

I mentioned last week, that the cross is the very center of the Christian faith. The cross can be viewed from three different angles: (1) it was a wicked act of men. (2) It was a selfless act of Love. (3) It was the just act of God. All three of these must be seen at the cross. Wicked men are there, taunting and ridiculing Him. Christ is there, selflessly and willingly dying. The Father is there, justly and righteously, punishing His Beloved Son in place of sinners.

There is a sense in which the cross was, at the same time, the greatest display of human wickedness, and the greatest display of divine love! Everything meets at the cross. Man's sin, God's love, God's justice and holiness. They all meet together at the cross!

In fact, if you think about it, there were very different groups of people that day at the cross—there were the Roman soldiers (who at this point were largely ignoring our Savior); there were the Jews (who were mocking our Savior); and there were some followers (who were adoring our Savior)—and all of this at the very same time.

Thus, we come this morning to the first words of our Savior uttered from the cross, as recorded by John. Seven times our Savior spoke from the cross. Matthew and Luke record His first two sayings, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do," and "Today, you will be with Me in paradise." These were words of forgiveness and salvation. In the passage before us we find words of deep love and affection, and I want to suggest three things from them.

- I. A Mother's Love
- II. A Son's Obedience
- III. A Savior's Tenderness

I. A Mother's Love

1. I need not remind you brethren, how the Roman Catholic Church has elevated Mary to a status almost equal to Christ.
2. And this is in many ways very tragic—for one, it gives her a place within the economy of redemption she doesn't deserve.
3. But secondly, and almost as tragically, it robs her the unique privilege she in fact had, as the earthly mother of our Lord Jesus Christ.
4. Dear brethren, while we must reject all that Rome imputes to Mary, let us remember, she was blessed above women.
5. For it was within this young Jewish woman, the Messiah was conceived, carried, born, fed, cared for, and deeply loved.
6. Thus, before we come to look at Mary, the mother of our Savior, let me say a few words about the other ladies mentioned in our text.
7. There has been some debate whether there's three or four women mentioned—I think it's most likely four women.
8. The question concerns whether or not, "His mother's sister" and "May the wife of Clopas" are the same or different women.
9. I suggest there are likely two different women for two reasons (1) it seems unlikely a parent would name two daughters Mary, and (2) it seems there's an intended contrast between the four women and four Roman soldiers.
10. V24—"Therefore the soldiers did these things...Not (but) there stood by the cross of Jesus...these four women."
11. His mother—John mentions our Lord's mother first, not because she was a leader among the women, but because she was more central to his point.
12. His mother's sister—that is, Jesus' mother's sister (or our Savior's aunt)—it's possible her name was Salome (Mk. 15:40), and if so, she was the mother James and John.

