

John 19: 25-27; “How Jesus Honored His Mother”, A Mother’s Day Sermon
Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on May 12th, 2019,
in the Morning Worship Service.

There is here in this text, a care for mothers; an honoring of them that is commended to us by the Lord Jesus Himself, which I trust will speak to each of us of this morning. I hope that it will speak to us of our duty to our wives and mothers on this Mother’s Day 2019. In Exodus 20: 12 it says, “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land that the Lord is giving you.” Here in our text, this honor that is shown by Jesus to his mother is very thoughtfully and very deliberately considered and given, even though He was in the midst of undergoing His most difficult sufferings on the cross; even though he would not get to live long upon the earth. He was suffering terribly, and yet He still took the time, during these sufferings, to honor His mother by committing the care of her to His disciple John whom He loved. And when He rose from the dead, it was also to a small group composed mainly of mothers, who were among the first to receive a sight of Him, and to believe in Him, as risen from the dead. If Christ so honored His own mother in this way, and all mothers through her, should not you and I do the same? So I want to ask the question this morning – How did the Lord Jesus honor His mother, and all mothers, in His death and resurrection? He did so in the following 3 ways.

1st – He took notice of the fact that these women were those who had faithfully stood by Him.

Verse 25 says – “Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.” It appears that all of the 11 disciples and apostles of our Lord forsook him and fled when He was taken and arrested by the mob and the temple guard in garden. But Peter and John followed at a distance, even when Jesus was taken into the courtyard of the high priest. John was known to the high priest, and as such was permitted to enter. He in turn spoke to the maid that kept the door, and Peter was brought in. And it was there that Peter denied his Lord three times, and afterwards left and went out and wept bitterly. But the Apostle John continued to be able to follow His Lord’s sufferings at a distance; all the way to the cross. He saw Jesus being taken and falsely tried, and then Him being condemned to death as a criminal. John saw all of this. And when Jesus went to the cross, it was John alone who remained with the women to stand by Him to the end.

Let us understand that spiritual strength to stand in the midst of opposition like this does not come except when the grace of God is at work in your heart. Matthew Henry says, “Thus the feeble were like David (Zechariah 12: 8): they were not deterred by the fury of the enemy nor the horror of the sight; they could not rescue Him nor relieve Him yet they attended Him to show their good will.” It is not agreed upon by the commentators, how many women are mentioned here. It is either 3 or 4. There is His mother and His mother's sister, and whether his mother’s sister was also named Mary or not is not known. If Mary's sister-in-law was a Mary also, then there were only 3. If not, there were 4 women standing there; Mary His mother, and His mother’s sister who is not named here, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. In my opinion it is possible that there were 4 women there. It could be determined if we knew the name of the virgin Mary's sister. If the sister is Salome who is mentioned in Mark 15: 40 as standing by, then there are 4. If the sister is a sister in law named Mary and she is the wife of Clopas and also the mother of James the less and of Joses, then there are 3 women standing there. It is hard to judge. But we can say that there were at least 3 women standing there with John and all of them were mothers except Mary Magdalene.

Now there is nothing more heart wrenching to any mother’s heart than to see the child that she has raised and loved, and having had great hopes for them, that they will do important and

significant things for others, having to watch them suffer and die. How many mothers anguish over the possibility of their sons who have gone into the military, suffering and dying on a foreign field? Do they feel it? Yes, they feel it very deeply and very keenly. I am sure that Mary as the mother of Jesus felt it very keenly. At she looked at Him hanging there upon the cross, her thoughts probably went back to the days after Jesus was born; to the time when she brought Him into the temple to present Him unto the Lord. She and Joseph had met a man named Simeon there, and they were marveling at those things which He was speaking about Jesus. He said some wonderful things about his eyes getting to behold the Lord's salvation, and how her son would be a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and become the glory of His people Israel.

Then Simeon had blessed them, and he said to her these awful words which now had come back to haunt her – “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), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.” And now Mary understood what a “sword piercing through her soul meant. It was a sword piercing her heart to see Him on the cross. But no, it was not just this, for this was just the culmination of all that had gone before, in His life. She knew, that her dear son was suffering for the many good things that He had spoken about Eternal Life being found by faith in Him. She felt it in her own heart when He was reviled and spoken against for the many good things that He had done; healing the sick, cleansing the lepers, casting out demons, and even raising the dead. All of this, she knew, was to the unbelieving Pharisees, a sign to be spoken against. And now, to see Him degraded from His dignity, and the beauty of His perfect character; to see Him treated in this cruel and mocking way; this Most Blessed and Divine Person who her son was, it was a sword to her soul. She now beheld Him as one she could no longer recognize. He had been scourged and beaten and a crown of thorns jammed down upon His brow, and nails driven through His hands and feet. Certainly this was a sword to her soul.

