

# ***“Woman, Behold Your Son!”***

SEVEN STATEMENTS FROM THE CROSS (#3)

John 19:23-27

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## **Introduction:**

Over the past several weeks, we have been looking together at the crucifixion of Jesus, and we have been looking very specifically at the seven statements that Jesus made from the cross. Two weeks ago, we learned that as Jesus was being nailed to the cross, over and over again He continued to say, ***“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”*** And then last week we looked at the two thieves who were crucified—one on each side of the Lord. Both thieves were hurling abuse at Jesus, but as the day went on, one of the thieves had a change of heart, he rebuked the other thief, he acknowledged that they were getting what they deserved, but that Jesus had done nothing wrong, and then he said, ***“Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!”*** And at that point, the Lord responded by saying, ***“Truly I say to you, today you shall be with me in Paradise.”***

This morning we move over into John’s account as we look at the third statement Jesus made from the cross, and the passage is found in **John 19:23-27**. In our pew Bibles, the Scripture is found on **page 1694**. And really, it would help to go back and look at the soldiers dividing the Lord’s clothing, because it helps to explain what happens next. In addition to the outer garment, history tells us that Jewish mothers often handmade an inner garment as a personal gift to their sons when they were old enough to leave home. It has been described almost as a long t-shirt and would have been worn right next to the skin. And so as we look at John’s account of the third statement that Jesus makes from the cross, I would like for us to notice that the third statement comes almost immediately after the soldiers cast lots for that seamless inner garment—a piece of clothing (a tunic) that was most likely a personal and handmade gift from Mary to her Son. If you will, please look with me at **John 19:23-27...**

***<sup>23</sup> Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His outer garments and made four parts, a part to every soldier and also the tunic; now the tunic [the inner garment] was seamless, woven in one piece. <sup>24</sup> So they said to one another, “Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, to decide whose it shall be”; this was to fulfill the Scripture: “THEY DIVIDED MY OUTER GARMENTS AMONG THEM,***

***AND FOR MY CLOTHING THEY CAST LOTS."*** <sup>25</sup> *Therefore the soldiers did these things. But standing by the cross of Jesus were His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.* <sup>26</sup> *When Jesus then saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold, your son!"* <sup>27</sup> *Then He said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" From that hour the disciple took her into his own household.*

We find, then, that as soon as the soldiers get to that inner garment, perhaps that personal and handmade gift from Mary to her Son, the Lord looks over to His mother and says, ***"Woman, behold, your son!"*** This morning, then, I would like for us to look very carefully at this third statement. I would like for us to consider, first of all, the courage of those who were standing there by the cross. I would like for us to focus in on the Lord's care for His mother. And then I would like for us to notice the bond we have with each other in the church—a bond that is closer even than that of our physical families.

I. **First of all, though, let us consider THE COURAGE OF THOSE FEW DISCIPLES WHO WERE GATHERED THERE BY THE CROSS.**

In fact, I do not know if we can truly appreciate this—the courage that it must have taken to stand there at the foot of the cross—to associate with a condemned criminal in such a public place. We remember what the outspoken and normally courageous Peter had done just a few hours earlier. When confronted by a servant girl, Peter had denied even knowing the Lord. The Bible even tells us that all of the disciples had fled—that they had scattered in all directions. And yet here we find that John has a change of heart and returns to the actual crucifixion, and he is accompanied by four women. It has been said that courage is not the absence of fear; it is the mastery of it. Someone else has said that courage is doing what you are afraid to do. Or, as John Wayne once said, ***"Courage is being scared to death but saddling up anyway."*** I think we might agree that John and these four women must have had some amazing courage to stand there with the Lord at the foot of the cross, knowing that the Jewish leaders were looking to stamp out the Christian faith. Sometimes we sing the song by Fanny Crosby, ***"Jesus, Keep me Near the Cross."*** And yet I do not know if we truly understand how much courage that would have taken. If we had been there, would we have had the courage to climb up on that hill and to stand there by the Lord? This is something that even Peter didn't have the courage to do. And yet we find that there were at least a small handful of disciples who had the courage to step up.

We find, first of all, a reference to Mary, the Lord's mother. As we think about Mary standing there at the foot of the cross, we cannot help but think back to the prophecy from our Scripture reading this morning, a prophecy that was made by Simeon when Mary and Joseph took Jesus to the temple when He was only eight days old, and in that prophecy Simeon spoke to Mary and said that ***"...a sword would pierce even [her] own soul"*** (**Luke 2:35**). And here we are with Jesus now on the cross, and

Mary is watching her first-born Son suffer and die—the same Son she had carried for nine months, the same Son she had bathed, and changed, and nursed. How difficult that must have been! It took courage for Mary to stand there at the foot of the cross.

We come next to Mary's sister, the Lord's aunt. From other passages, we know that this is Salome, the mother of James and John. We have seen her before (in **Matthew 20**), as she asked Jesus to give her sons thrones—one on His right hand and one on His left hand when He came in His kingdom. Jesus responded by saying, ***"You do not know what you are asking for. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?"*** Perhaps Salome now understood what the Lord was talking about as she stood there with courage at the foot of the cross.

