

Behold Your Son
John 19:25-27

We have seen the amazing compassion of Jesus through this section, and certainly as we see the passion narratives throughout the gospels we see that Jesus is constantly ministering from the cross even though in severe agony. And if you want to see the glory and compassion just look at how Jesus ministers to others who are at the cross. He cares for the crowds who mock and scorn and ridicule him. He prays for the very ones who were taking such delight that he was hanging on that cross. Listen to Luke 23:34, **“And Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.’ And they cast lots to divide his garments.”** As the soldiers are casting lots for his the last of his belongings, Jesus is not cursing everyone present but praying for them. How different than us! If any bring any turmoil, we are ready in our anger to vent and steam and of we might even call the fires from hell on them.

The second is the thief who asks Jesus to remember him when he comes into his kingdom. Here was a man who was a notorious thief and criminal, and before this request joined in on the cursing and taunting of Christ. But saw with what dignity Jesus suffered. None have suffered like him. So when Jesus had heard these words, listen to what he says, Luke 23:43, **“And he said to him, ‘Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.”** Incredible isn’t it? Evangelism taking place in the deepest anguish right their on the cross. Jesus is calling and caring for one of his own sheep.

And then we come to this really touching section that is only recorded here in the gospel of John. Here we see some of the individuals that Jesus loved beneath the cross. And we can only imagine the anguish of those who watched the suffering of Christ. And we have this touching scene before us, which again we see the wonderful provision of our Lord and Saviour. There are a couple of things to keep in mind. One is that this is a cruel world and it is full of sorrow. Sorrow and anguish and heart-ache find every single one of us. None of us are immune to it or have a corner on it. And as you look at this little band that is beneath the cross, it is a reminder once again that our faith in Christ does not shield us away from suffering. Having a great love for Christ and a great devotion to him does not mean there will be no pain or very little in our lives. As we seek to be made in the image of God one of the tools that God uses is suffering. There is a grace in suffering in that it really shows what we believe about life and God. And death in particular of one we love causes us to focus on our own mortality.

And the other thing we see in this passage is the provision that Jesus makes. One of God’s richest gifts he gives us in this life is other believers. Yes, I realize those who make up the church can be a divisive or hard to get along with or have their own struggles or even say things they ought not to say. They are in this process of sanctification like us. But we also realize our lives are so much richer with them in it. God gives revelation through his Word, but one of the blessings God gives us to see his Word and even hear his word is the spiritual knowledge and wisdom of others.

And when we are in duress or going through the painful trials of life one of the instruments God uses to point us to Christ and the hope we have in him and to even encourage our hearts to be his testimony is the Church of the living Christ. But in order to be involved in that process of comfort, and also receive that comfort we have to be involved with the people of God. We have to intentionally building these redemptive

relationships for the glory of Christ. And are you? And are we seeking to make much of God in our suffering by drawing close to Christ? Are we seeking the comfort and counsel from those of the household of faith? These are to be real and vital relationships for the glory of Christ. In a day and age of so much isolation God wants us to be active in the lives of others. It isn't enough to say, well I will be there if anyone needs me. God calls us to build these relationships now, so that when our lives or someone else's comes crashing down we will be there or they will be there for the glory of Christ, as instruments of grace. So I want us to look at this passage and really be encouraged and challenged to seek to build redemptive relationships for the glory of Christ. I want us to see a couple of things.

1. We need to see those gathered beneath the cross. V.25-26a.

Now think of all the pain in our congregation. Think of all the loss individuals have suffered. Some of you have had to say goodbye to loved ones. Others of you have had your families ripped apart because of your love for Jesus Christ. Others of you have had medical diagnosis that have been life altering. Others have had their children walk away from the faith. Others of you have had the anguish of major sin in your life that has caused you pain and heartache. And the pain and agony that individuals have gone through in this very room is extraordinary. If we could rehearse it all and understand it fully it would bring us to tears.

But here is the question: what causes us to draw close to those who are suffering? I mean think of it, it certainly is not joyous. It is not that it adds a whole lot of excitement or gaiety to our lives. And our world certainly prizes happiness and joy, And tries to escape any kind of sorrow. Our world tries to stay away from suffering and sufferers as much as possible. And certainly we can become immune and calloused to the suffering of others. So what causes us to draw close to others? Certainly we are called to weep with those who weep, and we are to comfort the afflicted in their afflictions. But it is more than mere obedience to God, isn't it? It is in one word — love. It is love for God which causes us to love one another with such a godly love and such a care that we are willing to carry the burdens and sufferings of others. And God gives us a greater capacity and sensitivity to really feel more deeply than those outside of Christ. We love and rejoice with joy inexpressible, and if our joy is heightened in Christ, so is our sorrow.

