

The Word Of Affection

John 19:25-27

Pastor John Miller

John chapter 19, and I'm going to read from verse 25 to 27. I'd like you to follow with me in your Bibles. John says, "There stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, his mother's sister, Mary, the wife of Cleophas and Mary Magdalene or Mary from Magna La. And when Jesus therefore saw his mother," verse 26, "and the disciple standing by whom he loved, he said unto her, 'Woman, behold thy son.' And he said to the disciple, 'Behold thy mother.' And from that hour, that disciple took her into his home."

In verse 25, I love the statement there. John says, "There stood by the cross of Jesus." Oh, to stand by the cross of Jesus. And that statement just went over and over my mind this week as I meditated on this passage, there stood by the cross of Jesus, there stood by the cross of Jesus.

I don't know about you, but I want to stand by the cross of Jesus, I want to be near the cross of Jesus, I want to understand the cross of Jesus, I want to live out the cross of Jesus.

I think of Paul the Apostle who said, "I am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless, I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I live now, I live by the faith of the son of God who loved me and gave himself for me." So Jesus, keep me near the cross. That's our prayer as we sing that song, keep me near the cross.

I want to stand this morning with you at the foot of the cross. And as we stand at the foot of the cross where Jesus suffered and died for our sins, he spoke and he spoke seven times. We not only look at Jesus, we listen to Jesus. The first words he spoke were the words of forgiveness. He said, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." The crowd that was mocking and jeering and calling names, he said, "Father, forgive them." And in the Greek, it indicates he repeated that phrase over and over and over again, "Father, forgive them, Father, forgive them, they know not what they do."

And then we saw that Jesus also uttered the word of salvation. One of the thieves that was hanging with Jesus, for there was a thief on either cross next to him, Jesus crucified in the middle, and the thief turned to Jesus and he said, "Lord, remember me when you enter into your kingdom," and all of those wonderful words, Jesus turned to that penitent thief and he said, "Today, today you will be with me in paradise." The word of salvation.

And so we come to the third word this morning. I call it the word of affection. Standing among the mocking, angry crowd were a small group of loving hearts. I want you to notice with me in verse 25, John mentions four women, Mary, the mother of Jesus, and then Mary's sister who was Salome, also the mother of John, the writer of the Gospel, and James known as the Sons of Thunder. And then there was Mary, the wife of Cleophas. We know very little about her. And then there was Mary Magdalene. She was a woman who Jesus had cast seven demons out of. Sometimes she's confused with being an immoral woman. Bible doesn't say that. She's not the

woman that poured the oil on his feet and wiped his feet with her hair. This is another individual.

But as she stood at the cross, no doubt she was reminded of her redemption and her deliverance, how Jesus saved her. And then the other Mary, and then the Mary, the mother of Jesus. So there were four women. And John also notice verse 26, "The disciple whom he loved."

Now, we'll talk more about that in a minute, but how interesting that John in his own gospel refers to himself as the disciple who Jesus loved. So there were four women and one man at the foot of the cross. What's up with you guys? Where are the men, right? I mean, the women are outshining the men here. They were the last at the cross, they were the first at the tomb on Easter, Resurrection Day. Who was it that first came to the tomb, found it empty and discovered that Jesus Christ had risen from the dead? The women. God bless you ladies this morning. God bless you ladies.

First service the women just saw, they stood up and clapped for themselves. Rightfully so. Thank God for the women. Where were the men? You know where they were, hiding behind locked doors, they were crying. Bunch of babies.

What would this world be without women? Amen.

Amen.

These brave women, these strong women, these courageous women. But where were the people who were healed, where were the people who were cleansed from leprosy, where were those who were given sight, the blind, where were those that were fed as Jesus fed the multitude? They had all forsaken him. Jesus said, "They will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered." And so only five loyal, loving hearts stood at the foot of the cross. And of those five, two people were very near and dear to the heart of Jesus. That was his mother, Mary, and John the disciple.

