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John 19:25-27 “Jesus’ Care For His Mother”

Intro. Many times in Scripture the New Testament writers make an appeal to us based upon the example of Christ. For example, in Philippians 2 Christ is the supreme example of humility and self-sacrifice. He was willing to leave heaven, take on human flesh, become a servant, and even die for others. Jesus is our example in so many other ways, including the way He honored, and cared for His mother. Jesus knew and practiced Exodus 20:12, the 5th Commandment, “Honor your father and your mother....”

One example of His obedience to that Commandment was when He was 12. You may remember the story found in Luke 2. Jesus had gone to Jerusalem with His parents and He went to the temple, and starting talking to the learned teachers of the Law. Meanwhile, His parents had packed up to return to Nazareth. They assumed that Jesus was with the other children in the caravan. After they had traveled some distance, they discovered that Jesus was not with them. So they rushed back to Jerusalem to find Jesus. Well, they found Him in the temple, and Mary expressed how concerned they were for Him. Jesus replied, “Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?” Then v.51 of Luke 2 goes on to say, “Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them....” He was obedient to His parents. In fact, that is one of the best ways a child can show love and honor to their mother. In John 14:15 Jesus said, “If you love Me, keep My commandments.” Even so, one way you can show love for your mother is by obeying her commandments.

Not only do we have that example of Jesus when He was young, but we also have a good example from Jesus as He faces the end of His earthly life. Here in John 19 we see that He honors and cares for His mother. Even as He was dying, He fulfilled the Commandment to honor His mother. So on this Mother’s Day, I want to encourage you to honor and care for your mother the way Jesus did.

However, first let us see what our text says about Mary, the mother of Jesus. She was such an example of love and devotion to her son. Likewise, most mothers have such devoted love for their children. That is one reason why we honor our mothers, especially on Mother’s Day. Now, based on this text of Scripture, I want to challenge *all* mothers who hear this message to have the same kind of love & devotion to your children that Mary had. So let’s see our first lesson found in v.25:

I. FOLLOW MARY’S EXAMPLE AS A MOTHER

There were many near the cross of Jesus that day: the religious leaders were there to mock Him, & see Him suffer and die. They were the ones who spearheaded His death. They taunted Jesus saying, “He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him” (Matthew 27:42). Then there were the curious spectators. Jerusalem was filled with pilgrims at Passover. The place of crucifixion was along a busy road leading in and out of Jerusalem. The Romans wanted many people to see crucified victims as a warning not to violate Roman law. Then there were the Roman executioners, who were indifferent to the suffering of Jesus. There were also two who were crucified with Him. But one

group of people received special notice. They came close to Jesus in His time of suffering because of their love and devotion. In v.25 we read, “Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.” Matthew (27:55) spoke of women beholding from afar, but John mentions three or four women¹ who have clearly drawn near the Cross by now. They were near enough to hear Jesus speak, and near enough to see the anguish and agony on His face! He who showed such love to others does not die unlamented. In the midst of rage & fury, loving followers stand near Him in His dying moments.

Now the one that we will focus on this morning is Jesus’ mother. She headed the list. In fact, John alone mentions the mother of Jesus in the group. Our heart goes out to her. To watch your child suffer & die must be one of the worst experiences of life.

Mary’s example challenges us first of all to:

A. Have Steadfast Devotion for Your Children - The thousands whom Jesus had fed, healed, blessed, and comforted had turned away—but His mother was there near Him. Mary showed her love and devotion to the very end. They convicted Him of blasphemy, but she still believed that He was the promised Messiah. She & the other faithful followers at the cross exhibited the words of the Song of Solomon: “love is as strong as death.... Many waters cannot quench love, nor can the floods drown it...” (8:6-7).

You know, you can usually count on your mother to stand by you, even when others won’t. Isn’t it wonderful to have a mother like that, who will stand by you through thick and thin? How can we not fully appreciate the heart of a mother!

I hope every mother here will follow Mary’s example, and be devoted to your children as she was.

Secondly, Mary's example teaches us to:

B. Be Strong for Your Children – Mom’s are endowed by God with great strength. After all, being a mom is one of the most difficult assignments a woman will ever accept. Mothering is no job for a weak person! Someone said that if motherhood were going to be easy, it never would have started with something called labor (Illus.#C-564). Mary’s strength was exhibited in at least two ways:

1. Unlike all but one of the male disciples, she & the few other followers displayed a lot of courage to be at the cross. We see her standing strong in the face of such hostility by the religious leaders, the crowds, and the thieves crucified with Him. They could have been accused of guilt by association. At the very least they could have been objects of scorn. Yet they drew near the cross, and clearly demonstrated that they were His followers. There are some women who show courage like few men do.

