

Message #60

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John

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MOTHER'S DAY

AND THE CRUCIFIXION DEMONSTRATION OF LOVE

JOHN 19:25-30

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW

Lisa Gerardini grew up in Florence, Italy, some five centuries ago. She was the oldest of seven children. She lived in a middle class family. Her dad owned several farms outside of town. Young women in that time and place tended to marry at an early age. Life expectancies were not very long. So Lisa married at age 15. Her husband was considerably older. He was a cloth and silk merchant. His first two wives had died. But it seems that it was not just an arranged marriage, or a marriage of economic convenience. Lisa and husband Francesco truly loved each other.

Lisa took on the task of raising Francesco's son from his first marriage. She also proceeded to have five children of her own. It appears that it was a godly household. Two of their daughters became nuns. Both of them were respected. The rest of the kids seemed to turn out well.

Francesco was chosen to become an official in Florence. It seems that he had a good reputation in the community. When he died, he left his estate to Lisa and made this statement about her: **"Given the affection and love of the testator towards ... Lisa, his beloved wife; in consideration of the fact that Lisa has always acted with a noble spirit and as a faithful wife; wishing that she shall have all she needs..."** Then he goes on to leave his estate to her.

If they had celebrated Mother's Day back in her era, Lisa certainly would have been worthy of honor. Of course, there have been millions of honorable wives and mothers over the centuries. What is notable about Lisa is that her husband commissioned a local artist to paint a picture of her. That artist was a man by the name of Leonardo da Vinci. (PROJECTOR ON--- MONA LISA) The painting has become known as Mona Lisa. It resides in the Louvre in Paris. Six million visitors a year pass by to look at her image.

According to the Guinness Book of World records it has received the highest insurance valuation of any art work in the world.

Our passage this morning deals with a mother who is even more famous than Lisa. (PROJECTOR OFF) I would like to be able to credit my good planning with arriving at this passage in our ongoing study of John's Gospel on this particular Sunday. But the truth is that this was simply the next passage to be studied in our sermon series. It is certainly an appropriate passage to consider on this Mother's Day. It has good things to teach us about a godly mom and a godly son.

Last Sunday we looked at seven notable elements in the crucifixion of Jesus. The passage, and the crucifixion of Jesus, seem to stress the humiliating and horrible nature of this form of Roman execution. But what it is intended to teach us is that Jesus is a friend of sinners and that we humans who experience rejection and humiliation and failure can come to the God-man Jesus who identifies with us. So we take up the story today with the conclusion of the crucifixion.

I.

In v. 25 of John #19, which is p. 905 in the black Bibles, we encounter THE EXAMPLE OF A MOTHER'S LOVE. (PROJECTOR ON--- I. THE EXAMPLE OF A MOTHER'S LOVE) The Apostle John writes, **"...but standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene."**

We saw last week that the site of the crucifixion of Jesus was just outside of the west gate of the city of Jerusalem. (GOLGOTHA) The hearing before Roman governor Pontius Pilate was probably held a short distance away in Herod's palace, once the home of Herod the Great. Romans intentionally set up the places of execution near well traveled areas. For they wanted the executions to be public spectacles. They wanted the people to see what happened to those who acted against Rome.

The two verses just prior to our passage focused on the callous activity of four Roman soldiers. They were executioners who were casting lots for the one valuable piece of clothing that Jesus possessed. The last of His earthly possessions were taken away from Him as He was dying on that cross.

In contrast to the activity of these four brutal soldiers, we are now presented with the activity of four godly women. At least three of them are mothers. One of them is the earthly mother of Jesus. The other

Gospels have lists of these women who were present at the crucifixion. The descriptions of them vary slightly. In this variation we can learn more about the connections that these women had.

(CHART OF WOMEN AT THE CROSS) You can see from the chart that Matthew (27:56) and Mark (15:40) also list the women who were present at the crucifixion. John's Gospel is the only one that mentions Mary, the mother of Jesus. Mary Magdalene is mentioned in all three lists. The name "Magdalene" is a reference to Magdala, which was a town on the west side of the Sea of Galilee. Mary may well be the mother of a James and Joseph and the wife of Clopas. Perhaps the most interesting connection is that Solome may have been Mary's sister and the mother of James and John, the disciples of Jesus. It is this John is the author of this Gospel.

So it may well be that the author of this book, and the apostle of Jesus, is the cousin of Jesus. Mary, Jesus' mother, may well be the aunt of the Apostle John. John never mentions himself by name in this Gospel. He also does not mention his brother James by name. It could fit that he does not mention his own mother by name either. She is simply described as Mary's sister.

