



Behold Your Son...Behold Your Mother

John 19:25-27

March 19, 2017 Diane Christopher

We come to the third “word” of Jesus from the cross. What is amazing about the words that Jesus has spoken thus far is that Jesus, who is in the midst of this incredible suffering, is thinking of others. Not only is Jesus experiencing extreme physical torture, he is experiencing a mental cost as well.

Jesus is probably naked on the cross. This is done to humiliate the crucified. But Jesus thinks of others and turns to those who are killing him saying, Father, forgive them. Jesus turns to the criminal hanging on a cross next to him and says today you will be with me in paradise. And now, Jesus looks down at those he knows, his family, his friends...and addresses them. Let us hear what Jesus has to say.

Prayer: Stir in us now, Holy Spirit, a willingness to hear, the desire to know the truth and the courage to follow in joyful obedience, that we may be formed by your word into women and men of faith. Amen

Read scripture John 19:25-27 “Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother’s sister, Mary, the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdelene. When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, “Woman, here is your son,” [or as some translations say, “Dear Woman, here is your son”] and to the disciple, “Here is your mother.” From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.”

The word of the Lord....

Think about this: Jesus could have taken care of his mother the night before in the Upper Room. He could have leaned over to John who was sitting next to Jesus at the dinner table and asked him to take care of his mother right then and there. He could have done it after he rose from the grave. He spent a lot of time with both Mary and the disciples after his resurrection.

Instead, he chose the moment when He was hanging on the cross to stop and take care of his mother's future. This was the only statement Jesus made that didn't have to be said while hanging on the cross. The others were unique to the cross. Why did Jesus wait until hanging on the cross to take care of his mother?

I think Jesus was revealing something to us. He is letting us see God's heart. This is a beautiful picture of how much God loves us. Jesus is hanging on the cross taking on the sins of the world:

Isaiah 53:6 - God laid on him the iniquity of us all

2 Corinthians 5:21 - God made him who had no sin to be sin for us.

This is a spiritual agony that Jesus is experiencing along with the physical agony.

Yet, he stops to show that he is not too distracted to take care of one desperate widow who needs a place to sleep. Yes, Jesus loves us in the big things, but this is a picture of a God who cares about the smallest details of our lives and who we are.

I think of one of my favorite stories in all of scripture. It is a story about one of God's prophets named Elijah who is going through sort of a depression (I Kings 19). He is tired and weary of serving God, and says to God, "I've had enough." Have you ever been that honest with God?

The depressed and weary Elijah falls asleep underneath a tree, and wakes up to find an angel tapping him on the shoulder. The angel points to some food and water sitting nearby, and the angel says, "Get up and eat." God, taking care of the basic needs of his servant.

Christ looked beyond his own suffering to see a mother watching her son die. And Jesus ministers to her. Mary is a picture of us. Maybe you are broken-hearted, crushed, maybe unsure of the future. You are in need of Christ to take care of you, provide for you in your time of need.

God does not just love you as a Savior who wants to take away your sin. God also loves you as a parent who wants to care for you the way a good parent would a daughter or son.

How do you view God? Do you see God as Someone too busy with the cares of the world to care about the things that are bringing you pain right now? Do you have minor details you would never bring to God because they seem just too trivial?

Scripture says, "Cast *all* your anxieties on God, because God cares for you." (1 Peter 5:7). While hanging on the cross, Jesus took the time to care for the needs of a person He loved. Jesus stopped in the middle of paying for our sins and said, "Mary, I love you. I'm going to make sure you're taken care of."

How has God taken care of you?

I can look back over my life and see the moments God entered in to show God cared. The time when I needed money to go to seminary and one day, an unmarked envelope showed up in my mailbox with 5 \$100 bills. Someone had cut out letters from a magazine, pasted them to a piece of paper saying, "For seminary." And of course, no clue as to whom it was.