So Jesus speaks to them. In verse 26, he speaks to his mother, "Woman, behold thy son." And then I want you to notice verse 27, he speaks to John, "Behold your mother."

Now, all of the mocking, all of the jeering, all of the spitting and the ridicule, and in this crowd there's these five faithful followers, and of the five, there were two that Jesus really cared about, particularly his mother, and then the word that he speaks to John.

Now, when he says to his mother, he says woman, and that was not a derogatory term at all. Today's equivalent would be lady or ma'am. That's a very respectful term. But notice in the Bible, Jesus never called her his mother. No warrant in scripture to look at Mary as the mother of God or co-redemptress. She was standing at the foot of the cross and beholding the man who was dying for her sins as well as her own son.

But he turns to Mary and he says, "Woman, behold your son." He wasn't talking about himself. He was talking about John, the writer of this gospel. And then he turns to John and he says,

"Behold your mother." Two amazing statements that Jesus made as he hung upon the cross.

Now, if you're taking notes, there's three things I want to share about this story that is only recorded by John, thankfully, in his gospel. The first thing I want to point out is that a sword pierced through a mother's heart, a sword was piercing through Mary's heart. In verse 25, "There stood by the cross of Jesus his mother." Think for a moment if you can, what it must have been like for Mary to stand helplessly and watch her son die.

Now, I'm not a mother, I'm a father, but I have children, and I can't even imagine how this must have just broken Mary's heart. As Mary looked at her son, she couldn't wipe his brow, she couldn't stop the bleeding, she couldn't help him. She stood helplessly watching her son being crucified, and she had to stand among the crowd, and she could hear the mocking, and she could hear the ridicule. And poor Mary's heart was broken. Those hands that had nails driven through had held her hand when he was young and they would cross a busy street. There's nothing greater than to feel your children's hands in your hand as you walk with them.

And that head that had the crown of thorns shoved down over it and had been beaten, had laid upon her breast. But now Mary helplessly has to stand there, and she watches her son suffer and die upon a cross. If Jesus were called a man of sorrows, then certainly his mother could be called a woman of sorrows.

Now, this reminds us of what happened when Jesus was only eight days old. Luke chapter two, "And in eight days, they would bring the young Jewish boy into the temple for his circumcision." They would give his name, he would be circumcised, eight days old. This is what the Jews did.

And so Mary comes into the temple with her little eight-day-old baby, Joseph by her side, and an older man who had been told by the Spirit of God, his name was Simeon, that he would not die until he had seen the Messiah, the Christ.

Now, a pretty cool thing, huh, that God tells you, "Hey, you're not going to die until you see the Messiah." So you're kind of indestructible until you see what God has promised you. And no doubt he would run around the temple every day checking out babies and pulling the blankets off him and seeing, is this a Messiah? And they probably thought he was a crackpot.

And then one day Mary walks in with this little eight-day-old baby, and Simeon walks over, and he sees the child. And no doubt the Spirit of God spoke to his heart, "This is the Messiah." And I picture Simeon scooping Jesus out of the arms of Mary and holding him high. And she probably thought, "Whoa, where are the ushers, where's the security?"

And Simeon began to prophesy with this child. This child was set for the rise and fall of many in Israel. And as he spoke about this child and what it would do, he no doubt gave the baby Jesus back to Mary. And then he turned to Mary, listen carefully, and he said these words, he said, "A sword shall pierce through your own heart. A sword shall pierce through your own heart." And Mary and Joseph were just kind of awestruck. They thought, "What in the world is he talking about?"

I'm convinced that that sword prophesied by Simeon was the cross of Jesus Christ, that as Mary stood there weeping at the foot of the cross, that sword that Simeon prophesied was piercing through the heart of Mary. I think of the sword she had to endure, born in a stable, rejected by men, Herod, the king wanted to kill all the babies born in Bethlehem, and they had to flee into Egypt for their lives.

And then during his public ministry, she saw the rejection and the scorn that he had to endure. So Mary had a sword pierce through her own soul because he died, because of the way he died, he died on a cross, and because of where he died, he died publicly.