And so this is really such a touching scene of these individuals who are gathered before the cross. Read this verse with me one more time, **“but standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.”** Look at the first word here is “but.” This verse and little section here is in contrast to the cruel indifference of the soldiers who nailed Jesus to the cross and then divided up his garments and drew lots for his seamless tunic. They were hard and indifferent to all the pain and anguish that was going on just a few feet from them. But “standing by the cross,” in other words near the cross. They would have been forced back later when Jesus expired. But here are these women.

Now how many women are represented in this verse. Believe it or not, there is a lot of ink spilled trying to figure out who they are. Some say there are only two women. The first part of the verse indicates the relationship, **“his mother and his mother's**

sister,” then the formal names, **“Mary, the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene”** This would mean that Mary would have been remarried after the death of Joseph, but there is no indication that she ever remarried in scripture or church tradition. Another view is that there is three, his mother’s sister is the wife of Clopas, but it would be odd if there were two named Mary from the same family. It could be a sister in law, but whatever the case, In think it is best to take this as four women along with John in the next verse that would make up five. And they are there in contrast to the cruel indifference of the soldiers.

And look at first part of verse 26, **“When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby.”** Now this identifies the fifth person at the cross, and that is one of the disciples — and it is this phrase that we see throughout the gospel, and that is the one whom Jesus loved. And we have mentioned, this is the humble way we see John writes himself into the narrative but always wants the emphasis on Jesus. Here is John before the cross, and they must have been fairly close because when Jesus finally musters enough energy to speak they are close enough to to hear him. But remember what Jesus said about all the disciples, Matthew 26:31, **“Then Jesus said to them, ‘You will all fall away because of me this night. For it is written, ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.’”** John along with all the other disciples fell away, ran for their lives when the authorities came to arrest Jesus. They knew it would end in his execution, and their desertion was self preservation. In that moment they care more about self than Jesus.

So why is John here? In fact, why do all the other disciples come back to Christ? And the answer is love. Not there love but Jesus’. **“The disciple whom he loved.”** This is the one who Christ loves, therefore he will never let go of us even when our faith, love, trust in him falters, his love for us will never falter. It is always perfect. No one, including ourselves can ever pluck us from the grip of our Saviour. But here is the thing — we are all prone to wander, Lord I feel it. But God also has created a love for Christ in us. Because of his work in us, we come back. And isn’t that an encouragement? Did you fail to love him this week? Did you a fail to be the spouse you were meant to be or, or parent? Did you succumb to some sin that you always seem stuck in? Did fail to love Christ this week? Yet, look at where we are. Here we have sung hymns praising our great King and Lord and Saviour. His unending, perfect, constant love for us, causing our faltering love to always come back. John being at the cross is not a testament to John’s greatness but the greatness of the love of the one on the cross. God’s love for us through Christ is eternal. He will never forsake us.

But the emphasis of this little section is on Mary. The aged Simeon said to Mary in the Temple in Luke 2:34-35, **“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 (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.”** Notice those words that italicized, “and a sword will pierce through your own soul.” And again, this is metaphorical language speaking of the deep anguish of her soul. She carried that child for nine month, loved him and nursed him, and here he is expiring on a cross for crimes he did not commit. And she is there among all the taunting and verbal abuse being hurled at her beloved son. And I don’t think we can really enter in on the full impact of

her grief, let alone the grief of all five of these individuals as they stand here as helpless spectators. But they have to be there. Why? Because love has compelled them to be there, no matter what the cost to them personally — they have to be there. Oh the midst of anguish and sorrow!

And think of your own anguish that happens to be in your own life. Think of the pain you are going through right now. There has always been pain and there will always be pain in our world and in our lives until we are with our Lord and Saviour. But as you look at Jesus' love for these individuals, and that is what is central as we will see, it is an indication that our level of suffering in this life is no measure of His disfavour with us. We are not immune to suffering just because we love Christ.

And think through it, none of them would have recognized God's intentions in this suffering. None of them would have realized that God really had their highest good and eternal welfare in mind here at the cross of Christ. This one was really taking their debt and paying for it. All they can see the anguish, heartache and loss. But God is sovereign. And he is good and loving and always up to good in the lives of his people even when we don't understand it. Don't let the confusion of suffering redefine who God is. Know whatever you are going through he is sovereign and he is good.

2. We need to see the provision of our Lord. Vv. 26b-27.

God is so good in the midst of our suffering. There are couple things we are given in this passage that I think should encourage us in the midst of our suffering. One is we are given his presence. We realize our Jesus will not only never forsake us but has left us with none other than his Spirit. And the second is his people. Both of these work together. So often in the midst of suffering just the presence of another helps us. But also their words. It is humbling to realize we are not the fount of all wisdom, and God has given us his people to help, aide and comfort. They bring words of wisdom and consolation. And we have probably been in that situation where we have been so benefited by another, coming alongside. Or, maybe we have grieved with someone and walked away praising God for the opportunity of bringing some measure of comfort to those we love. But you have to recognize your need of others.