The time when I had to be out of my rented apartment in a few weeks, I couldn't afford another place, and a friend offered her mother's house for free. She had just put her mother in a nursing home, and she needed someone to take care of the house.

Ok, I will share with one. When I was in my late teens, the time my date took me to the road where everyone watched the airplanes take off and land at the airport, but my date had other things in mind besides watching airplanes. And at a crucial moment, a cop shone a flashlight in the car....

Or the time, I was driving to seminary one morning in the middle of a blizzard on the freeway in rush hour traffic in Minneapolis. I remember thinking as I was clutching the steering wheel, "Someone is praying for me." I felt it. All of a sudden, my car caught the seam at the side of the road and my car began to skid. It did a 180 and began to slide across 3 lanes of heavy traffic. I waited for a car to hit me.

No one did. My car stopped as I hit the freeway barrier that kept my car from skidding into the other side of traffic. I looked up. I was facing the opposite direction and a car was right in front of me. He had stopped just in time. We looked at each other...and I waved at him, turned my car around and continued safely to school.

God, in the details of our lives, protecting, caring, providing. You can look back and see them. Right? And if you can't, go home and begin to think back over your life...maybe write down all those times that God provided, intervened, cared. Ones perhaps you never recognized before.

Some of you may be thinking of the times when God didn't stop the accident, the injury, the death. Did God care then? Look at the cross. It still existed, but God provided for Mary and John in the midst of horrible circumstances....which leads to my second point. Not only does God care about the details of our lives, God uses other people to meet those cares and needs.

Back to the cross. Jesus is looking down and sees 3 women, all named Mary: his mother, Mary; Mary Magdalene whom Jesus healed and became a devoted follower. Then there is another Mary, wife of Clopas. Who is that?

Early church history says that Clopas is Joseph's brother. Therefore, this Mary is Jesus' mother's sister-in-law, or another way to put it, Jesus' aunt. She and her husband may have cared for Jesus and his mother when Joseph, Jesus' earthly father, passed away. She was like a second mother to Jesus. Now here she is at the cross.

Jesus is concerned about them. A mother is watching her son die and feeling his excruciating pain. For those of you who have lost a child, you know that pain. Only one disciple is standing there (the rest are gone), John, the one that was closest to Jesus.

So Jesus looks at his mother and his disciple, and tells them to love and care for each other. John, behold your mother...she is now going to be your responsibility. And Mary, behold your son, John. Share your love with John who will need your support in the days ahead.

Jesus wants these two people to take care of each other, and that is still God's call for us today. Through Christ, we have a family of believers to take care of, and a family of believers who take care of us. Over and over again, scripture tells us to do this for each other:

Be devoted to one another...

Honor one another above yourselves...

Live in harmony with one another

Accept one another just as Christ accepted you...

Instruct one another...

Serve one another in love...

Forgive one another...

Submit to one another...

Encourage one another...

Fellowship with one another...

Pray for each other....

Christ takes care of us, therefore we take care of others. And when we do, we are following the example of Christ. That's what Christ followers do.

What younger people in your life need guidance, love and encouragement? To whom can you become like a mother or father? What older people needs care, comfort and support? To whom can you become like a son or a daughter?

Christ gave us each other as a gift. Take a look around you. Behold your mother, your father, your son, your daughter, your sister, your brother.

I end with an example of someone who cared for us, this church. After Larry died, Pastor Paul and I found ourselves overwhelmed...not only with our own grief, but the grief of a whole church and the many tasks of Larry's falling into our laps. We asked Presbytery for help.

Together along with Brad Monroe and the Administrative Commission, we developed the position of a temporary part-time executive pastor. David Dethmers heard of need and sent me an email introducing himself: I live down the street. I have been a pastor for over 30 years and offer myself in anyway I can to help out. He had attached his resume, and I sent it on to the Administrative Commission.

David came out of retirement and started working mid-October. He has been with us the past 5 months. God, who saw our need. "Behold your church," God said to David, and David answered the call to walk by our side.

Call David forward for thank you.