Someone put it in a poem, near the cross or vigil keeping, stood the mother worn with weeping, where he hung, the dying Lord, through her soul and anguish, groaning, bowed in sorrow, sighing, moaning past the sharp and piercing sword.

And you mothers that are here today can understand maybe just a little bit of what pain she must have had to endure as she stood at the cross and watched her son die.

Now, a couple lessons, those who love most deeply suffer most intently. You know why Mary's pain was so great? Because she loved her son. No doubt there were still things about her son, Jesus, that she didn't fully comprehend, she didn't fully understand. Maybe after the day of Pentecost she would understand more fully when the spirit came in its fullness. But she loved her son. And those who love intensely suffer most deeply.

The second point I would make is sorrow often comes to those who are greatly loved and used by God. Remember, Mary was called blessed among women. Do you know that God knows how to balance our life? With great blessing, sometimes come great sorrow, and I believe that, that you can't bless unless you first bleed. The world has been most greatly advanced by those who suffer. You want to find somebody that has something to give, has something to share as a real blessing, they've passed through the fires, they've passed through sorrow to be able to do that. Without becoming hard or bitter, they become better, and they're used by God.

I think of Mary blessed among women. How could you say she's blessed among women? Her son is dying on a cross, the sword is piercing through her heart. So with great blessing come great bleeding, and with great sorrow comes great service. Through her pain, God would use her in a mighty way as he did. Mary suffered greatly at the foot of the cross.

And then I would say also Jesus always sees us in our sorrow. I love verse 26 where it says Jesus saw his mother. I love that. Just a little statement in the Bible, Jesus saw his mother. Think about what he's doing right now. He's hanging on the cross bearing the sins of the whole human race, he is doing his greatest work of redemption, but he had care and concern and thought for his own mother. How amazing is this statement here? And I do believe that Jesus sees us, Jesus knows us, and Jesus cares about us.

But really I want you to think about that, Jesus took time for his mom, Jesus took to see his mother. And here's my point, I don't think I'm stretching the text either. When I preach the Bible,

I make sure that I'm sticking with the text and the meaning of the text, and I don't want to read into the text, but I do believe the application can be Jesus sees us in our sorrow. Jesus saw his mother. I believe it added to the suffering on the cross. I believe it added to his suffering on the cross. He's dying, he's being crucified, the sins of the world, and he has to watch his mother weeping at the foot of the cross.

Some believe, and I don't know if this is the case, some believe that when he said to John, "Behold your mother," that John actually took her off right away so that Jesus wouldn't have to watch his mother suffer, so that she wouldn't have to watch him suffer. How difficult that must have been for Mary, but Jesus looked at her and saw her. And I believe that right now, whatever sorrow you're passing through, Jesus sees you and Jesus knows you.

You say, "Does God really know what I'm going through? Does God really care? Does God really understand? Does God know what is going on in my heart and life?: Yes, he does. He knows, he loves you, he cares. He saw Mary and he sees you in your time of sorrow and in your suffering and in your agony.

But sorrows and the sword were also the place of her salvation, because his son's death became the basis of her redemption. Mary in her magnificence said, "My soul does magnify the Lord and rejoice in God my salvation." He rejoice, I rejoice in the God of my salvation. And so the place of sorrow, the place where the sword pierced her heart was also the place of salvation for Mary. A sword pierced through her heart.

Second thing I'd like to point out is that a son provides for his mother, a son provides for his mother. He turns to his mother, says, "Behold your son. This is your son now," referring to John. Then he turns to John, he says, "Behold your mother." Jesus is providing. Jesus would go to prepare a place for Mary in heaven, but before that he must provide a home upon the earth.

Now, what Jesus is doing, and I only have one main simple point to make, Jesus is obeying the fifth commandment of the Decalogue. Exodus 20:12, "Honor thy father," and what? Thy mother. All the women know that verse, right? Doesn't just say, honor your father, honor your mother. What was Jesus doing on the cross? He was honoring his mother. I believe Joseph is already dead, and he was taking care, the oldest son, and he was taking care of his mother. And he had the time in the midst of redeeming the world from sin to actually honor his mother.