What a contrast they were to most of the male disciples. Where was Peter, the big, bold fisherman? Where was Thomas, who had said, “Let us also go, that we may die with Him” (John 11:16). Where were the other disciples? Mt. 26:56 says of them, “They forsook Him and fled.” As

¹ Robertson says that Solome, who was there (Mark 15:40), was John’s mother. She may have been Mary’s sister. It may be that His mother's “sister” was also called Mary. If so, it could not have been her blood sister. She was probably her husband Joseph's sister. This Mary was also among the few women who came to the tomb that 1st Easter morning (Mt. 28:1). But also gathered there was "Mary with wife of Clopas." Then, there was Mary Magdalene. Jesus had performed a wonderful act of mercy, having cast 7 demons out of her. She knew what it was to be bound by sin and then freed by the savior! What love and devotion she had! These women showed greater love and devotion than most of the disciples. Where would we be without the love and devotion of women!

we see from v.26 that only John returns to follow Jesus to the cross.²

2. Another evidence of her strength is the fact that she did not flee the terrible sight. Though her heart was filled with sorrow, I believe that she kept her composure. She would not let anything keep her from being there for her son. That is one characteristic of mothers that is worthy of honor. A mother's love and devotion enables her to keep going when others would quit. A mother will make heroic sacrifices for her children.

Years ago, a young mother was making her way across the hills of South Wales, carrying her tiny babe in her arms, when she was overtaken by a blinding blizzard. She never reached her destination alive, and when the blizzard had subsided her body was found beneath the snow. But the searchers discovered that before her death she had taken off all her outer clothing and wrapped it about her baby. And when they unwrapped the child, to their great surprise and joy, they found he was alive and well. She had given her life for her child, proving the depth of her mother love. Years later that child, David Lloyd George, grown to manhood, became prime minister of Great Britain, and without doubt one of England's greatest statesmen.³

Dear mothers, will you be strong for your children? Are you spiritually the kind of mother that your children need?

Finally, Mary's example teaches us to:

C. Be Willing to Suffer for & with Your Children – Can you imagine how difficult it was for Mary to be there, to watch her son suffer so much? What a horrible sight for a mother to look upon! The same head that Mary kissed and caressed in a cradle now bleeds from a thorny crown on a cross! The crowd was screaming and mocking, her son was bleeding, and she was watching it all. She experienced the fulfillment of Simeon's prophecy (Lk. 2:35). He told her some thirty years before that someday her own heart would be pierced through also. We can only imagine how much Mary suffered that day with grief and sorrow that only few can imagine.

Being a mother or father is a great experience, but we must be realistic and expect the possibility that it can be a source of great suffering and pain. Being a mother begins with great pain. Some of you have buried a child. Others of you have worked long hard hours to provide for, and care for a child. Many parents have experienced the heartbreak of a rebellious child. Oh yes, there can be great suffering in being a mother. But there is also great reward! Many rewards are yet to come! So don't flee from the responsibilities of being a parent just to avoid suffering. Accept suffering as a necessary part of being a parent.

Now I want every child here today, whether young or old, to appreciate what Mary illustrates, that your mothers have been devoted to you, strong for you, and have suffered for you. They are worthy of your honor, respect, obedience, and love. And so that leads to my next scene in this drama at the cross. We also see here:

II. FOLLOW JESUS' EXAMPLE AS A SON

In this text of Scripture we see an amazing demonstration of our Lord's love and concern for His mother, even as He was experiencing great suffering on the cross. Let me ask you a

² He fled like the others, but then later, he changed His mind, and returned to be near Jesus. He was the one who seemed to love Jesus the most! When we turn away from Jesus, we should repent, and come back to Jesus. May I ask you a question: have you wandered away from Jesus? Come back to Jesus!

³ G. Franklin Alleo in Paul Lee Tan, *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: #3648* (Rockville, Maryland: Assurance Publishers, 1979).

question. What happens when you stub our toe really badly? Are you at that moment concerned about the stock market? Ladies, are you concerned about what you are going to serve your family for the next meal? I tell you what happens. The more we hurt, the more we all tend to become very self-centered. We become preoccupied with our own pain & suffering. Yet even though Jesus was suffering greatly, atoning for our sin, He took time to care for others. He was engaged in tremendous suffering. Yet, He was not so preoccupied with His own problems that He did not consider others.

As we have noted, the Gospels record that Jesus spoke seven last sayings on the cross. The first three of them all express Jesus' concern for others. Even in death, Jesus showed more concern for others than for Himself. As they nailed Him to that cross He was thinking of others when He said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." As He hung on the cross, He took time to offer the hope of forgiveness & eternal life to the repentant thief. And as He hung on that cross, He thought, "But what about mother? What will happen to her?" He was concerned for her safety. He was concerned for her shelter. He was concerned for her sustenance. Jesus gives us an example of honoring and showing love for our mothers.