13. Mary the wife of Clopas—according to Matthew and Mark, it seems likely she was the mother of James the Less and Joses (Joseph).
14. Mary Magdalene—according to Lk.8:1-2, this Mary followed Jesus through His earthly ministry assisting Him.
15. Luke tells us she was delivered from seven demons, thus, no doubt out of gratitude, she followed and served Christ.
16. Let me simply remind you in passing, these women are not only in contrast to the soldiers but also the disciples.
17. If you remember, all of them fled and left our Savior at His arrest, with only John returning (and Peter watching from afar).
18. Thus, we learn dear brethren, that women are just as needed for the Lord's work as are men—we all have work to do.
19. These ladies followed Jesus throughout His earthly ministry, serving and assisting Him, and that to the very end.
20. Dear brethren, just because Scripture forbids women to hold office in the church, this doesn't mean women are less important to the church.
21. Women can and should be a vibrant part of the church—learning theology, teaching other women, serving in various capacities, and encouraging the brethren.
22. Thus, at this point I want to suggest three truths about Mary—her love was intense, her grief was foretold, and her devotion was persistent.
23. (1) Her love was intense—I suggest to you, there is no greater human love, than that of a mother for her child.
24. While obviously fathers love their children, and in many ways equally to mothers, mothers have a unique love for their children.
25. The mother has carried the child for 9 months, birthed the child, and she has (oftentimes) fed the child, from herself.
26. John Flavel—"What is the child but a piece of the parent wrapped up in another skin"—this is especially true for the mother.
27. Brethren, this passage reminds us that our Savior was and is fully human—He was the promised Seed of the Woman.
28. We must always remember—our Savior was and is one Person with two natures—He is GOD and He is MAN.
29. Thus, concerning His human nature, Christ grew in understanding and wisdom, in a similar way every other person does.
30. He had to learn how to walk and talk—He had to learn how to eat—He had to learn every other thing a child learns.
31. Lk.2:52—"And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men"—He was fully human.
32. Dear brethren, we can hardly imagine what Mary endured, watching her first born Son, suffering on that cross.
33. There is little doubt that every blow and every groan was a dagger to her heart, a cause of great pain and sorrow.
34. A.W. Pink—"She is the dying Man's mother. The One who agonizes there on the Cross is her Child. She it was who first planted kisses on that brow now crowned with thorns. She it was who guided those hands and feet in their first infant movements. No mother ever suffered as she did."
35. (2) Her grief was foretold—that is, it was prophesied about 30 years earlier, by Simeon, that her son would be a cause of great sorrow.
36. Lk.2:34-35—"Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against (yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."
37. There are two prophecies in these verses—the first has to do with "the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."

38. This means, Christ is the great divider of mankind—depending on how men treat Him, will be their eternal destiny.
39. Some will "fall" because of Him, as they will reject Him to their eternal ruin, while others will "rise" as they believe in Him.
40. But there is another prophecy within this, that has specific reference to Mary—"yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also."
41. One way in which people will "fall" is that they will crucify Christ, and so doing, reveal the wickedness of their hearts.
42. Thus, it's in connection to His crucifixion, that a sword will pierce through Mary's heart, just as a literal sword would pierce Christ's physical heart.
43. Perhaps we can say, while Christ would be physically crucified, Mary would be emotionally crucified in her soul.
44. Brethren, I don't know what Mary thought of this prophecy, but she knew, in some way, He would bring her great sorrow.
45. Obviously, she had no way of knowing the particulars of this prophecy, but she certainly knew its general meaning.
46. The little baby being circumcised that day in the temple, that brought her great joy, would also bring her great sorrow.
47. Dear brethren, it's simply impossible to grasp the pain and sorrow Mary felt that day standing beneath the cross.
48. There are times when one of my own children are injured, and it literally breaks my heart to see them suffering.
49. But brethren, can you even imagine, watching your first-born suffering the pain and shame of the old-rugged cross.
50. MH—"His torments were her tortures; she was upon the rack, while He was upon the cross; and her heart bled with His wounds."
51. (3) Her devotion was persistent—here I simply want to remind you, that Mary was not only Jesus' mother but follower.
52. When Mary was converted we don't know, but she is introduced to us as a pious, God-fearing, young Jewish woman.
53. Lk.1:46—"And Mary said: My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; for behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed."
54. Mary knew she needed a Savior. Only a sinner needs a Savior. Mary knew she was a sinner in need of salvation.
55. Furthermore, she knew that Christ was her Savior. She knew He was the promised Messiah. The Redeemer of the world.
56. And thus, Mary "stood by the cross of Jesus"—not only as a loving and grieving mother, but as a devoted follower.
57. Oh brethren, what a wonderful example are these four ladies. Standing always near the cross of our dear Savior.
58. I mentioned last week of the need to ever live within the shadow of the cross—always mindful of what Christ did for us.
59. Though most of the disciples have fled the scene, here are four humble ladies, tenderly watching their Savior die.
60. But you know what brethren—this really isn't a testimony to these women, but instead to their gracious Lord (it speaks of His worth – they are willing to risk all for Him, and His power – He is able to give them courage to stand with Him).