Now, what does it mean to honor your mother and your father? Well, if you are underage and you're a dependent child in the home, you are to, here it is. Are you ready for this? You are to obey your mother, you are to obey your father.

Had a woman in the front row, "Amen, Pastor, amen."

Don't you as parents want to say amen to that? You got kids in the home, what are they supposed to do? Obey you, right? Be obedient to your father and mother. You say, "Well, I'm not in the home anymore, and I'm a grown person, and I'm married, and I'm an adult child, and what are you to do?"

How do you honor your father and your mother? You love them, you respect them, you show them gratitude, and you provide for them.

Now, I know that this, when I said that first service, it got real quiet in here. "Did he say provide for them?" That's what I said, honor your parents by providing for them, taking care of them, loving them, sharing. "Well, my parents are on the other side of the state or in another country." Call them up and just say, I love you and thank you for all you've done for me. Express to them your honor, your respect, your love, your appreciation for them. I mean, too many people that have just written their parents off, "Well, they don't deserve honor. They were a bad parent." It doesn't say honor your father and mother if they were good parents. It just says, honor your father and your mother. Jesus is our example, Jesus is our example.

What about Joseph? What about Joseph?

Why isn't Joseph taking care of Mary? Well, Joseph was probably dead and gone. You go, "Well, what about Jesus' other brothers and sisters?" You know that Mary had four other sons after Jesus was born, four other sons and two daughters? Where were the other children? They weren't believers, they didn't believe that Jesus was the Messiah. They were still unbelievers, and Jesus being the oldest son was taking care of his mother, and he took that responsibility, and he understood that care.

And so Jesus makes provision for his mother. Here's the lesson; our spiritual responsibilities and service to God do not remove from us our obligation to care for our families. I know that was a lengthy point, but let me repeat it again. Listen carefully. Our spiritual responsibilities and service to God do not remove from us our obligation to care for our families.

You go, "I'm too spiritual to care for my family. I'm a missionary. I'm a pastor. I serve the Lord. I don't have to take care of these domestic responsibilities." Jesus rebuked the religious leaders of his day who found loopholes in the law that said, honor your father and thy mother, honor your father and thy mother. By the way, which is a commandment with a promise it may be well with thee that thou mayest live all long on the earth. I'm all scarred up because I didn't obey my mother. It's lucky I'm alive today because I didn't obey my mother.

But Jesus said to these religious leaders, he said, "You circumvent the law of God by all of your little things like they say, 'Mom, dad, sorry, I can't help you, sorry, I can't provide for you because my money is Corban, it's gift to God, it's given to God. I've dedicated to God, so I can't really help you.'" Jesus said, "Shame on you giving it to God, gift of God. That's ridiculous." I'm free paraphrasing Jesus. He didn't use the word ridiculous, but they were finding ways to circumvent the law of God, honor your father and mother by saying, "Well, I've given it to God, and it's devoted to God, and so I can't help you." Jesus said, "That's not right."

This is what Paul said in 1 Timothy 5:8, "If any man provide not for his own, especially for those of his own house, he's denied the faith, and he is worse than an unbeliever."

I don't think that's just money either. I think that's your domestic responsibility and your duty. I've

heard of missionaries that have left their wives or left their children, gone off to be a missionary, and leave their family behind. I don't get that, I don't agree with that. You go together, or you don't go. We serve together, or we don't serve.

Now, let me say it like this, the family and the church are two divine institutions, and they are not in competition with each other. They are to compliment one another. Never put Christian work ahead of your marriage, never put Christian work ahead of your own family, but be careful and keep an imbalance that you don't focus only on your marriage and your family and neglect altogether Christian work. They both go together.

I know some families are so busy with all the things they got going, they never come to church, they never serve the Lord, they're never involved in ministry. That's not good.

