Practical Ways to Care for Your Mother:
John 19:25-27 & Selected Scriptures 5/10/15 AM
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How thankful I am for my mother, as I’m sure most of you are. See if you can identify with this humorous reminder of how much we should be thankful for the work a mother does. On this day in which we are reminded of the importance that we value our mothers I want to look at how Jesus’ example of caring for His mother serves as an example to us. Based on Jesus’ example we will consider practical ways to care for our mother, as well as for one another. But as we look at Jesus’ example of caring for His mother we will see also that in honoring our mother we must still put doing God’s will above any earthly relationships, including those of our mother.

This morning as we look at Jesus’ example of caring for His mother we will consider two primary passages of Scripture.

We will read the second of these passages for our Scripture reading along with its context. We will see from the context of this passage that after the apostle John describes the four callous soldiers assigned to Jesus’ crucifixion he then describes four women who also stood by the cross of Jesus. Turn with me for the Scripture reading to John 19:23-27.

As we honor and remember our mothers this day, I want to remind you that the biblical command to honor our mother and father (cf. Exodus 20:12; Deut 5:16), includes making provision for their needs. How can you demonstrate care for your mother? Seek to take care of her needs.

Care for your mother by providing for her needs (John 2:1-11; John 19:25-27)

Both from this account here in John 19 of Jesus entrusting the care of His mother to His disciple, as well as the story of Mary’s interaction with Jesus at the wedding in Cana we see that Jesus models for us what it means to care for one’s mother.

[Jesus models for us what it means to care for one’s mother.]

Mary, the mother of Jesus, apparently experienced the heartache of widowhood before Jesus began His public ministry. Joseph does not appear on the scene after the episode in the temple when Jesus was twelve years old (cf. Luke 2:41-52).¹ Jesus Himself was known not only as the carpenter’s son (Matt 13:55) but also as the carpenter (Mark 6:3).² Apparently, at some point before Jesus began His public ministry around the age of 30, the family fortunes had depended on Jesus’ manual labor.

We’ll come back to John 19:25-27, but look with me at an example that shows Mary leaning on her firstborn son. Notice how in a time of crisis Mary naturally turns to her oldest son. Turn with me in your Bibles to John 2. This is the account of Jesus turning water into wine at a wedding. This wedding takes place in Cana of Galilee. Cana is located eight miles north of Jesus’ hometown, Nazareth.
A wedding celebration could last as long as a week. The financial responsibility lay with the groom (cf. John 2:9-10). To run out of supplies would be a dreadful embarrassment in a culture in which “saving face” was very important.

Now the fact that Jesus and His disciples were invited to the same wedding suggests the wedding was for a relative or a close family friend. Mary may have had some responsibility for the organization of the catering. This would explain her attempt to deal with the shortage of wine (cf. John 2:3). Look at John 2:1-3: “On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. 2 Now both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding. 3 And when they ran out of wine, the mother of Jesus said to Him, ‘They have no wine’” (John 2:1-3 NKJV). Why would Mary turn to Jesus in this crisis? Mary probably turned to Jesus because she had learned to rely upon His resourcefulness. Mary, kept in her late 40’s was most likely a widow. As such, apparently she had come to rely on Jesus as the family provider. Her response here indicates she, like any widow, had leaned hard on her firstborn son.

Yet Jesus makes clear in His response to His mother that His first priority is to doing His Heavenly Father’s will. Note Jesus’ response to His mother’s request in John 2:4: “Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come’” (John 2:4 NKJV). When Jesus refers to his “hour has not yet come,” this refers to the hour of His death, resurrection, and exaltation to glory.

The term “Woman” serves as Jesus’ normal, polite way of addressing women. But it is unusual for a son to address his mother with this term. The custom in either Hebrew (or Aramaic) and Greek would be for a son to use a qualifying adjective or title. Thus, by using this more neutral term, Jesus indicates that a new relationship exists between Him and His mother as He embarks on His public ministry. Jesus was no longer or primarily only Mary’s son, but the “Son of Man.”

So while Mary had come to rely on Jesus as the family provider, now that Jesus has entered into the purpose of His coming, everything, even family ties, have to be subordinated to Jesus’ divine mission.

So too, for you and me as followers of Jesus Christ. Our relationship with Jesus must take precedence over all other relationships. Just as Jesus chose doing His Father’s will in heaven as His number one priority, so for us to follow God we must count the cost and make Jesus the number one priority of life if we are going to follow Him. Being a follower of Jesus means our love for Him takes priority over our desire to please family. In Luke 14:26-27 Jesus told the large crowds traveling with Him: “If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple. 27 And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:26-27 NIV).