And what was the purpose of all this? It was “that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed”, even as they are being revealed now in this assembly as we contemplate it. Oh how this mother loved her son! What she had endured in order to see Him come into the world; riding on a donkey from Galilee and the city of Nazareth to the city of David when she was great with Him in her womb. What she patiently had endured in being misunderstood by Joseph when she told him that she was going to have Jesus and he was not the father. Why, he was “minded to put her away”, until an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and convinced him otherwise. And how concerned she and Joseph were, when they had gone to Jerusalem one year, at the feast of the Passover when he was 12 years old, and having finished their days there, they left the city, supposing him to be with them, and instead He lingered behind in Jerusalem. They thought that he was among their relatives and kin when they left, but after a day's journey they searched and could not find Him. What anguish!

And so, when they had searched and they could not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem to see what had happened to Him. And they searched for 3 long days! And finally, they found Him in the temple. And what was He doing? He was sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. Why could He have not told them? And so she says to Him, “Son why have You done this to us?” “Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously.” And He said to her, “Why did you seek Me?” “Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?” But what did that mean? Is this how He honored His earthly father and his mother? She did not understand the statement. But she did know from the words of Simeon, that this Child, this Young Man of hers, this unusual and unique Man who was called the Son of God and Son of Man, was destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a

sign which would be spoken against. But did a sword have to pierce her own soul? Yes, it was God's holy will that it would be so, in order that the thoughts of many hearts might be revealed.

Can you sympathize with Mary, mothers who are here this morning? Do you feel in a measure something of what she felt that day when she saw her son hanging on the cross? And yet, now, Jesus was going to honor her, and the other mothers who were standing there with her that day. They were the friends and supporters of His ministry, and they were probably like mothers and sisters to Him as well. In Mark 16: 40 it says, "There were also women looking on from afar, among whom were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the Less and of Joses, and Salome, who also followed him and ministered to Him when He was in Galilee, and many other women who came up with Him to Jerusalem." They are honoring Him by standing with Him and near Him in His sufferings. His sufferings were for them just as much as for anyone else that He suffered for, of His Elect, that day. These mothers who those who were trusting in Him were dismayed, but Jesus would honor them that day; even in, and by, His death. They were all sinners by nature, but He would save them from all of their sins. He would die for them, in order that they might be saved, and that their faith in Him might be honored. They would trust in Him and stand by Him in His sufferings, and they would not be disappointed in the end.

Let me ask you husbands and sons and daughters who are here today, are you willing to honor your mother today for her faithfulness to Christ? Believing mothers are those who stand by the sufferings of Christ in their hearts in the many situations of difficulty in which they cannot do anything to change what is happening, but they are praying silently that God will intervene and bring good out of whatever evil has come. When things are happening that are not right, they are found standing with Christ's kingdom, and His cause. They do not walk away from it, but they are praying that God's will would be done, and that His truth and righteousness would be vindicated. Oh, how much we have to honor, in regard to our believing mothers. In fact, we could even say that there is a sense in which Christ died in order that all believing mothers could be honored. Those who believe and stand with Christ's cause in the darkest hour, can know that Christ does honor their loyalty and their faith. And so should we, if we have a believing mother or wife, when we see them doing this.

Now 2nd – Jesus honored His mother by appointing His beloved disciple John to take His place as her son. (verses 26 and 27)

"When Jesus therefore saw His mother and the disciple whom he loved standing by, He said to His mother, 'Woman behold your son!'" This was how he honored His mother. He thought about her, He cared for her plight and made provision for her since He would not be able to be with her, and care for her Himself. He honors His mother by re-defining for her their relationship. Notice that He calls her "woman". It is not as though He is not cognizant that she is his mother. He is, however, attempting to spare her the increased grief and pain of what it would mean to all of her feelings, should He call her by that endearing term of "mother". And yet it is more than that, I think. I think that He is saying to her that their relationship is about to change forever. She was His earthly mother, but now her relation to Him as Lord and King must be her focus. She cannot help Him in His present state on the cross. She is not a co-mediator with Him in the work of redemption as those who worship Mary believe. She is His earthly mother who has real spiritual, emotional, and physical needs. And He is not now going to leave her "sonless" (since Jesus was her first-born son). He would not be able to care for her now that His mission on earth was almost fulfilled.

The Lord Jesus was, in just a few short days, to take up the work of His Mediatorial Kingdom, from His vantage point in heaven, at the right hand of the Father. And in that exalted position, He would intercede for the saints. He would not be able to fulfill his earthly responsibility to honor her in the way that He would want to, as her earthly son, and so He

commits this responsibility directly and formally to John. She is to accept this. She is to understand that in His giving John to her to be her “son” that He is giving to her His very heart. He knows that in doing this that John will do the right thing, and that he will truly act the part of a dutiful and loving son as she goes through the present crisis of losing Jesus for a time here at the cross. He further knew that she would not be having Him near her as she grew older and faced death herself. And so He says to her – “Woman, behold your son!” Then He says to His closest disciple, that is, the disciple whom He loved and who leaned upon His breast at the Supper, “Behold your mother!”