And then I know other people that are at church every night, they're busy, they're serving, they're preaching, they're going to the hospital, they're doing all the work of the Lord, they are ministering, and their own kids are being neglected. There needs to be a balance there. The church should be a blessing to the family, and the family should strengthen the church. Your family should be enriched and helped and encouraged and strengthened by this church, and this church needs your family. We need each other to strengthen one another, to encourage each other, but we can never say, "I'm called of God, I'm called to serve the Lord, so I'm going to leave my wife or leave my kids or forsake my family. I'm not going to provide for them or take care of my parents because I'm so busy in the work of the Lord." That's a challenge.

But we can piously say, "I'm Corban, I'm a gift to God, I'm given to God. I can't help you or provide for you." That is a real danger. We need to keep it in perspective.

And there's a third and last point I'd like to make about this story, and that is that a beloved disciple gains a mother. So a sword pierces through a mother's heart, a son provides for his mother. As he's hanging on the cross, he has time to say, "My mom needs to be taken care of." I would've been thinking only of myself as I was crucified. He says, "I've got to take care of my mom. I have a responsibility."

But we also see that a beloved disciple gains a mother. Notice verse 26, "When Jesus saw the disciple standing by who he loved," verse 27, "he said to that disciple, 'Behold your mother,' and from that hour, that disciple took her into his home."

Now, why is John called the disciple whom Jesus loved? And did you notice that neither Matthew nor Mark nor Luke call him that? Isn't it interesting he's only called that in the book that he wrote? "Let's see, who am I? Oh, yeah, I'm the one Jesus loves. Ha-ha, nanny, nanny, nanny." What's with that, John? When I get to heaven, I'm going, "Dude, are you okay? What's up with you calling yourself the one that Jesus loved?"

Now, did not Jesus love all the disciples? Yes, and I want you to know this morning that Jesus loves every one of you equally and fully. You know, there's not one human being on planet earth that God loves more than another person, and there's not one person on planet earth that God

loves less than another person, for God so loved the world, he gave his only begotten son. And God's love is perfect and infinite and unchanging, and you can rest assured today that God loves you, God knows you and loves you. The amazing thing is that God knows us and still loves us, right?

Years ago you'd see that bumper sticker on a car, to know me is to love me. Why would someone put that on their car? Every time I'd see, I think, "You got to be kidding me, to know you is to love you."

But John said, "I'm the one that Jesus loved." What did he mean by that? I believe that what John meant was that he had a greater capacity to receive the love of Jesus. Jesus doesn't love anyone more or less than anyone else, but there are some people that have a bigger cup and they are more willing to let Jesus fill that cup, and they know by experience the love of God that passes all knowledge. I believe John was so in love with Jesus that he opened his life to Jesus and he received the love of Jesus. That's why he's called the disciple who Jesus loved. John was the one who leaned on Jesus' breast at the Last Supper. They would lay on their left side at the dinner table, on the dinner bed, which I believe is a great idea by the way, you can eat and just go right to sleep.

I ate too much spaghetti one time at a friend's house, and I was so full, and it expands so good, I couldn't stop. I said, "Can I spend the night? Can I sleep over?" That was before I was married by the way. Single dude eating spaghetti. It's like, "Can I just sleep on your couch tonight, dude? I can't move." In those days, you just lay on your left side, grab the food, drop it in. Then when you're done, you just roll over and go out. Sweet.

So John being right in front of Jesus, all he'd have to do is flop backward, and his head's right there on his chest. He's like inches away. He's like, "Hey, John, what's up?" His mug is right there. Talk about invading space. "Hey, Jesus, how are you doing?" Hopefully, he hadn't been eating any onions off the table. He had that capacity to just want to be near to Jesus.

Now, I emphasize this because interestingly, the Bible says that Jesus warned his disciples that they would all forsake him and flee. Matthew 26:56, "Did all his disciples forsake him and flee?" Yes, Jesus said they would. That would include John.