The mom who stands out in this story is Mary, the mother of Jesus. This is the woman who was chosen by God to be the earthly mother of our Lord. She is the woman who had to deal with scorn in her home town of Nazareth as she was looked upon as a girl who became pregnant outside of marriage. Initially her fiancé did not believe her. She is the one who traveled to Bethlehem when she was close to giving birth. She is the one who gave birth to her first child in a place where animals were kept. She is the one who was visited by the shepherds who announced that angels had appeared to them proclaiming the birth of a Savior. She is the one who received the prophecy from a stranger named Simeon when she visited the temple in Jerusalem. (LUKE 2:34) According to Luke #2 vv. 34 & 35, **"And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, 'Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed (LUKE 2:35) (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.'"**

She and her husband were visited by these strangers from the east bearing gifts and desiring to honor their child. Mary, along with Joseph, was the one who protected Jesus from the murder attempt of evil King Herod by fleeing to Egypt. Mary is the one who raised her son in Nazareth in Galilee. At some point she became a widow, and became the sole parent of Jesus. Mary had other children, but Jesus was unique. When He began His public ministry, she did not understand Him. She did not know what to make of stories that He was healing people and saying radical things about His mission in life. (MARK 3:21) According to Mark #3 v. 21, **"And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they**

were saying, 'He is out of his mind.'" Ten verses later we are told (MARK 3:31), "And his mother and his brothers came, and standing outside they sent to him and called him."

At some point, Mary came to believe in the claims of her son. She became part of a group of women who followed him around in His ministry. She must have been terribly stressed to see the growing opposition to Him from the religious leaders. (PROJECTOR OFF)

Now she was standing at the cross. Except for John, the other disciples were not to be found. It was a group of women, including Mary, who would not desert Him. At least three of them were mothers. They were marked out by their courage. Perhaps they were seen by the Roman soldiers as less of a danger to their own security. But still, it took a certain boldness and commitment to stand with this One who was branded by their religious leaders as a heretic and blasphemer, and by the Romans as a traitor and a rebel.

Imagine the emotions that Mary must have been experiencing as she witnessed the suffering of her son. It is difficult for any parent to lose a child. We parents expect to pass away first. I watched this week as Chuck Lamb's mom saw her son slip into eternity. She said that the doctors told her that he would not live beyond three or four years old. So she recognized the blessing of the extra years of life that he had been given.

There must have been a double sadness for Mary as she saw the physical punishment that her son was enduring. She also saw the injustice of His treatment. This was the mom who had a son who never did anything wrong. She had seen the miraculous healings that He had performed and the other good deeds that He had done. Yet He was being vilified by her own religious leaders for being a fraud and a blasphemer. She saw that they had arranged His death and had gained the acquiescence of the Gentile political leaders. I suspect that Mary may have remembered the prophecy of Simeon so many years earlier that eventually her soul would be pierced by what happened to Jesus. She did not understand why God would allow all of this. It would not be until after the resurrection that she would begin to understand the divine purpose behind this seeming tragedy.

Truly Mary was committed to her son. Her behavior is the model example of a mother's love. She did have a perfect child in Jesus. We parents do not have such children. So committed parental love does not necessarily mean giving our kids all of what they want. It means seeking to provide them with what they truly need. It certainly does mean a love of selfless commitment.

II.

In vv. 26 & 27 we encounter THE EXAMPLE OF A SON'S LOVE. (PROJECTOR ON--- II. THE EXAMPLE OF A SON'S LOVE) The Apostle John writes, **"When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, 'Woman, behold, your son!' Then he said to the disciple, 'Behold, your mother!' And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home."**

Jesus is the one who is dying. He is suffering pain and exhaustion and dehydration and humiliation. Yet He maintains a certain command of the situation. We know from the other Gospels that He is hearing the confession of one of the other two criminals. He is promising entrance into heaven. Now He is caring for His mother. He is showing a son's love for her.

The term "disciple whom he loved" has been used before in this Gospel. It appears to refer to the author John.

Jesus calls His mother in v. 26 "Woman." That sounds a bit cold in our language. It did not have such a cold connotation in His language. It is interesting to notice that in the Gospels Jesus never refers to Mary as "mom" or "mother." There is perhaps in this an indication that once Jesus began His public ministry that His relationship with her changed

There is support for this in the incident in which the family members of Jesus showed up to take Him away. (MARK 3:33) According to Mark #3, beginning in v. 33, **"And he answered them, 'Who are my mother and my brothers?'"** (MARK 3:34) **And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers!'"** (MARK 3:35) **For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother."** At the same time, we must keep in mind that Jesus is here doing the work of a devoted son. He is caring for His mother.

