

Some Last Words Part 4

Luke 23:32-43

The society that we live within today, and the culture that defines its behavior seems to be ever-changing. And unfortunately, the changes seem always to be continuing down a path that it should not follow, a path in which parents are less and less caring towards the children they birth into this world.

And also, and even more obvious, the children are following a similar path, one which is less and less caring about and towards their parents.

Family, as defined within the modern day cultural circumstance is often not even a marriage. And with fathers and mothers simply living together, it seems easier for the two to separate out from each other for little or no reason, leaving the children to wonder and often not know how they are to respond to these people that are called their mother and their father.

This may seem to be an overstatement to some who hear my words. But folks, the downhill slide of what we once called "family" is increasing with each generation.

Family and the loving relationship that the word "family" used to imply truly is dissipating rapidly within our modern day relationships.

But it was never, never intended to be that way. Never! God's very obvious intention for "families" is a marriage between a man and a woman and them then bearing and raising and loving a house-full of children.

And further, with their children responding during their grownup years by loving and caring for their aging parents.

That is a clearly given mandate within these scriptures. And in some of Jesus last words spoken during His life on this earth, He lovingly demonstrated it for us.

So then, as we continue to consider some of these last words that Jesus spoke while He hung there on the cross, we find these particular words given to us in the Book of John chapter 19. Listen, beginning in verse 25, we read . . .

²⁵ Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶ When Jesus therefore

saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold your son!" ²⁷ Then He said to the disciple, "Behold your mother!" And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home. (John 19:25-27)

As the Lord Jesus hung there suffering and slowly dying on that cross, His dear mother, Mary was there with Him! Mothers are that way. It is the nature that God has put within most all mothers, a faithful and enduring love for their sons no matter the circumstance, a love that perseveres through the worst of trials and suffering.

And although it is not recorded in these gospels, I believe that Mary was with the Lord Jesus often as He traveled about in His pursuit of the souls of men.

But this day was very different, like no other day Mary had ever experienced. This day, she would experience grief and anguish beyond anything she could ever imagine.

This day, she would stand helpless at the foot of a blood-drenched cross, watching as her beloved Son slowly suffered and died, powerless to do anything to relieve His ever-increasing pain. Her heart was surely stricken with the sorest grief a mother could ever bear.

And no doubt, in those moments, she longed to cradle Him in her arms as she had done on so many other occasions in His younger years.

In my imagination, I believe that Mary's life, as the mother of the Lord Jesus, had been the strangest, but also the most wonderful life than any mother could imagine. And I wonder if those memories were flooding her thoughts as she gazed up at Him, memories of even before He was conceived in her womb, those fear-filled moments when the angel Gabriel suddenly appeared to her and told her about all of the inconceivable wonders that lay ahead for her, about the miraculous conception that would take place within her body and about the baby she would bear.

Listen to those words given to us in Luke chapter 1.

²⁶ In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, ²⁷ to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ The angel went to

her and said, “Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.”

²⁹ Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. ³⁰ But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. ³¹ You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end.”

³⁴ “How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?”

³⁵ The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. (Luke 1:26-35)

Though we know that Mary was probably very afraid and uncertain about all that the angel was saying, her response to Him was one of simple faith. She said ³⁸ . . . “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.” (Luke 1:38)

Do you not love these words of Mary? These are precious words of surrender, a giving over of herself to the plans and the purposes of God.

And it would take this same surrender to stay her through all of the strange and wonderful chapters of life that would unfold before her over the years that lay ahead, the first beginning in only a few days as she would go to visit with her relative Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist. There, Mary would begin to truly grasp, at least to some small part, God’s mysterious plan for this child that was growing inside of her. It was then that she said,

⁴⁶ . . . “My soul magnifies the Lord, ⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior. (Luke 1:46-47)

And then later, right after He was born, as Mary and Joseph presented the baby Jesus at the temple, an old man, Simeon, who was said to be a “righteous and devout man, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him,” took Jesus into,

²⁸ . . . his arms and blessed God and said, ²⁹ “Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; ³⁰ for my eyes have seen your salvation ³¹ that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, ³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your

people Israel." ³³ And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. ³⁴ 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 ³⁵ (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed." (Luke 2:28-35)

These were strange words for a young mother to hear about her baby, wonder-filled words, but some of them also very foreboding and ominous.

And perhaps now here, as Mary stood before the cross, she might be remembering those words of that old prophet that day, because this truly was like a sword piercing her soul.

These gospels speak very little about the inmost thoughts of Mary, only that she "kept all these things and pondered them in her heart." So we are left to wonder about just how much she was able to truly comprehend as she observed the events of Jesus' life unfold before her.

I wonder about that in part because at this moment that I am working on this study, I am visiting with my children and some of my grandchildren. And as I watch my grandchildren play and interact with one another, my imagination takes hold and I begin to imagine what it must have been like for the Lord Jesus when He was a child growing up with his other siblings.

And I truly do not believe that Jesus ever behaved badly. We're given only one questionable incident, when He was twelve years old. On that occasion, He wandered off from His family to spend time in the temple talking with the teachers. But was that bad behavior? Was He not simply "being about His Father's business"?

We're told that after that incident Jesus went with His parents "to Nazareth, and was subject to them, but His mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men."