So early on, John with the other disciples fled and ran, but John, blessed John, he had a change of heart, and at one point he had a change of heart. He goes, "I'm going back to Calvary. I'm going to go back to the cross. I'm going to go back to the foot of Jesus," and he joined the women in the crowd.

Now, I can see John standing up next to Mary and putting his arm around her. "Mary, I'm here," standing there weeping with the other women. So he had a change of heart, and love drew him back to the side of Jesus. And he's the only of the disciples that is there at the cross. Let love draw you back to the side of Jesus, back to the cross.

What did John find at the foot of the cross? He found love and forgiveness. Do you know the

same John that we're reading about here that wrote this gospel, he wrote 1 John in the Bible, the New Testament, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, those letters? You know what he said in his first epistle chapter one, verse nine? He said, "If we confess our sin, God is faithful and just to forgive us of our sins and to cleanse us from what, all unrighteousness."

John experienced that. He came back to the foot of the cross and he said, "Jesus, I'm sorry. Please forgive me." And he confessed to sin, and he was forgiven. And there he was again, found love and forgiveness at the foot of the cross. Jesus didn't condemn him, Jesus didn't rebuke him. He forgave him.

Sometimes I think we need to learn to pray and we need to say, "Lord, let me let you love me, let me let you love me." Sometimes we build walls. We don't let God love us. He loves us, he wants to bless us, but we don't let him. So pray. "Lord, let me let you love me, let me just be a reservoir of your love. Just fill me with your love, and then a conduit to flow out to other people." John was the apostle of love, and that came from his proximity to Jesus, his nearness to Jesus.

But John not only found love and forgiveness at the cross, he found a great responsibility. Says in verse 27, "He took Mary into his home. From that moment, from that hour, he took Mary into his home."

Now, John's mother, Salome, and Mary were sisters. So Mary was his aunt. He already had a mother, but now he's taking Mary as well into his home, and I tried to imagine the hours of sweet fellowship that John and Mary had talking. Can you imagine having Mary live in your home? "Tell me about when Jesus was born again. Tell me about the angels that sang, and tell me about the shepherds and the wise men, and tell me about Jesus." The Bible says that when Jesus was born, that Mary pondered all these things, and kept them in her heart. She had a baby book. Maybe she had the shepherds sign the baby book. She took a picture of them, stuck it in there.

"Jesus, here you are. The shepherds, the wise men came, they worshiped you, brought gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh." And John could have said, "Mary, tell me the stories." So for hours, they probably sat and had sweet communion with one another and fellowshiped. But he saw that he had a responsibility to take the place of Jesus and care for his mother.

We have a great responsibility to take his place in the world. Jesus was saying to John in these words, behold, your mother, "Take care of her for me. My hands are nailed to a cross, my feet are nailed to a cross. I'm going to die, I'm going to ascend back into heaven. John, I'm going to entrust you with my mother. Take care of her for me." He saw that he was given this responsibility.

We as well, when we come to the cross and we see Jesus dying, we learn the lesson that we have a responsibility to be his hands extended, to be his feet and take the good news to the world, that we care for people, that we love people, that we provide for people, that we show concern for people. We are his representatives in this world. That's, again, why Paul said, "I'm

crucified with Christ. Nevertheless, I live, but the life I live and the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me, gave himself for me." So it's the crucified life lived out, Jesus living through me, caring for your wife, caring for your husband, caring for your parents, caring for your children.

What if all Christians took care of their families and loved each other and then took care of the world, took care of other people, and took care of strangers? We get so busy with our Christian things that we forget that we're to show Christ and demonstrate Christ to the world that is around us. There stood by the cross of Jesus.

Where are you this morning? Are you standing by the cross of Jesus? Are you near the cross of Jesus? I love the song, the word say, keep me Jesus, keep me near the cross. There's a precious fountain. Free to all a healing stream flows from Calvary's mountain. In the cross, in the cross, be my glory ever. What a blessing to stand near the cross. And if you'll come to Jesus today and you'll stand near that cross today, he will forgive you, and he will give you everlasting life. Let's pray.