the threefold repetition of the word *disciple*. Three times John refers to himself, not as an apostle, but as *disciple*.

“When Jesus saw his mother and the **disciple** whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, “Woman, behold, your son!”²⁷ Then he said to the **disciple**, “Behold, your mother!” And from that hour the **disciple** took her to his own home (26-27 ESV).”

By this all men will know that you are my *disciples*. By what? If you do what the disciple at the cross did with His Master’s mother. If you *love one another*.

Jesus’ words to John make two things clear that we’re prone to forget on this special day.

1. *Our bond in Christ is stronger than blood ties.* When Jesus committed the care of His earthly mother to His spiritual son, He was emphasizing just how vital this new relationship is for His followers.

When Jesus Christ established the Church, He formed a new humanity, a new people, a new family. So we are related to each other, if we belong to Christ.

Do you love your family? I hope you do, for this is God’s will, to love our mother and father and brothers and sisters and children.

But the truth is, if we’re disciples of Christ...

2. *We are part of an eternal family, the family of God.* If we have been born again, we have been placed in the family of God. Which means we have a whole lot of mothers and fathers and brothers and sisters and children.

And we are responsible to them, to *love one another*, said our Master.

John didn’t take that responsibility lightly, nor should we. It’s not coincidental that the apostle John had more to say about ‘love’ in his writings than any of the other New Testament writers. He penned these words to the church in 1 John:

1 John 3:11 “This is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another.”

1 John 3:16 “This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.”

Lay down our lives for our brothers. Is that what we’re supposed to do, to value each other in practical ways, to sacrifice for each other, to be willing to die for each other? Yes, and why? Because Jesus introduced a new relationship. We are to care for each other in a way that resembles His care for us.

And so John did. He fulfilled his responsibility. He cared for Mary. Consequently, he exhorted the churches he led to care for each other. That’s our assignment, too, beloved. We are to care for each other because Christ cared for us.

Dear friend, if you want to see what honoring your father and mother looks like, then look at the cross. Look at how Jesus comforted His mother, making sure her needs would be met. And look at the commission that He gave to John, which not only resulted

in Mary's care but in an example of how each of us are to care for the mothers and fathers and siblings and children we have in our forever family.

Application: We have three responsibilities.

1. Believe that Jesus cares.

Throughout His life and even at the cross, Jesus provided an example of the kind of selfless love that God expects us to exhibit.

You say, "But I can't attain Jesus' example. I'm a sinner."

Yes, indeed, but that is why Jesus willfully went to that cross. He chose to bear the penalty we deserve for not loving God and others as we should, that is, our sin. And He not only paid the penalty for our sinful selfishness, but He also transforms us into the kind of loving people who care sacrificially for those in need, as John did with Mary.

The transformation starts right here. Believe that Jesus cares. This is the main lesson of the third saying from the cross. Jesus cares for sinners. Believe it.

Oh, friend, the Savior died and rose again to save sinners. Have you trusted Him to be the Savior of your life? He is interested in you!

You say, "I'm not sure. What does it mean to believe in Jesus?"

If you believe, you do two things, by the help of the Spirit of God. First, you admit that you are a sinner and acknowledge that your vile sins have cut you off from experiencing the care of your holy Creator God. You repent of those sins.

Then secondly, you put your total trust in the One God sent to bring you back home to Him. You believe that the merit of Christ's life, death, and resurrection, plus nothing you have to offer, is sufficient to save you.

I call on each person here today to believe that Jesus cares. Then...

2. Become like Jesus in showing His care to others.

If we believe that Jesus cares for us, we must also believe that He calls us to care for one another, to follow in His selfless steps.

Are you committed to your forever family, and are you consistently looking for ways to show it? Is there someone right now that Christ would have you to reach out to and show His care? Maybe there's a brother or sister in Christ whose needs are on your heart.

One very practical way you can show love to your local church is by joining it, and being faithful to the times it meets. We have a new members class coming soon for those interested.

3. Begin at home. By God's design, that's where caring for one another is supposed to begin. And it does begin when we come to know the One who cares for us and through us.