II. A Son's Obedience

1. Here I am referring to the fact, that our Savior was obeying the law all the way to the final minutes of His life.
2. Ex.20:12—"Honor your father and your mother"—our Savior was honoring His mother by making provision for her.
3. V26—"When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, Woman, behold your son! Then He said to the disciple, Behold your mother."
4. Now, as I've said before, by "the disciple whom He loved" is mostly likely a reference to the disciple John himself.
5. It's a very beautiful way to describe oneself—"the disciple whom the Lord loves"—I don't think John ever got over the fact that Christ loved him.
6. He never describes himself as "the disciple who loves Christ," though that's true, but "the disciple whom Jesus loved (13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7; 21:20)."
7. Now, it's evident brethren, that John did love Christ, which is illustrated in the fact that he was present at the cross.
8. But likely in humility, John says nothing of his love for Christ, but describes himself as the disciple the Lord loves.
9. Now, if you remember, John and his brother James are referred to as "sons of thunder" because of their strong character.
10. At one point if you remember, John and James wanted fire to come down from heaven to destroy a Samaritan village for not receiving Christ (Lk.9:54).
11. And yet remember, John is writing his gospel account many years later, and no doubt, he's reflecting on things.
12. It seems rather evident that John has changed over the years. Yes, if we were to read his letters, he still speaks plainly.
13. But how is John now usually described or referred to—not as a son of thunder, but as the apostle of love. I don't think John ever got past that.
14. I think it's true brethren, that many of start out as "sons of thunder" and overtime, with maturing, become apostles of love.
15. Let me just say also, in passing, that it appears our Savior had certain disciples that were closer to Him than others.
16. If you remember, He originally had 70 disciples, from which He chose 12, and then 3 that were esp. privileged.
17. And then from that group of three (James, John and Peter), only John is described as leaning upon His bosom.
18. Thus, our Savior chooses John to tend to the physical needs of His beloved mother, something John welcomes.
19. V27—"And from that hour that disciple took her—to his own home"—in other words, he cared for her physical needs.
20. The obvious implication is, Mary at this point was widowed. Joseph, her husband, having already died earlier.
21. Thus, we learn a very wonderful lesson—caring for widows and orphans is at the very heart of true religion (Jas.1:27).
22. And so, under this second heading, I want to suggest three things about Jesus' obedience—it provides instruction, motivation, and redemption.
23. (1) It provides instruction for all children—in other words, in our Savior's obedience, children learn their obedience.
24. Fundamental to the fifth commandment are five things—reverence, affection, obedience, submission, and provision.
25. (a) Reverence, Lev.19:3—"Every one of you shall revere his mother and his father"—to revere is to show proper respect.
26. (b) Affection—children are not only to revere and respect their parents, but they are to give and show them love.