Joseph is clearly gone from the scene. Probably He died at some point before Jesus began His public ministry. By custom and tradition, the oldest son in the family was to take over leadership of the clan. That would be Jesus. (PROJECTOR OFF) His itinerant public ministry necessarily required some separation from the family. Many, or most, of His siblings would have been adults by this time. At a certain point, His mother joined this band of Jesus followers. Now at the cross He acknowledges responsibility for her care.

By putting together all of the Gospel accounts, it is generally recognized that Jesus made seven statements while hanging on the cross. His statement in vv. 26 and 27 is number 3: "Woman, behold your son! Behold, your mother!" Jesus is passing on the responsibility for the care of His mother to the Apostle John. Why him? We may not know the entire reason, but there are at least a couple of factors of which we are aware.

The first is that there is no indication that the siblings of Jesus have changed their attitude toward Jesus and His mission. The last that we saw of them, they were trying to take Jesus away because they thought that He was off of His rocker. Mary has embraced Jesus and His mission. She has made a commitment to Him and to His band of disciples. Secondly, John is probably Mary's nephew. So he is part of Mary's extended family.

Our translation in v. 27 says that this disciple took Mary "to his own home." That is not actually what the Greek text says. It says that he took her "into his own." I suspect that the more accurate picture is that John took Mary into his own family. That might have meant traveling around Judea and Galilee in the ministry that followed. It may have meant staying with friends when they were in Jerusalem. It may have meant having a home base in Capernaum on the Sea of Galilee, where we know that John's family had a fishing business.

Our Catholic friends have historically argued that John was coming under the care of Mary, the mother of the Church. A plain reading of the text should lead to the conclusion that Mary, the earthly mother of Jesus, was being entrusted to the care of her nephew. Mary is certainly to be admired. She was a godly example and model. But in John's Gospel, we have seen no central role that she has in the mission of Jesus. The focus is upon Jesus and not His mother. Jesus is the Giver of life and blessing, not His mother.

We find in the actions of Jesus in these verses an example of the proper application of the Fifth Commandment. (PROJECTOR ON--- EXODUS 20:12) In Exodus #20 v. 12 God says, "**Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.**" The example of Jesus teaches us that one thing that it means to honor father and mother is to care for them in their old age.

The Apostle Paul expands on this responsibility in regard to widows in particular. (1 TIMOTHY 5:8) In 1 Timothy #5 v. 8 he writes, "**But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members**

of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.” He goes on to explain that when there is no family around to support a widow, the church needs to take on that responsibility.

So we find here in Jesus the perfect example of a son’s love for his mother. It is an example to be emulated by all children for their parents, especially as they grow older. We may live in a society that offers many safety nets and government programs. But the Biblical responsibility remains for children to care for their aging parents.

III.

In vv. 28-30 we come to THE BEST GIFT OF THE PERFECT SON. (III. THE BEST GIFT OF THE PERFECT SON) John writes in v. 28, **“After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), ‘I thirst.’”** All was now finished. Jesus’ primary mission was in the process of being accomplished. That mission was to pay the penalty for the sins of the world.

John recognizes that Jesus is fulfilling Scripture in what He is doing. The word that he uses for “fulfill” is not the usual word that is used in this context. Rather he uses the Greek word for “finish” or “complete.” It is a form of the same word that Jesus is about to utter on the cross. The reference here to fulfillment of Scripture could be understood as pertaining to Jesus’ death as a whole. It could be referring to His next statement. It could be referring to both. It seems like it must at least refer to the statement, “I thirst.”

If that is the case, the issue is what Scripture the Apostle John had in mind. Last week we saw that John recognized that Jesus was fulfilling the description provided centuries ago in Psalm 22. Verse 15 in that Psalm certainly describes a situation of thirst. (PSALM 22:15) The psalmist writes, **“...my tongue sticks to my jaws...”** Because of what happens next with Jesus, there is perhaps another Psalm that has an even more appropriate reference. (PSALM 69:21) In Psalm 69 v. 21 the writer says, **“...and for my thirst they gave me sour wine to drink.”**

This statement by Jesus about His thirst is regarded as the fifth of Jesus’ seven sayings on the cross. Number four, which is not included here, is “My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me,” a quotation from Psalm 22. How is it that the Second Person of the Triune Godhead could experience a separation from God the Father? It was because this was necessary for Him to bear the wrath of God against sin as our substitute. He was experiencing a spiritual death, a real separation from God.