For Jews of the first-century, as well as for you or me, making a choice for Jesus may alienate us from our family. If you desire acceptance by your family more than a relationship with God, you may never come to Jesus, given the rejection that may inevitably follow. If you do not make Jesus your first priority you cannot be His disciple. Being obedient to the Lord and seeking to please Him must take precedence over the desires of your family members.
For example, let’s say you have completed your education and you are out on your own. You sense God calling you to serve Him overseas as a missionary. Your parents struggle with the thought of your moving overseas. Their own desire is for you to stay where you are. Yet, if indeed you sense God’s calling you overseas, Jesus says, your first priority must be pleasing the Lord, even above the natural desires of one’s family.

When our parents ask us to do something contrary to the Word of God, or go in a direction different from what we believe God’s will for us to be, as adults, Jesus’ response to us is that His will must take precedence over all human relationships. In such a case, this adult child should still show the utmost respect to their parents, but as a follower of Jesus Christ, they must put doing what they believe Jesus would have them do, above the wishes of their parents. The only way you have solid relationships is if you put Christ first.

Jesus sets the example here in John 2 for us. While we will see that on the cross Jesus makes provision for Mary’s future (John 19:25-27), Mary, like every other person, must come to see Jesus as the promised Messiah. She must see Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Neither she nor anyone else dare presume to approach Jesus on an ‘inside track.’ While there is more in this passage here in John 2 that we could consider at another time, the point I want you to see is that:

**Mary’s request for Jesus’ help at the wedding in Cana shows she had learned to rely upon Jesus’ resourcefulness (John 2:1-3).**

I encourage you that have mothers still living, and especially those who have a mother who is a widow and/or elderly, to ask yourself: What can I do to help meet the practical needs of my mother? Let me give you three practical ways to care for your mother.

**Practical Ways to Show Care for Your Mother:**

- **Verbally affirm your appreciation for her**
  [ILL] Often when I drive over to York to visit someone in the hospital I will give my 79 year old mother a call. I enjoy both catching up on how she and my Dad are doing, as well as my other family. Also, I want her to know my appreciation and concern for her. Show care for your mother by verbally affirming your appreciation for her.

Second:

- **Be attentive to her needs**
  [ILL] Dobson read on Focus on Family Radio this letter from an eighty year old woman on her birthday: To all my children: I suppose my upcoming birthday started my thoughts along these lines...This is a good time to tell you that what I truly want are things I can never get enough of, yet they are free. I want the intangibles.
  
  I would like for you to come and sit with me, and for you to be relaxed. We can talk, or we can be silent. I would just like for us to be together.
  
  I need your patience when I don’t hear what you say the first time. I know how tiresome it is to always be repeating, but sometimes I must ask you to repeat. I need your patience when I think
too much about the past, with my slowness and my set ways. I want you to be tolerant with what the years have done to me physically.

Please be understanding about my personal care habits. I spill things. I lose things. I get unduly excited when I try to figure out my bank statements. I can’t remember what time to take my medication, or if I took it already. I take too many naps. Sometimes sleep helps to pass the day.

Well, there you have it: Time, Patience, and Understanding. Those are priceless gifts that I want. Finally, in his letter, the Apostle Paul wrote, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” I know I can, too! It’s a wonderful feeling to know His eye is on the sparrow and I know He cares for me. I guess being old isn’t so bad after all! Love, Mom

Be attentive to your mother’s needs. How do your parents need your physical, financial, spiritual or emotional support? From Jesus’ example in John 19:25-27 another practical way to care for your mother is this:

- Provide for your mother’s needs in her elderly years

Seek to provide for your mother’s needs in her elderly years. Jesus sets a good example for us of this in John 19:25-27.

[Jesus’ assigning the care of his mother to His cousin John during Jesus’ crucifixion also shows His care for His mother (John 19:25-27).]

Jesus displays His care for His mother as both she and the beloved disciple (John) are passing through their darkest hour, on their way to full Christian faith. Jesus commissions his disciple John to look after Jesus’ mother. By such an act Jesus expresses His love and care for His mother. Notice how He thoughtfully provides for her needs at the hour of supreme devastation. In John 19:25-27 we read: “Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. 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!” And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home” (John 19:25-27 NKJV).

John mentions several women standing by the cross of Jesus. When one compares the accounts in the other gospels, along with the fact that the apostle John is careful not to mention his name or the name of his family members in the gospels it appears most likely that John refers to four women standing near the cross of Jesus.