27. (c) Obedience, Eph.6:1—"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right"—children must obey their parents "in the Lord."
28. That is, they are to obey them by the grace that's given in Christ, and they are to obey them out of love for Christ.
29. (d) Submission—by this is meant, submission to their will, counsel, and correction—children must submit to their parents.
30. (e) Provision—by this is meant, children have the obligation to provide for and assist their parents in tangible ways.
31. This largely has reference to when they grow older, and you have the privilege to practically provide for their needs.
32. While the dynamic of the fifth commandment alters when children grow up, our parents always remain our parents.
33. The commandment—"Honor your father and mother" has applications regardless how old we or our parents become.
34. James Montgomery Boice—"We are under a God-given obligation to honor our parents, and that obligation does not cease even though we should come of age or move far from them."
35. (2) It provides motivation for all children—in other words, in our Savior's obedience, children find motivation to obey their parents.
36. Over and again throughout Scripture, Christians are exhorted to "walk as Christ walked" and "to follow in steps."
37. Well, here dear brethren we learn, our Savior honored His dear mother in the fullest sense, even to the very end.
38. Why should you honor your father and mother? Well, in the first place, because the holy law of God commands it.
39. But here's another reason—Because you want to be like Christ! You want to imitate Him, and follow His example.
40. (3) It provides redemption for all children—that is, in our Savior's perfect obedience, we find our own redemption.
41. Children, let me ask you this question—Have you perfectly revered, loved, obeyed, submitted, and provided for your parents?
42. Historically we make the distinction between the active and passive obedience of Christ, and both are necessary.
43. By "active obedience" is meant His perfect life, and by "passive obedience" is meant His substitutionary death.
44. Both of these together, comprise His atoning sacrifice—He perfectly obeyed the law and suffered its just curse.
45. When our children were very young, I would often tell them—they must first trust and then imitate Jesus' obedience.
46. I can remember dozens of times, when I would be forced to administer the rod, to ask the question—Did Jesus ever disobey His parents?
47. And of they would say, NO. I would then ask—Did Jesus always perfectly obey His parents (in word, deed, and thought)? And they would answer, YES.
48. And then I would ask—Was Jesus treated on the cross as if He disobeyed His father and mother, and they would say, YES.
49. Dear children, behold in this scene your salvation—Jesus obeying the law's demands and suffering its just punishment.
50. But brethren, let us be clear on this point—this is not only good news for children but for all us without exception.

III. A Savior's Tenderness

1. Here I am referring to the fact that Mary wasn't merely our Savior's mother, but she was also one of His beloved sheep.
2. I want to suggest that this is perhaps the greatest lesson from our text—our Savior is always mindful of His people.
3. Is Jesus loving His mother? Yes. Is Jesus obeying His Father. Yes. But remember, Jesus is also dying for His sheep.
4. Did Christ uniquely love Mary as His mother? Yes! But remember, He also eternally loved her as His beloved sheep.
5. I suggest this is likely why our Savior refers to His mother as "woman"—He's reminding her of this transition.
6. With death all early ties are broken—she was not to think about Him as her Son, as much as, her sovereign Lord.
7. The care that Christ shows Mary goes beyond parental affection—Christ loved Mary with an eternal and dying love.
8. I suggest we see in this passage far more than a Son honoring His mother, but we behold a Savior loving His people.
9. I suggest we learn in this passage, that Christ is concerned with every need, physical and spiritual, His sheep have.
10. J.C. Ryle—"The heart that even on the cross felt for Mary, is a heart that never changes. Jesus never forgets any that love Him, and even in their worst estate remembers their need."
11. In fact, to be honest, I suggest this is a primary point of this passage—our Savior leaves His people in community to take care of each other.
12. Or perhaps, put another way—our Savior Himself ongoingly cares for His people through His people in community.
13. Earlier in His ministry our Savior was teaching in a house, and someone said—"You mother and brothers are outside, wanting to see You" (Lk.8:20-21).
14. Lk.8:21—"But He answered and said to them, 'My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it.'"
15. That is, the ties that bind Me and My spiritual family, are stronger than the biological ties that bind My physical family.
16. I suggest this is the ultimate lesson from John 19:25-27—Jesus was physically leaving His disciples in this world.
17. But they would not be alone—He would be with them by His Spirit, and He would take care of them by His people.
18. V26—"He said to His mother, 'Woman, behold your mother!' Then He said to the disciple, 'Behold your mother!'"
19. In other words—I am leaving you both, and you need to take care of each other—you are brethren in community.
20. Dear brethren, what a great privilege it is, to be a part of Christ's church, for it's here that Christ Himself takes care of us.
21. Let me say in closing, I suggest this is in part why our Savior doesn't refer to Mary as mother but as woman (Woman, behold You son).
22. Because our Savior wanted her to know that, while He had not forgotten about her, He was actually about His Father's business.
23. And while Mary would still have the memories of Him as her Son, she must transition, to viewing Him solely as her Lord.
24. Oh brethren, what a wonderful thought—our Savior loving His mother to the end—YES! But more than this—He loved His people to the end.
25. Jn.13:1—"Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end."