John’s relationship to Jesus was changing at this point as well. I like the words of R.C.H. Lenski on this verse. “The suffering of John was like that of Mary.” “These two belonged together because in the death of Jesus these two were losing something more than the rest.” “Neither Mary nor John would ever have Jesus again as they once had had him in tender, familiar, loving interaction as they had before.” “Never would Mary again embrace her son and lay her head upon His breast; never would John again recline beside him on the same couch at table and be able to lay his head on Jesus’ breast.” “Yes, John supported Mary, but as one who himself needed support just as she did.” “These two belonged together.” “In love nearest to Jesus, now that He dies, both are joined before him.” “And Jesus saw it, and His heart understood.”

John, as Lenski says a little later, was receiving this responsibility of being a substitute son as a part of Jesus’ last will and testimony. “The word to John is the exact counterpart of the one to Mary; it conveys nothing new.” “Yet it has been asked why Jesus added this word.” “Was not the word to Mary enough?” “Did not John as well as Mary understand what the will of Jesus was?” “Would not John without the second word have obeyed the first word with alacrity?” “Already by his first word Jesus made John His adopted brother, His substitute, His administrator.” “Yet Jesus had good reason for adding His second word to John.” “Jesus is making His personal will and testament.” “Despite all its brevity that will and testament should mention each person to whom a bequest is made.” “Jesus is not merely by indirection or by an inference asking John to take charge of His mother.” “All are to know that it is John and John alone to whom this bequest of his mother is made.”

And I would say that this applies to us here this morning as well, who have mothers. We should honor them for all that they have done for us, in raising us, loving us, and caring for our needs both spiritually and physically. It is what we are called to do as grown children, that when our mother needs comfort and help in her old age, or when she is distressed by the loss of her husband, or others of your siblings, that you care for her. It says, “And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home.” 1st Timothy 5: 4 says, “But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show piety at home and to repay their parents; for this is good and acceptable before God.” Well, Jesus, it appears, did not have any believing siblings and so He commits the care of his mother to John, His beloved disciple. And if we ourselves, as Christians, have mothers who need to be cared for, and it is apparent that we are to die before our mother, then it will be right for us to seek to ask another Christian man who is a beloved friend to help us to help them if it is possible.

John took her into his own home. He probably already had the care of his own mother. But His love for His Savior and Lord was such that this was not too much to ask. As Lenski says again, “John was nearest to Jesus’ heart, and so the trust was laid upon him.” “Love is not halved by thus adding objects of love.” “No child loves either parent less for being blessed with two.” “So this is how Jesus honored His mother, and this is how John honored His Lord.” “We honor our Lord when we honor our mothers by caring for them when they get old and cannot do things for themselves.” “We should honor them today for all they are doing for us now or have done for us in the past.” (end of quote)

And then 3rd – Jesus honored His mother and all mothers by His resurrection from the dead, in that He gives hope to each one who believes.

Turn with me to over to Mark chapter 16, verses 1-7. It says here, “Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome brought spices that they might come and anoint Him.” They had come to honor Him through care of His body at the grave. He will now honor them with being the first to witness His rising from the dead. “Very early on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen.” “And they said among themselves, ‘Who will roll away the stone from the door for us?’ “But when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away – for it was very large.” “And entering the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed.” “But he said to them, ‘Do not be alarmed.’ “You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified.” “He is risen!” “He is not here.” “See the place where they laid Him.”

And now turn over to Matthew’s account of this in Matthew 28, verses 8 and 9. It says there, “So they (that is Mary Magdalene and the other Mary) went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word.” “And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, ‘Rejoice!’ “So they came and held him by the feet and worshiped Him.” Oh how Jesus honors those who honor Him! I believe that it was because they acted the part of mothers to Him, even though neither of them was His physical mother. They go out of the tomb quickly, with fear, but also with great joy. And He meets with them personally, and He tells them to rejoice. And so they did, no doubt. And so should all mothers who believe in Jesus rejoice, because He has died on their behalf.

He comes to all mothers personally, who believe in Him, and He gives them hope. He honors them by granting to them a sense of His risen personal power and presence in their lives. The reason for this is because of what we find in Mark 3: 31-35. It is because they are His true and nearest kin. Listen to what it says there: “Then His brothers and his mother came, and standing outside they sent to Him, calling Him.” “And a multitude was sitting around Him; and they said to Him, ‘Look, Your mother and Your brothers are outside seeking You.’ But He answered them saying, ‘Who is My mother, or My brothers?’ “And He looked around in a circle at those who sat about Him, and said, ‘Here are My mother and My brothers!’ “For whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother.” Jesus honors them because they do the will of God and they trust in Him. He gave His mother both an earthly and a heavenly hope that day. And He will give you the same today if you are trusting in Him.