We are going to look at 3 actions of Jesus, and then draw lessons for us based on the example of Jesus. First of all, notice in v.26 that:

A. He "Saw" His Mother – Don't you imagine that her eyes were filled with tears? Don't you think that a look of anguish was in her face? It would seem that she was suffering almost as intently as Christ. When the child of a parent suffers, you can be sure the parents suffer also, and would wish that they could suffer in the place of their child. So the suffering of Mary was quite evident. Yet He did not ignore her, but He looked upon His dear mother, and no doubt was moved with compassion for her. Surely, Christ noticed her suffering!

I believe there is an application to us. Just as Jesus took note of His mother, even so, Jesus knows what you are going through. When you and I get into problems, we sometimes think that Jesus is too busy running the universe to care about us. Don't believe it for a moment! As the song says, "His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He's watching me."

Several years ago Cheryl & I went up to Lynchburg to help Andrew move out of his dorm. Cheryl did a good job cleaning up his dorm room. That took a while. Then we ate a nice meal at Cracker Barrel. It was at least 3:00 p.m. by the time we left Lynchburg. Then as we were nearing Crew, VA we heard a severe thunderstorm warning on the radio. Then the sky became dark, and strong wind was blowing. It started raining so hard I could hardly see more than 30 feet in front of me. In fact, up ahead on 460 a tree had been blow down over the road, and I barely stopped in time to go around it. Then it started to hail. We were caught in a terrible storm & we started to pray for God's protection. And it was a comfort to know that God knew we were going through that storm. He sees us, and He cares! Sure enough, God saw us through the storm, & we arrived home safely.

Of course, we also need to make application to us as children. We are to look after our mothers. And the older they get, the more important it is to check up on them from time to time. There's an expression that says, "Out of sight, out of mind." We must not let them be out of sight for very long. Be like Jesus, and look upon your mother, especially in her time of need. Don't ever neglect her.

Not only did Jesus see His mother, and notice her suffering, but also:

B. He Spoke to His Mother – In the last of v.26 we read that "He said to His mother, 'Woman, behold your son!'" How it must have encouraged her soul just to hear her son speak to

her yet again!

Even so, I believe we should speak to our mothers with regularity. Call them. They want to hear your voice. Write them. Stop by and visit them.

Now let's not get concerned about the way Jesus addressed His mother here. This isn't the first time He called His mother, "Woman." About three years earlier He was at a wedding in Cana, He addressed her in this way (2:4). The title "woman" was not a harsh designation in that day, but a rather common one. In fact, I found 5 other examples in the New Testament.⁴ It would be similar to "Mam" or "Mrs." today. [But He may have addressed her in such a manner for at least 2 reasons. First, to protect her. At the very least identifying Mary as His mother could expose her to the rudeness of the crowd. Secondly, Mary had to realize that natural ties were to be replaced by spiritual. Christ no longer was to be her son, but her Savior & Lord. Mary needed a Savior just as much as you do.] So don't regard this form of address as a sign of disrespect. Christ would never use a disrespectful term to address His mother. He would never violate the commandment to honor His mother, and nor should you.

Another way Jesus honored & cared for His mother was this:

C. He Selected a Protector & Provider for His Mother - Jesus knew that He was about to leave this world. It was quite evident that His mother was a widow. He knew that she had no government support. But He would not leave her uncared for. The eldest son was responsible for a widowed mother, and now she would need another to look after her. So He seeks to provide a home for his widowed mother. So beginning in the last of v.26 Jesus "said to His mother, 'Woman, behold your son!'" Then He said to the disciple, 'Behold your mother!'" Before He died, He appointed a protector & provider for His mother.

I want us to answer several questions concerning what Jesus did here:

1. When Did Jesus Do This? He did it when He was a grown man. Our obligations to our parents do not end when we become adults. We still should love them, honor them, and, if need be, even provide for them. 1 Timothy 5:8 says, "But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever." When our aging parents need our help, we should provide for them. After all, they provided for us for 18+ years! Granted, Gen. 2:24 says that a man shall leave father and mother, and be joined to his wife, but that does not end all responsibilities toward parents. Clearly, Jesus fulfilled all the requirements of the Law, and so this act was His final discharge of His earthly duties. Jesus kept the commandment to honor His parents. He did it with His last breaths on the cross.

What does this mean for us? It means that we, too, must honor our parents in such a way.

After Cheryl's mother was hospitalized from a serious illness, she did not hesitate to go to GA to care for her. Then when she was discharged from the rehabilitation center, she brought her mom to our home here in Virginia. She has been devoted in her care of her mother, and she is another example of honoring mother in such a way.