So now when Jesus Christ says that He thirsts, He may be expressing not only a physical thirst, but also a spiritual thirst. Earlier in John's Gospel we saw Him proclaim that He was the source of living water. Before He can provide an unending stream of living water, He must experience spiritual thirst Himself. (PROJECTOR OFF)

So at this point Jesus is dying spiritually. He is also about to die physically. Today, we humans die physically first. If we have not acquired a relationship with Jesus, then we will die spiritually.

Verse 29: **"A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth."** This was a cheap drink that was typically imbibed by Roman soldiers. Jesus' cry from the cross prompts one of them to put a sponge with this drink by His mouth. This was not necessarily an act of kindness, because it simply served to prolong the agony of the victim of crucifixion. But this soldier was unwittingly fulfilling prophecy by what he did.

By using a branch of hyssop, John was perhaps recognizing additional symbolic significance. For at the original Passover the children of Israel were required to apply the blood of the Passover lamb to the doorposts of their homes in order to avoid the visitation of death from the angel of God. (PROJECTOR ON--- EXODUS 12:22) Moses instructed his people in Exodus 12:22, **"Take a bunch of hyssop and dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and touch the lintel and the two doorposts with the blood that is in the basin."** Now the blood of the true Passover lamb was being applied to the penalty for the sins of the world.

Verse 30, back in our passage, says, **"When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, 'It is finished,' and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit."** Perhaps this last taste of sour wine gave Jesus the energy which He needed to make this last utterance. Mark #15 v. 37 describes it as a loud cry. First He bows His head, and then He gives up His spirit.

In most deaths, especially crucifixions, the ebbing of life results in the giving up of one's spirit. Then the slumping of one's head happens. There is a hint in the description here that Jesus is in control up until the very end. He bows His head, and then He gives up His spirit. His human, divine spirit leaves His physical body.

The last utterance of Jesus has great significance. (TETELESTAI) It is one word in the original Greek. It is *tetelestai*. It is a perfect tense verb, which means that it refers to past action that has continuing results.

His work is finished, completed, but it has continuing results. Archaeologists have discovered an accountant's office in ancient Egypt from a time when Greek had become the common language there. There were two stacks of bills in this office. One had bills that were unpaid. The other had bills that were paid. A cover was over the paid bills. On it was written the word *tetelestai*. (PROJECTOR OFF)

What is it that is finished? The work of redemption, the mission to pay the penalty for the sins of the world. The resurrection is still to come, along with the ascension into heaven. But the primary point of Jesus' mission to the world was to die for the sins of humanity. Back in #1 v. 29 we saw John the Baptist proclaim when he saw Jesus: **"Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"**

This has tremendous theological implications. It means that eternal salvation for human beings has been accomplished by the crucifixion of Jesus. There is nothing more that we humans can add to it. Thus it is that the Apostle Paul (PROJECTOR ON--- EPHESIANS 2:8-9) proclaims in Ephesians #2 vv. 8 & 9, **"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast."** The only responsibility that we have is to accept this gift, to trust in Jesus. There is nothing to earn. The price has already been paid. The work of Jesus Christ is finished. It is the best gift of the perfect Son.

(MONA LISA) It took a while for Leonardo to finish the picture of Francesco's wife. That project got sidetracked for a while when another more lucrative painting project came along. Then Francesco encountered financial difficulties. So he never paid for the picture of his wife. Leonardo took along the painting when he moved to France. It was found in his studio after he died. His earliest biographer says that Leonardo never actually finished the painting. Art historians have discovered that Leonardo injured the arm that he painted with toward the end of his life. That may have something to do with the reason that Mona Lisa was never completed. There is also a statement that is attributed to Leonardo da Vinci that goes like this: "Art is never finished, only abandoned." I submit to you that the work of Jesus Christ was finished. It was completed. *Tetelestai!* (PROJECTOR OFF)

Hudson Taylor was the British missionary who introduced the gospel to China. He was the founder of the China Inland Mission. He grew up in a Christian home. He had a loving mother who regularly prayed for her son. For a long time, Hudson resisted the offer of the gospel. Then one day someone placed a tract in his hand that had the statement: It is finished.

That statement troubled Hudson. He did not understand what it meant. According to his own words, **"Then there dawned upon me the joyous conviction that since the whole work was finished and the**

whole debt was paid upon the cross, there was nothing for me to do but to fall upon my knees, accept the Savior and praise him forevermore.” Such it was that Hudson Taylor became a Christian. Such it is that we too can have the gift of eternal life. We simply must trust in Jesus and what He did for us upon the cross.