John has just observed that four soldiers divided Jesus’ garments among themselves. Now John contrasts these four soldiers with four women who also stood by the cross. The four soldiers, indifferent to Jesus’ suffering, focus on what they can gain from this man cursed by God who hangs on the cross. Yet also near the cross stand four women whose hearts break for this one whom they love. The prophecy of a sword piercing Mary’s heart is being fulfilled. See them weeping over this one whom they love, their hearts numb with grief.

John mentions that Jesus’ mother’s sister was one of those who stood by the cross. If Mary the wife of Clopas was understood as the same individual, then Jesus’ mother Mary, would also have a sister named Mary. This is highly improbable in a Jewish family of that time. More likely, Jesus’ mother’s sister goes unnamed by John. When one compares the other gospels, it
appears likely that the sister of Jesus’ mother mentioned here is to be identified with the woman named Salome mentioned in Mark 15:40 and also with the woman identified as “the mother of the sons of Zebedee” mentioned in Matthew 27:56. If so, and if John the Apostle is to be identified as the beloved disciple, then the reason for the omission of the second woman’s name becomes clear; she would have been the apostle John’s own mother. John consistently omits direct reference to himself or his brother James or any other members of his family here in the Fourth Gospel. This makes John, Jesus’ cousin. Thus, as Jesus commissions John to take care of his mother, Jesus entrusts his mother’s care to his cousin, who apparently had a home in Jerusalem.

Why would Jesus entrust his mother’s care to his cousin, John, rather than his brothers? As you may recall just a few months prior to this Jesus’ brothers were quite unsympathetic to their older brother. John tells us that in the year prior to Jesus’ crucifixion, Jesus stayed out of Judea because the Jewish leaders wanted to kill Him. While Jesus is at home in Galilee His brothers tell Him when the Jewish feast of Tabernacles was near: “‘Leave here and go to Judea so your disciples may see your miracles that you are performing.’ For no one who seeks to make a reputation for himself does anything in secret. If you are doing these things, show yourself to the world.’ (For not even his own brothers believed in him)” (John 7:2-5 NET). So here six months before Jesus’ crucifixion we see Jesus’ brothers in a state of unbelief. While this is perhaps the primary reason, an additional reason may be that Jesus’ brothers were not even in Jerusalem at this time. Jesus’ provided someone to care for His mother when He would be unable to provide hands-on care.

When Jesus looks at his mother and says about John, “Behold your son,” He wants Mary to accept the help and support John might give her. Jesus wants His mother to know He is not abandoning her. Through John He will continue to provide for her in the years to come. I think He also wants Mary to see John as her own son and reach out to love and support him because what he is going through right now is also painful.

When Jesus looks at John and says about his mother Mary, “Behold your mother” Jesus clearly indicates to John that Mary is now going to be his responsibility. Jesus wants John to care for Mary as if she was his own mother and help her in very real and practical ways. Jesus knows that what these people are about to face is going to be difficult. Thus, He wants them to be there for one another, not just in thought or word, but in action.

Jesus calls John and Mary to have a deep level of love and commitment for one another. He calls for them to care for each other as a mother and son, or a parent and child. To understand just how serious a commitment this is, think about the one commandment that comes with a blessing. As the apostle Paul reminds us in Ephesians 6:2-3: “‘Honor your father and mother’ — which is the first commandment with a promise—so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth’” (Eph 6:2-3 NIV).

Do you want life to go well for you? Honor your parents. God promises a blessing for those who keep this commandment. This commandment was given to adult children who were being called to honor or actually physically care for their parents in their old age.

Physically, emotionally and financially support and provide for your parents as they got older.
As adult children we are to physically, emotionally and financially support and provide for our parents as they got older. Work to make sure your parents have food, shelter, and clothing. Make sure they are protected.

This care Jesus demonstrates for His mother, also reminds us of the care we are to have for one another. As Jesus looks down from the cross, He creates a new family. Jesus is not calling His mother and John into some kind of superficial relationship of being nice to one another. It’s not about just offering words of support, it’s not about only sending cards on Mother’s Day or birthdays. Commit to taking care of your mother for the rest of your life.

A tradition tells us this is exactly what happened. This tradition says John built Mary a home in Ephesus and that she lived out the rest of her life there.

Jesus wants these two people to take care of each other as if they are a real family and I think that is still God’s word for all of us today. During His entire life, Jesus worked to establish and strengthen relationships. New relationships of love and commitment have always been part of the mission of the church. In the book of Acts we get a picture of what this looks like when the early church faced an extreme need of having Jewish people from around the world there in Jerusalem who put their faith in Christ then wanted to stay and learn what it meant to follow Christ. In Acts 2:44-47 we read: “All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. 46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:44-47 NIV).

