

Take Care of My Mom

Third in a Series of Seven Words from the Cross

March 11, 2020

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So the soldiers did these things, but standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. 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.

Dear Friends in Christ,

Last Wednesday we heard a repentant thief pleading with Jesus in his dying moments to remember him when he comes into his kingdom, and Jesus responds with an immediate grace, "Today, you shall be with me in paradise." The week before, we saw cruel soldiers mocking and taunting and slapping and spitting and whipping and nailing and even as they were crucifying, he cried out for an amazing grace to be theirs, "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they're doing."

Tonight, I invite you to come one more time to the foot of your Savior's cross with every all that is making you weary or worried, come with all that is dismaying and distressing you, come with every one of your memories of days gone by and your dreams of days yet to come, come to the cross with every last one of your faults and your failures, every one of troubles and your trials, and listen in as Jesus looks his mom in the eyes and says in effect, "Mom the disciple whom I so dearly love is going to take care of you." And then he looks John in the eyes, and no doubt with what we call the Fourth Commandment in mind, he says "take care of my mom."

Two lessons we would learn tonight. #1 we rejoice in Jesus taking care of us, and #2 we take seriously our Lord's command that we take care of each other.

#1 we rejoice in Jesus taking care of us.

I can only imagine what it would be like to watch one of your own sons or daughters die. I do have an image in my mind of our daughter Michelle holding close her infant son Gabriel for the one hour that he lived here and now, I can see her holding him close as he breathed less and less and then no more, I can see grandparents and parents and siblings praying and sobbing, and then sobbing and praying some more, can see little Gabriel's dad holding close a little casket, getting down into a grave, placing that little boy in the cold November grave, I can see family members

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covering up that casket with dirt, singing a few songs, reading a few Scriptures, and then beginning the wait for the resurrection of that body.

Tonight, I invite you to imagine the crucifixion from Mary's point of view. He was flesh of her flesh, bone of her bones. She remembered well that silent and holy night when she first held him in her arms. She remembered nursing and caressing him, she played with him, she took care of his every need. When Herod's soldiers came after them, it's likely that the donkey would be too slow, likely that they ran for their very lives on their way to Egypt. When Jesus was 12 she remembered thinking he was lost, she searched him out, already then he was about his heavenly Father's business.

Mary's last recorded words were at the wedding of Cana, "Whatever he tells you to do, do." Now on a little hill outside of Jerusalem, she could remember Simeon predicting that a sword would go through her heart. That hand, now nailed to a tree, she used to hold and guide as he took his first steps. Those arms, now stretched out, they used to hug her. Now there was nothing she could do except to be there. She had heard him praying for the Father to forgive those who crucified him, she had heard him promise paradise to one of the thieves, perhaps she wondered if there was anything for her.

And there was. Jesus takes care of her to the bitter end. Mary may well have had four other sons - James, Joses, Simon, and Jude. But none of them could be found in her time of greatest need. In John chapter 7 we read that the brothers of Jesus were not believing in him, they showed no sympathy or support for his work. Mark records that at least one time, these brothers had come to take him away, because they said, "he's crazy."

Jesus had made it clear that his true brothers and sisters and mother were those who believed in him, they were those who did the will of his Father.

Jesus takes care of Mary by making sure John provided a home. Mary would not be a burden for him, but rather a privilege. Scholars suggest that Mary may have lived 12 years after the crucifixion. The New Testament teaches us that John stayed in Jerusalem while other apostles went on mission elsewhere. John was her son, her friend, even her pastor. He had been at the very bosom of Jesus, John had seen the very glory of Jesus on the Mt. of transfiguration, he lived to be a hundred years old and may well have been the only disciple to die a natural death. So the promise of the 4th Commandment comes true, "Honor thy Father and mother that it may be well with thee and thou mayest live long on the earth."

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But Jesus did so much more for Mary than provide for her a safe home here on earth. He cared for her and us by living the perfect life none of us could get close to living. He cared for her and us by suffering all that we should have suffered. He cared for her and us ultimately by dying the very death that gives us life. Lesson #1 tonight, we rejoice at the foot of the cross as we see Jesus taking care of us like nobody else could or would.

Lesson #2 we take seriously our Lord's command that we take care of each other. When Jesus asks John to take care of his mom, we are reminded of Jesus on the previous night washing his disciple's feet and then commanding, as I have loved you, so you must also love one another. When Jesus makes sure his mom is cared for, he is teaching us one last time to make sure we take care of the widows and the orphans in our midst.

Just this past Sunday, we noted one of the great promises of God is that we are part of a large family, namely the Holy Christian Church. It's here in the Church that we cry with those who are crying, we laugh with those who are laughing, we give rides to those who need rides, we help those who are feeling helpless, and we pay attention to those who wonder if anybody cares.

Tonight, Jesus isn't asking us so much to build prisons and hospitals, he's asking us to visit those who are in prison or in the hospitals. He isn't so much telling us to cheer up, tomorrow is a new day, he's inviting us to live today on behalf of one another as if it might be our last day. Tonight Jesus would be telling us not so much to make sure we go through the motions in our life together, but rather to be looking each other in the eyes, to be going beyond the surface in our conversations, and to be loving each other not just with kind words but with actions that speak so much louder than words.

The kingdom of God is like a medium sized church in a medium sized community full of folks who keep on soaking up the love of Jesus in the sanctuary of their church and then they go looking for folks out and about in need of some extra kindness and a healthy dose of patience. They hear the Word of God, they treasure the Word of God, and then they go looking for folks who are feeling as though there is an emptiness in their hearts and they're not sure why. If you listen in on their conversations, more often than not, you'll find them to be first of all grateful and secondly serious. Grateful that Jesus has been taking care of their needs in both body and soul, and serious about taking care of each other. Amen.