And we are told in several other places in these scriptures that Jesus never sinned, not even once, not even remotely. And that would be true, even during what is often the most turbulent years of a young boy's life, His adolescence and His teenage years, those times when sons so often struggle with their emotions and behaviors.

These gospels testify to us that Jesus never once faltered, but remained kind and gentle and obedient to His mother and father.

Again, much of this is my imagination, and I enjoy pondering such things as these in my heart. And oh dear friends, as a parent, what a treasure Jesus would have been as a Son! And what a treasure He surely was to His mother.

But I do imagine that she was not prepared for all of the things that would begin to take place later on, as He set out on the strange and unpredictable pathway of the “gospel”, especially during those last few years of His life when He began to perform all those impossible miracles with seemingly effortless ease. Surely, Mary was astonished, and with one remarkable incident after another unfolding in front of her eyes, she came to understand that there was something very, very special about her beloved Son.

She showed some of her hidden thoughts at the Wedding in Cana, as she appealed to Jesus for His help when the wedding party had run short of good wine to serve. On that occasion, in deference to her wishes Jesus easily transformed simple water into the best of wine.

And no doubt, Mary was also present at many other of His miracles, perhaps the feeding of the five thousand, and the raising of Lazarus from the dead, and others.

And she was also probably present on some of those occasions when He spoke about the necessity for Him to die in the way that He was now dying, a sacrifice to atone for the sins of men, to redeem their lost and perishing souls.

But would she have been willing to receive such terrible and heartbreaking words? As a loving mother, she probably put those things out of her mind in hopes that it would never take place.

But now here, as Jesus hung there on that cross, it was taking place, her worst fears being realized! And as she stood there, looking up at her beloved Son writhing in His agony, Mary grieved for her boy, wanting to help Him, but unable even to touch Him and offer solace to His suffering soul.

But unfortunately for Mary in her grief, this thing that was taking place was the exact way that it really had to be, the only way it could be, the way it had been planned to take place even from before the foundations of the earth.

And Jesus knew that it was so. Yes, in His humanity He struggled with it. He showed that struggle the night before as He prayed to His Father there in the Garden of Gethsemane saying, "If this cup can pass from me, let it be so". But then in complete surrender, He willingly submitted and said, Father, not My will but thine be done".

And now here, as His life was drawing to a close, He gazed down at His dear mother. And though immersed with pain and suffering, He knew that there was some final responsibilities to be done for her. And in these words that He spoke, we again see the loving nature of God pouring forth from Him, ever and always reaching forth to bless and to help others.

With His dying breaths, Jesus was faithfully reaching forward to make provision for His dear mother's care, both in her coming days of grief and also throughout the many uncertain years that lay ahead of her.

He said to His mother, "Woman, behold your son!" Then He said to His disciple John, "Behold your mother!"

Her care was necessary to Jesus, as it should be for all sons towards their mothers. We find no mention made of Mary's husband Joseph after the first years of Jesus' life. So it has been assumed by the bible scholars that Joseph had died. And Jesus knew that the widows of that day were sometimes left without care and support.

So here, with some of His final breaths, Jesus is making provision for His mother.

May I take a moment and reiterate something that I have said often, but bears repeating. All the words that are given to us here in these scriptures are for our instruction and help.

As we read in 2nd Timothy chapter 3,

¹⁶ All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of

God may be complete, equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

Here, from the cross, we find Jesus giving loving words of instruction to His dear friend John, that he from that day forward was to give loving care to His mother Mary, just as if she were his own mother.

Was that an absolutely necessary thing to do? Yes, but more than that, it is a clear example and demonstration of what all sons are to do for their mothers.

Yes, most sons will get married and have families of their own to care for and support, but if their mothers are ever in need, a son is to quickly reach back to take care of his mother.

Is the son to show any less care for his own family as he cares for his mother, no! It is a simple truth that all of God's plans fit together perfectly without any one obligation interfering with another.

And yes, Jesus did have other half-brothers who might have been very capable of caring for Mary. And His half-brothers did prove to be very Godly men. Two of them, James and Jude, are understood to be writers of these scriptures.

But still, Jesus wanted to clearly put forth a son's duty to his mother and not just leave the matter outstanding, hoping that his brothers would do the right thing. Here, Jesus did what He knew to be the exact right thing. He made provision for His mother.

And may I add that such instruction for care of widows and orphans is repeated over and over again in these gospels. We see in the Book of James . . .

²⁷ Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world. (James 1:27)

And in my bible, the word here for "visit" refers over to the words of Matthew 25:35-36 which tell us,

³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶ I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' (Matthew 25:35-36)

Yes, we are to do this for our neighbors. But even more so, we are to do it for our mothers and our fathers when they are in need.

May we close our considerations of these words of the Lord Jesus from the cross for today, and as God wills, we will continue with them next week.

But as we leave, may we take this precept that Jesus has given to us and may we let it take root within our hearts with the same love and conviction that He had on this day of His suffering.

Here, in the final moments of His life, He was ever faithful to honor and to care for His beloved mother. And so must we, you and I. It is our solemn duty before God.

May I close with added instructions given by the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 6:1-3,

¹ Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ² "Honor your father and mother," which is the first commandment with promise: ³ "that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth." (Ephesians 6:1-3)

Pray with me.