

**“HOW HE LOVED HIS MOTHER”**

John 19:25-27

I realize that two days that have been set aside to honor our parents, Mother's Day and Father's Day can be wonderful days to give thanks or they can be difficult, especially for the person who has not had a good relationship or has had a damaging experience with either their Mother or Father. And yet today is Mother's Day and we can certainly pause to honor or celebrate our Mother or, hopefully, a woman who has been like a mother to us.

This past Monday I was trying to remember how Mother's Day came into being and so I decided to do a little research. I found that Anna M. Jarvis (1864-1948) first suggested the national observance of an annual day honoring all mothers because she had loved her own mother so dearly. At a memorial service for her mother on May 10, 1908, Miss Jarvis gave a carnation (her mother's favorite flower) to each person who attended.

Within the next few years, the idea of a day to honor mothers gained popularity, and Mother's Day was observed in a number of large cities in the U.S. On May 9, 1914, by an act of Congress, President Woodrow Wilson proclaimed the second Sunday in May as Mother's Day. He established the day as a time for "public expression of our love and reverence for the mothers of our country." By then it had become customary to wear white carnations to honor departed mothers and red to honor the living. *Pulpit Helps, May, 1991*. Now the tradition of wearing white and red carnations seems to have been lost over the years, but the observance of Mother's Day continues on.

As I was thinking about this day and what I would preach, I began to think about the plethora of mothers mentioned in the Bible and decided what better one to focus on than Mary, the mother of Jesus.

We read about her in the birth narrative; she is mentioned when Jesus is taken to the Temple on the eighth day for circumcision; again she is referred to when Jesus was 12 years old and His parents took Him to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover and they leave the city without him, only to return and find Jesus in the Temple with the teachers; and there is the wedding feast at Cana where Mary comes to Jesus out of her concern for the bride and groom because they had run out of wine. And now it is not only at the end of Jesus' ministry but the end of His very life that we encounter Mary again.

The beautiful and touching thing was that Jesus was not absolutely alone as He hung from that cross. Yes, if you read a few verses prior to our passage today, you read in John 19:23 that there were four unbelieving soldiers at the foot of the cross who took Jesus' clothes and divided them into four parts, one for each of them. But there were four other people standing at the foot of the cross.

For there was not one, not two, not three, but four women standing there watching Him suffer and die; four women who loved Him. Standing there was Mary, the mother of Jesus; Jesus' mother's sister whose name was Salome; Mary, the wife of Clopas; and Mary Magdalene.

Now how was it that these women were able to stay there unharmed while all the rest of the disciples had gone into hiding? Were they in danger but willing to risk their very lives because they truly believed what Jesus said that, "perfect love casts out fear" or was it because they were women and back then women were not seen as a threat? And yet you read in Acts 8:3 that women as well as men were the victims of persecution and so, in that situation, they were obviously perceived as a threat, just like the men. And yet it is hard to know how and why these women were able to stay there with Him until the end. All we know is, they were there. I wonder, if we had been followers of Jesus back then, what we would have done faced with a similar dilemma? Stay or run? And so the women are at the foot of the

cross and they stay with Him till the end. They did not leave Him in His hour of desolation. And I cannot help but believe that their very presence gave Him some sense of strength and comfort.

You have to wonder if Mary, Jesus' mother, understood all that was taking place that day, and even if she couldn't, she could love her Son. Her very presence was such a painful, yet natural thing for even if Jesus was a criminal in the eyes of the law, He was her Son. It was Kipling who said it best when he wrote:

"If I were hanged on the highest hill,  
Mother o' mine, O mother o' mine!  
I know whose love would follow me still,  
Mother o' mine, O mother o' mine!

If I were drowned in the deepest sea,  
Mother o' mine, O mother o' mine!  
I know whose tears would come down to me,  
Mother o' mine, O mother o' mine!

If I were damned of body and soul,  
I know whose prayers would make me whole,  
Mother, o' mine, O mother o' mine!"

What was displayed that day at Calvary was the eternal love of motherhood in Mary.

But what about the love that Jesus showed His mother that day? In the hour of His death He cares for His mother as she cared for Him throughout His childhood. He looks down upon this woman who has been there for Him and now it is His time to take care of her, one last time- He gave her into the care of the disciple whom He loved, John. Let me briefly share some thoughts about how He loved His mother. First, **Jesus showed respect for His mother**. One might think that Jesus was pretty cold and formal when He addressed His mother as "Woman." But in reality, this is a warm term of respect. After all, this was the woman who brought Him into the world; this was the woman who looked after Him and cared for Him all those formative years; this was the woman who wiped away His tears when He cried; she picked Him up when He fell down and skinned His knee; she nursed Him as a baby and nurtured Him and changed His diaper and hugged Him and kissed Him. Even at the very end Jesus showed Mary respect.

Second, **Jesus showed compassion towards His mother.** He was thinking of the days ahead. For some reason He wasn't able to give her over to the care of His brothers, and maybe the answer is found in John 7:5 for we read these words, ("For not even his brothers believed in him.") Was it because of His brothers' unbelief that He gave her over to John's care? And yet John wore two hats which possibly made him the logical choice to entrust her into his care- first, John was Jesus' cousin, as he was Salome's son, and second, he was the disciple whom Jesus loved. And so Jesus, out of His compassion for His mother, gave her into John's care, and gave John into Mary's care, so that they could bring comfort to each other when He was gone. Jesus showed compassion to His mother, even at the end.

And third, **Jesus showed care for His mother.** He gave Mary into the care of John for our passage says that after Jesus said, "Woman, here is your son." He looked at John and said, "Here is your mother."

And then it says, "And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home." She was going to be taken care of, looked after in her old age by this beloved disciple and Jesus knew John would do an admirable job.

No, I don't know what the relationship is like or was like between you and your Mother. I pray it was good, and yet I know that is not always the case. And yet I pray that there has been and even is a woman in your life who is like a mother where you can show forth to her respect, compassion and care. I pray that there is at least one older woman with whom you can have that kind of relationship with, or, that you had or have that kind with your own Mom.

There is something wonderfully moving in this passage where Jesus, suffering an agonizing death on the cross, when the very salvation of the world is teeter-tottering in the balance, Jesus, out of His love and compassion for His mother and what was yet ahead for her, reaches out to her one more time.

He somehow never forgot the duties that go with being the eldest Son, even in His death. He was always thinking of the sorrows and pains of others, more so than His, even at the end. And therein is a lesson for all of us.

To you Mothers and those who have been like Mothers in the congregation today- Happy Mother's Day. To those for whom their Mother is deceased, like mine, I pray that we can go back in our memory bank and have fond thoughts surrounding our Moms. For those who plan to reach out to your Moms today and for those who have a woman who became an "adopted" Mom, reach out to her with all the love, respect, compassion and care you can muster up. Jesus gives us a good example to follow, let's do likewise. Amen.