We now consider the other Mary, the wife of Clopas. We are not told anything else about this woman, but it is interesting that John mentions her husband. As we have studied before, there is often a reason for mentioning a name like that—often, it means that the first readers knew the person. And so it is possible that Clopas later became a Christian. Perhaps Mary had some kind of influence over her husband. Like several of the men here at this congregation, it is certainly possible that Clopas was later brought to the Lord by his wife. But whatever the situation was, we know that this Mary (the wife of Clopas) must have also had a great deal of courage to stand there at the foot of the cross.

We also notice a reference here to a third Mary, Mary Magdalene. We know from the Scriptures that Mary Magdalene was a woman out of whom Jesus had cast seven demons. We also know that this particular Mary was one of those women who had followed the Lord and had provided financial support for the Lord's ministry out of her own private means. And then, according to Mark's account, Mary is also the first one to whom the Lord appeared after His resurrection. It may be hard for us to truly understand the deep appreciation that Mary must have had for being released from those seven demons. What a weight that the Lord had lifted. And so in response, we find that Mary Magdalene also had the courage to stand at the foot of the cross.

But then finally, this morning, we come to John, the only MAN in this group. John was perhaps the Lord's closest friend. Perhaps out of humility, he does not identify himself by name, but he refers to himself very simply as ***"the disciple."***

The first idea here, therefore, is that it took a lot of courage for these five disciples to identify themselves with the Lord at the foot of the cross—an encouraging example for all of us here this morning. When we are tempted to not speak up about something either at work, or at home, or maybe as we are out with our friends, we can think about these five disciples and the courage that they must have had, and we can hold them up as an example.

**II. There is a second basic idea from this passage, and we see it in the fact that even on the cross, JESUS DID WHAT WAS NECESSARY TO TAKE CARE OF HIS MOTHER.**

In verse 26, Jesus turns to Mary and says, *“Woman, behold, your son!”* And then in verse 27 He turns to John and says, *“Behold, your mother!”* In other words, Jesus was making arrangements for His closest friend (His most faithful disciple) to treat Mary as if she was his own mother, to care for her in her later years—to do for her what society would expect for a son to do for his mother. And John agrees. We know from history that in Jewish society it was customary for the oldest son to take responsibility for this. We notice that Joseph is not mentioned. We read about Joseph along with the temple incident when Jesus was 12 years old, but then we never hear from Joseph again. We assume that Joseph is dead. We know that construction has always been a rather dangerous occupation, so perhaps he died in some kind of accident—we don’t know. For those of you who have lost a parent at an early age, it appears that Jesus knows what you have gone through...from His own personal experience. But Joseph is not in the picture, and so the Lord (even while hanging on the cross) makes sure that someone will take responsibility for His mother.

We are reminded, then, that all of us whose parents are still living have certain responsibilities toward our parents. First of all, for those who are still living at home, you are responsible for obeying your parents (or, in the case of those who are being raised by grandparents or by someone else, you are responsible for obeying whoever is *acting* as your parent). The Bible says in Ephesians 6:1-3, *“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER (which is the first commandment with a promise), SO THAT IT MAY BE WELL WITH YOU, AND THAT YOU MAY LIVE LONG ON THE EARTH.”* The opposite of this is that if we decide not to obey our parents, then our life will be short on the earth! There is a value to listening to mom and dad! And I know it may seem like our parents are hopelessly out of date, that they have no idea what we may be going through—after all, they are over the age of 30—but there is still a value to listening to mom and dad! King Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, said in Proverbs 23:22, *“Listen to your father who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old.”* That is some very good advice!

But we also know from the Scriptures that we also have a responsibility to support and take care of our parents in their old age. At this point, Mary would have been at least in her mid to late 40’s. And so, in a time when the life expectancy was perhaps 50 years or so, Mary was getting pretty old!

We remember in Mark 7 how Jesus condemned the Pharisees because they thought they had found a loophole in the Old Law. They knew they were supposed to take care of their elderly parents, but they said that everything they owned in life was dedicated to God, and so they did not have anything to give to their parents in their old age. The Lord got extremely upset at that line of reasoning and said, *“Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: ‘THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME.*

***BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN.*** *Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men.*” God, therefore, had rejected the worship of the Pharisees, because they had refused to take care of their elderly parents.

As the apostle Paul would go on to write later (in 1 Timothy 5:8), ***“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.”*** The Lord, therefore, was setting an example for all children—even as He was nailed to the cross, He was thinking about His mother and was making arrangements for her to be taken care of after He was gone. As God, Jesus was taking care of some eternal matters—He was carrying the sins of the world. But as a Son He was demonstrating for us what it means to care for our own earthly parents.

Have we thought about our own parents and what they sacrificed for us? They made sure we had food to eat when we were helpless. They taught us to walk. They changed our diapers. They held the Kleenex when we blew our nose! They taught us to drive. Our mothers seem to love us no matter what. As I was preparing for this morning’s lesson, I read about some interviews that were done with mothers whose sons were on death row awaiting execution. The mothers would say, **“But he’s such a good boy!”** The interviewer would say, **“But he slaughtered 37 people with an axe!”** **“Yes,”** the mothers would say, **“but he has a good heart!”** You see, mothers will believe in us when no one else will. The Lord, therefore, made arrangements for the care of His mother. And what an amazing example that is for all of us here this morning—to obey, honor, and care for our parents just as the Lord did!