2. How Did Christ Provide for Her? Jesus is the Son of God. Yet He did not send manna from heaven to provide for her after His ascension. No, He provided through His people, in this case, through John. In v.27 Christ said to John, "Behold your mother!" From now on, John would take His place as the son who would be responsible for the care & protection of Mary. No doubt, this was a burden he gladly bore. We read in the last of v.27, "And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home." One tradition says that Mary lived with John in Jerusalem the next 11 years and died there. Another says that she did not die in Jerusalem, but followed John to

⁴ See also Matthew 15:28; Luke 13:12; Luke 22:57; John 4:21; 20:13.

Ephesus, and died there at a ripe old age.

The same is true today. Just as Jesus said to John, “Behold, your mother.” Even so, He may say to us, “Behold, your mother. Care for her.” James said that pure religion includes visiting widows in their affliction (Jas. 1:27). Or perhaps there is someone else you know that is in need. They have no family, or no believers in their family. Perhaps the Lord would say to you, “Behold, your brother; care for Him.” We are our brother’s keeper (cf. Mt. 25:40). I wonder how many children need grandparents. Their flesh & blood grandparents are hundreds of miles away. Yet you could develop a close relationship with those children. Would Christ say to you, “Behold, your grandchildren.”

3. Why Did Christ Choose *John* to Provide for Her? Mt. 13:55-56 plainly declares that Mary had other children (cf. Mk. 3:31-35). They were probably all grown at this time. Why were they not appointed to take care of their mother? One reason is the fact that in John 7:5 we read that the brothers & sisters of Jesus did not yet believe on Him. In the kingdom of God, spiritual ties take preference over natural ties. Galatians 6:10 says, “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.” Jesus asked in Mt. 12:48, “Who is My mother and who are My brothers?” Then vv.49-50 says, “And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, ‘Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother.’” John was more of a brother to Jesus than His own flesh & blood brothers. So Jesus gave John the responsibility of caring for Mary.⁵

When Jesus linked His mother to John, He was conveying a deeper reality: The cross of Christ is intended to make family of all of us. When we become believers in Christ, we become brothers and sisters — by the blood of Christ. We share the new birth. We partake of the same Holy Spirit. We have the same destiny, a home in heaven.

Though my physical mother has gone to heaven, I have many mothers in Christ. Though my brother lives 500 miles away in Georgia, I have many brothers in Christ right here in this church. Though my sister in the flesh has died, I have many sisters in Christ in this church. I have many spiritual sons and daughters. I have a few spiritual fathers as well.

You know, this story ends on a good note. Look over at Acts 1:14, “These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.” Note the victory that came—His whole family became believers. Something happened between the death of Jesus, and the events of Acts 1. We know from 1 Cor. 15:7 that the risen Christ “was seen by James,” the brother of Jesus. No doubt He gave testimony to His brothers and sisters, and they all believed in Jesus.

Conclusion: I want to conclude with this thought. What was the best thing the brothers and sisters could have done for their mother? It was to believe in Jesus. That is what happened in the case of Mary’s family. All were united in faith. I wonder if there are some here today who would bring joy to your mother, and joy to heaven, by repenting of sin, and believing in Jesus. Who will step forward to confess Jesus as Savior and Lord? Finally, are you showing honor to your mother by your words? Children and teenagers, are you showing honor by your obedience? Grown children, are you showing honor by properly caring for your widowed or aged mothers? If not, I encourage you to make things right starting today.

⁵ Besides, John may have been her nephew, the son of Mary’s sister. Furthermore, the brothers and sisters of Jesus were evidently not present at the cross.

Sources: Dr. Ernest L. Easley (notes from his sermon on this text dated 2/18/96); John Gill, *An Exposition of the Old and New Testament*, 1760 (accessed from *Online Bible*); Oliver B. Greene, *The Gospel According to John*, Vol. 3 (Greenville, SC: The Gospel Hour, 1966); William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: John* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1955); Herschel H. Hobbs *John: A Study Guide Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1965); Fred. W. Krummacher, *The Suffering Savior* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1855), 399-409; John MacArthur, Jr., *Crucifixion & Resurrection: Study Notes on John 18-20* (Panorama City, CA: Word of Grace Communications, 1984); Tony R. Nester (notes from his sermon on this text); Larry Pierce, *Online Bible* [CD-ROM] (Ontario: Timnathserah Inc., 1996); Arthur W. Pink, *Exposition of the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975); A.T. Robertson, *New Testament Word Pictures*, Vol. 14 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1931, accessed through *Online Bible*); Merrill C. Tenney, *John: The Gospel of Belief* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), Warren W. Wiersbe, "Be" Series: *New Testament Volumes 1 & 2, John* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1989). Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982).

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