Now look at the last part of verse 26 because it is an interesting statement, "**he said to his mother, 'Woman, behold, your son!'**" So you see anything a bit strange about that statement of Jesus? It is in the address to Mary. He calls her "woman" instead of "mother." Now why that? I think if I ever called my mom, "woman" she would either think I was upset at her or take it as an insult. Your children would do that, "Mom, can I have an ice cream?" Not, "Woman, can I have an ice cream?" You get my drift. Some think that this is language of a formal adoption. And there is a transfer going on where Jesus is making sure that his mother is taken care of. But I think it is more than that. Mary's main identity in life is not that she is the mother of Jesus, but this designation as "woman." She is not unlike or doesn't have any special merit because she is the physical mother of Jesus, but she is lumped in with the rest of humanity. She has a need of salvation in Christ. She is called with all other women and all others — all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. And the one on the cross is making provision for her on the cross.

And that is something we all need to be reminded of, because in the midst of suffering we all struggle, and that is normal for even the people of God. We grow

through that struggle, but in suffering we tend to do so much complaining — complaining about our pain, the unfairness of life, complaining about others. And we forget who we are. We do not merit anything from God. And the cross always reminds us of God's amazing, glorious, other-worldly love of those who deserve the exact opposite. In the midst of Mary's anguish the greatest comfort is not some earthly designation, but in who we are and what our Saviour has done. We do not deserve his love but look at what he has done. We come back to those truths, provisions, and promises that are made throughout the Scriptures. In your suffering, are you remembering who are? Are you seeking to fill your mind and heart with the truth of the love of God which none of us deserve? We deserve so much worse but we are now eternally loved by him.

Now look at verse 27, "**Then he said to the disciple, 'Behold, your mother!' And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.**" Now let me say this very quickly because I do not want to get away from the main point. But this verse is a main teaching passage of the Roman Catholic Church as far as Mary being the co-Redemptrix. When Jesus says, "Behold, your mother" he is not making provision for Mary but actually the other way around. It is for John and all other believers. Mary is our Mother. It is through her that salvation is birthed. And they invert the order. And Mary has nothing really to do with in this gospel. She last appeared in chapter 2 at the wedding feast in Cana of Galilee. But through some exegetical gymnastics they have taken the plain intent of Scripture and turned it on its head.

Now it is amazing that Jesus gives this responsibility to John, because Jesus had other siblings. So why not leave this responsibility to one of them? And I think the answer is quite simple. None of them are believers at this time. They will come to Christ after his resurrection but none believed on him yet. And isn't it amazing how strong our bonds are in Christ? We call one another sons and daughters, brothers and sisters. And the household of faith is to be that. It is to be a household of faith. We have stronger bonds than we many times have with those who are our natural family. And tradition indicates that John did take her to his home and cared for her until her death.

So here is the comfort. None of these five individuals are suffering alone or living alone. They come together to the cross because of a mutual love of Jesus but also because they have a relationship and love for one another. And you can't care and love those who are of the household of faith unless you are in a relationships with others.

So let me end with a few observations about suffering, and the suffering you are going through. One is resist the urge to heroically isolate. We were meant for community, not online but face to face and weekly relationships. We were meant to dwell in community. It is so easy in the midst of suffering to say either I don't want to talk about it or I just want to be alone. Be humble to realize your need of others in your life. Yes, people might say things they ought not, yes other people are messy but realize in the wisdom of God this is what you need. Listen to what Paul David Tripp writes about this, "**There are times when I don't want to rehearse again what I'm going through. There are times when it seems too much to be around people. There are times when I've been hurt by the response of another and don't want to deal with that hurt again. At the same time, I'm convinced that it's important that I fight the isolation temptation. I know I need the presence and voices of others in**

my life who can say and do things for me that I could never do for myself, and I know that the relationship I have with these people is God's gift of comfort, rescue, protection, and wisdom." This is an urge that we all have to fight. With so much emphasis on Jesus and me, we forget God's great gift of others.

Also, really think about what we should be sharing with others. We want to be helped by others, and so often we are very good at sharing the pain of the situation, or what someone else said or did, or about how tough my life is compared to everyone else. And here is what I found — people who just gripe and complain end up gathering around them people who gripe and complain. They complain about how difficult life is or they complain and gossip about another. But we have to learn to share with one another not just the details of suffering but something more important — and that is how we are dealing with the suffering and agony in our lives. We have to humble enough to say — I am really struggling. My heart is taking me to places I should not. I am having attitudes and speaking words that I ought not.

If you are struggling with doubt about God than talk about that? If you are dealing with envy or jealousy or anger then talk about that. If you are struggling with the "what ifs" of the future talk about that. If you are struggling with the length of your suffering — will it ever end — then talk about that. We often never get the help and comfort because we never talk about the heart of the matter. Jesus gave Mary into the care of John because he cares for her. Jesus gives us in the care of one another because he truly does care.

So we will suffer, but what does trusting Christ look like in the midst of that suffering? Remember your identity and run to the resources he has given us. He has given us his Word and his people. Praise God for the goodness of his grace.