**III. There is one final concept I would like for us to consider from this passage, and it comes in the fact that THE LORD DID NOT GIVE THIS RESPONSIBILITY TO ONE OF HIS YOUNGER BROTHERS.**

In fact, I find it so powerful that as the Lord speaks these very simple words to John, John knows exactly what he needs to do, and so the Bible tells us (in verse 27) that, ***“...from that hour the disciple took her into his own household.”*** In other words, John got it! With just a few words, John understood exactly what needed to be done, and he did it.

Why didn’t Jesus give this responsibility to one of His younger brothers? We know from the Scriptures that Jesus had at least four younger brothers. We are given their names in Mark 6:3. We also know that the Lord had at least two sisters. Why were the other siblings not called upon here? Well, for one, they weren’t there. We know from earlier in the life of Christ that His family thought He was crazy and tried to have Him committed (Mark 3:21). It was only after the Lord’s resurrection that several of them were converted. But I believe there is a more important reason. Have we heard the saying that blood is thicker than water? We know what that means. We know how strong family ties can be. However, I would suggest that our ties as a Christian family are much thicker than blood! And we know the benefits and

the responsibilities that go along with being a part of the Christian family. As Paul would go on to write later (in **Galatians 6:10**), ***“So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.”*** In other words, we have a responsibility to everybody, but our love and concern for others absolutely has to start with our brothers and sisters in the church. On that day, therefore, Mary might have lost a Son, but she also gained a Son! The apostle John gained a mother.

You might remember the time from earlier in His ministry when the Lord's mother and brothers showed up. Mark says that, ***“Then His mother and His brothers arrived, and standing outside they sent word to Him and called Him. A crowd was sitting around Him, and they said to Him, ‘Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are outside looking for You.’ Answering them, He said, ‘Who are My mother and My brothers?’ Looking about at those who were sitting around Him, He said, ‘Behold My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister and mother’”*** (**Mark 3:31-35**). The Lord was not slamming His natural family, but He was emphasizing the importance of our spiritual family—those of us who share the Christian faith.

Several years later (in **Mark 10**), Peter would say to the Lord, ***“Behold, we have left everything and followed You.”*** And you may remember how Jesus answered, ***“Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel's sake, but that he will receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life.”*** Again, the point is that we gain a spiritual family in the church, and as family we take care of each other.

We remember how those in the early church shared their possessions and how they took care of each other. We remember the godly men in **Acts 6** who were appointed by the church to care for Christian widows—to care for women who were in Mary's situation. The church, therefore, is not just a club where we hang out together for an hour every week, but it is a family—a family where we are to care for one another just as John took care of Mary. As the church, we rejoice with those who rejoice and we weep with those who weep (**Romans 12:15**). We support and share with each other. We look beyond our own physical family, and we reach out, and the Bible teaches that that relationship starts at the cross. I am not primarily Baxter, the son of Ray and Jessie, but I am first and foremost a child of God and a brother to all of you here this morning. As Christians, we belong to each other. We are all joined together with a bond that is thicker than blood. We pray for each other. We check in with each other. We care for each other.

In a practical way, this means that we need to recommit to communicating with others within the congregation—regardless of age, or gender, or racial background, or economic situation. We can meet someone for dinner this week and get to know them a little better. We can make a call or stop by for a visit. We can stop by and visit with some of our elderly widows and see if they need some light bulbs changed,

to see if they need us to change the batteries in their smoke detectors. Is there someone in our spiritual family that we need to get to know better? Look through the bulletin. Look through the church directory. The Lord would say to us, "**Woman, behold, your son,**" and, "**Behold, your mother.**" We are to open our hearts and our lives to our brothers and sisters in the church, because there is a bond that is closer than physical family.

### **Conclusion:**

As we come to the end of our study, we are left with some powerful questions:

- First of all, would we have had the courage of Mary, and the other three women, and of the apostle John—the courage to stand there at the foot of the cross, in spite of the danger? And likewise today, do we have the courage to be identified with Christ even when it may be rather uncomfortable?
- Secondly, will we follow the example of Christ by taking care of our parents in their elderly years? Are we making plans for that? Are we honoring our parents right now?
- And then finally, does the family of God mean more to us than our own physical families? Are we concerned for each other and are we taking care of each other as we should?

Next Sunday, if the Lord wills, I would like for us to study the fourth statement made by Jesus on the cross, and I would encourage you to try to find it on your own sometime before next Sunday morning.

The greatest question this morning, though, is whether you personally are a member of God's family. The Bible explains that we become a part of God's family by being born into it, by being born again. We turn away from our sins, and we allow ourselves to be briefly buried in water for the forgiveness of sins. If you have any questions, we would love to talk with you about that, but if you are ready to obey the gospel right now, you can let us know as we sing this next song. Let's stand and sing...

To comment on this lesson: [church@fourlakescoc.org](mailto:church@fourlakescoc.org)