

**Take Care of My Mom**  
**Third in a Series of Seven Words from the Cross**  
**March 8, 2023**

**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/ begging / hoping with Jesus in his dying moments to remember him when he comes into his kingdom, and Jesus responds with an immediate mercy, "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 all that is making you weary or worried. Draw near with all that is dismaying and distressing you. Approach your Savior with every one of your regrets of days gone by / with dreams and fears of days yet to come / with every last one of your faults and your failures, every one of our troubles and trials, and listen in. Listen in as Jesus looks his mom in the eyes and says in effect, "Mom, my good friend John 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 invitations I have for you tonight. The first is an invitation to **rejoice in Jesus taking care of us. The second is that we take seriously our Lord's command that we take care of each other.**

**Invitation #1 is to 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 watching and praying with her and Brandon, watching and praying, tears rolling down our cheeks, then open weeping as our daughter takes care of her son to the end. I can see little Gabriel's dad, our son in law holding close a little casket, getting down into a grave, placing that little boy in the cold Minnesota grave, I can see family members 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. But even as we wait, rejoicing that this little one is in the presence of Jesus. Jesus is taking care of him.

Tonight I invite you to imagine the suffering and death of Jesus from His mom's point of view. He was flesh of her flesh, bone of her bones. Her memories included all kinds of snapshots:

- That silent and holy night holding the very Son of God in her arms for the first time, she and Joseph wrapping him in swaddling cloths, shepherds finding and worshiping and glorifying.
- That dreadful night when Herod's soldiers were coming after them and how slow the donkeys seemed as they ran for their very lives on their way to Egypt.
- Memories of nursing and caressing the baby Jesus ever so gently, memories of playing with him and teaching him how to play with others, guiding him through all the ups and downs of childhood, and into what we call the teenage years.
- Memory of Jesus at age 12 in the Temple, asking questions of the nation's brightest and best scholars, learning and growing and being about his Father's business.
- Memory of Wedding of Cana, with Mary finally instructing servants, "Whatever he tells you to do, do, Jesus doing the first of many signs and wonders.
- Memories of Jesus teaching and preaching, healing the multitudes, showing compassion unto the outcast, being opposed by the authorities.
- Now on a little hill outside of Jerusalem, her mind flashed back to Simeon in the temple predicting that in fact, a day would come when a sword would pierce her heart.

The hands of Jesus, now nailed to a tree - she used to hold and guide them as he took his first steps. Those arms, now stretched out, they used to embrace her as she tucked him into bed. That sweet face, now battered and bruised and writhing in pain. And there was nothing she could do except to be there. She had heard him praying for the Father to forgive those who were crucifying him. She had heard

him promise paradise to one of the thieves, and 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. One wonders where they were on this awful Friday afternoon. In John chapter 7 we read that the brothers of Jesus were not believing in him, and at that point in his ministry, his siblings were showing 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. Taking care of Mary would not be a burden for John, but a privilege. Secular scholars suggest that Mary may have lived 10 or more years after the crucifixion.

John describes himself as the one Jesus loved. Best friends they were. The New Testament reveals that John stayed in Jerusalem while other apostles went on mission elsewhere - no doubt making sure Mary was provided for and protected. From that moment on, John was her adopted son and she his adopted mother. John, the brother of James and the son of Zebedee and Salome, had reclined at the very bosom of Jesus. He 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.

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 / laying down His life in sacrificial and voluntary fashion / the very Lamb of God who takes away the guilt of our sins / takes away to shame of our sins / takes away the power of our sins / takes away the eternal consequences of our sins.

**Tonight's second invitation is that 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 disciples' 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 / from the cross to make sure we take care of the most vulnerable first of all in our families, then also in our neighborhoods, and finally in all of society.

In recent sermons, we noted one of the great promises of God is that we enjoy the benefits of being a part of a large family, namely the Holy Christian Church. All Christians across the globe are our brothers and sisters in the faith. It's here in the Church most of us were born again in the waters of baptism unto a living hope. It is here in the local fellowship of believers 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.

When Jesus invites us to take care of each other, He isn't so much asking us to build prisons and hospitals, he's asking us to visit those who are in prisons and hospitals. He isn't so much telling us to cheer up those who are sad and depressed, he is asking us to travel with them through those valleys of darkness. 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 congregation of believers full of folks who have this one thing in common - Jesus Christ is their Savior, their Rescuer, and their Deliverer. Jesus is their Best Friend Forever. Jesus is the Good Shepherd who keeps following them around with goodness and mercy. The rhythm of their faith is first of all to 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. First, they hear the Word of God, they treasure the Word of God, they reverence that Word of God, and then they go looking for folks whose hearts are broken in every imaginable way.

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.