What we see here are people committed to caring for one another no matter what is going on. When anyone had a need, the church was there to help. When someone struggled, others were present to provide comfort and strength. What we see is a real family where people were willing to truly love one another where love is defined as a sacrificial action and not just a sentimental emotion.

When we sacrificially reach out in care for others in our church family, others get a glimpse of what the true family of God looks like. It’s what Jesus was seeking to create in one of His final words from the cross.

What Mary and John teach us is that we can’t be afraid to reach out and work to build healthy and supportive relationships with those around us. Whether they are younger people who might need guidance, love and encouragement or older people who need physical care, comfort and support – we need to ask God to show us the family we need to develop.

Who is here today that we might need to reach out and love? What families do we know in our neighborhoods that need some extra support? What needs in the schools or the nursing homes need our special attention and support? What students need a mentor, what college students need a host family, what shut-in needs an adopted child or grandchild to spend time with them? There are people all around us in need of love and support and if we will open our ears and hearts to Jesus – he may share a word with us that will help us see them.
So this is not just a compassionate word Jesus has for Mary and John from the cross; this is a word of direction for the church. We are to become a family in very real and practical ways. We are to care for one another the way we would care for our children or our parents. We need to seek ways to deepen and develop relationships with those around us who might need a little extra love and attention. We need to be willing to sacrifice what we have for the real needs of others. In a final word from the cross Jesus created a family and His word for us today is still to be that family – His family.

In the bulletin I’ve listed some next steps for you. Consider what God might have you do in these areas:  

**Next Steps:** At the foot of the cross Jesus honors His mother and creates a new family.

1. How might God be calling you to honor your father and mother? How do your parents need your physical, financial, spiritual or emotional support? What can you do this week to help them?

2. What older adults might need your loving support? With families scattered around the nation and world, what older adults in the church or community could use your physical, emotional or spiritual help? What practical ways can you help them this week?

3. What children or youth might need your loving support? The responsibility of caring for children and youth belongs to all of us in the church, so what ways can you help children, youth and their families? Can you build a relationship with a family whose extended family lives far away?

4. How can you help lead the church in ministries that help meet the needs of seniors or children in our community? What relationships can you help establish and nurture with daycares, schools and nursing homes?

5. Take some time to reflect on the picture of the early church found in Acts 2: 44-47. How did the people care for one another like a family? How can you help Calvary Bible Church better do these things today?

Lord, help us never to be too busy for mom...if you could take time and great effort for her on the cross in your death, help us to love her while we have her in our life! Help us as well to recognize our responsibility not only to our own mothers, but also to one another, as members of your family here at Calvary Bible Church. Help our love for one another continue to abound in genuine, sacrificial love for one another.
D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 170. While the Jews state during Jesus’ public ministry that they know His father and mother (cf. John 6:42) this does not necessarily mean Joseph was still alive. These hostile Jews say, in effect, “We know who Jesus’ parents are. What right then does He have to claim nobler, even divine, heritage?” Cf. ibid., 292.

The word used for Jesus being a “carpenter” (τέκτων, tekton) literally means “one who constructs,” and can refer to a worker in stone, which may be more likely. Cf. tekton in BDAG for this possibility.

The ‘hour’ of Jesus’ death, resurrection, and exaltation to glory is in the first part of John’s Gospel constantly said to be ‘not yet’, until the arrival of the Gentiles (John 12:20ff). From that point on, with the crucifixion of Jesus about to occur, the hour is said to have arrived (cf. John 13:1; 17:1). Ibid., 171.


Peter had to learn this as well (cf. Mark 8:31-33). Ibid., 171.


In antiquity, a dying person ordinarily would entrust his mother to another with a direct charge such as this: “I leave to you my mother to be taken care of” (Lagrange 1925: 494 [cited in R. Brown 1970: 907]; cf. Lucian, Toxaris 22). In the LXX, the adoption formula is generally “you are” rather than “here is” as in the present passage (“‘Mother, here is your son’ … ‘Here is your mother’”; cf. Ps. 2:7; Tob. 7:12). The form of expression used in John has a Semitic ring. Speaking of “the official formula of the old Jewish family law,” one commentator refers to a crucified man’s “right to make testamentary dispositions, even from the cross” (Stauffer 1960: 13; cf. Borchert 2002: 269; Schnackenburg 1990: 3.278), quoted in footnote by Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 549.

We do know however, that after Jesus’ resurrection, Jesus’ brothers did come to saving faith. Luke records that Jesus’ mother and His brothers were part of the 120 believers gathered in the upper room in Jerusalem after Jesus’ crucifixion (cf. Acts 1:14). This belief on the part of Jesus’ brothers may be due to Jesus’ resurrection appearance to His brother James (cf. 1 Cor 15:7).