

Words of Love
Part 3 - When Love Speaks
John 19:25-27
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In this Season of Lent we have been looking at the words Jesus spoke while hanging on the cross. The first words Jesus spoke from the cross were, ***"Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing."*** In that sermon we looked at the importance of confessing our sins and receiving God's forgiveness. The second words Jesus spoke from the cross were words of assurance. Jesus said to the thief, ***"Today you will be with me in Paradise."*** In that sermon we learned important things about salvation by listening in on the conversation Jesus had with the thief who was on the cross next to Him.

Today we are going to look at the conversation Jesus had with His mother and His closest disciple while He hung dying on the cross. John writes, ***"Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, 'Dear woman, here is your son,' and to the disciple, 'Here is your mother.' From that time on this disciple took her into his home."*** (John 19:25-27)

The first thing I invite you to notice about this passage is the absence of men at the foot of the cross. They had scattered and were in hiding out of fear that they would be killed along with Jesus. But the women weren't considered a threat, in fact, they weren't even considered worth noticing. They used this to their advantage and came to mourn Jesus' crucifixion. The only man mentioned here is John, Jesus' closest disciple and notice that it says he was "standing nearby." We get the impression he was standing back so that he would not be

recognized as one of Jesus' followers. But when he hears the Lord speaking to him, he answers. Risking everything, John seizes one more opportunity to interact with Jesus.

Tradition tells us that Mary was a widow. Her husband, who was much older than her, had left her in the care of Jesus, when he died. Now that Jesus was dying, she would need another man to take care of her and provide for her. Tradition tells us that Mary lived around twelve with John before she died.

Such simple words set this arrangement in place. *"Mother, behold thy son."* And to John he said, *"Behold thy mother."* The words sound simple enough but their implications are profound. These words show us the heart of God — God's compassion, God's tenderness, God's love, God's caring and concern. These things are not just for His mother and His closest disciple, but for you and for me, and for the world.

What do we learn from these simple words? We learn that if we are going to love like Jesus, we are going to have to **TAKE CARE OF OUR FAMILY**. That's what Jesus is doing here. He's taking care of his family. In the midst of Jesus' pain and suffering, while he's hanging on the cross dying, He shows us how we are to love our family. From these simple words we learn much about love.

FIRST, WE LEARN FROM JESUS THAT LOVE PAYS ATTENTION. That's what Jesus did. He paid attention to His grieving mother who was standing there at the foot of the cross in so much pain. Jesus teaches us that no matter what's going on love pays attention. Jesus is hanging there, dying. He's experiencing all kinds of distractions. There are crowds of people mocking him, scorning him, scoffing him, insulting him and a handful of people weeping for Him. He is in excruciating pain. Jesus ignores all the distractions and focuses on His family. He gives her His attention.

Giving someone your attention is one of the greatest gifts you can give. It's far more important than money or possessions or anything else. The greatest gift you can give your family is your attention. When you give someone your attention you are giving them yourself. You are giving them your life, because your time is your life. You can always make more money, but you can't make more time. Once it's gone, it's gone. You only have so much time in this world. When you pay attention to someone, when you take the time to really focus on someone, you are putting love into action. You are demonstrating that they matter to you; that they are valuable to you; that they mean more to you than anything else. When you pay attention to someone, you're treating them with dignity and respect. You're honoring them.

On the other hand, when you ignore someone, you are disrespecting them and dishonoring them. It's a terrible experience to feel you're invisible, that people intentionally overlook you. It's a form of belittling and rejecting someone to treat them as if they were invisible. The women were able to gather at the foot of Jesus' cross without fear because they were ignored by the soldiers, treated as if they were invisible. Nobody paid any attention to them. Jesus was so different. Jesus always paid attention to the women around him and by doing this he raised the value of woman. He saw all people as made in God's image, male and female, and he paid attention to those who were overlooked and disregarded by the rest of society. If we are going to love like Jesus, we are going to have to do the same. Here we find him paying attention to his mother and making sure she is taken care of. He teaches us that loving others must start with our own families.

The fifth of the Ten Commandments says, "***Honor your father and your mother....***" (Exodus 20:12) There is no statute of limitations on that command. It doesn't say "honor your father and mother as long as you live in their home." It

doesn't say "honor your father and mother as long as they are alive." We are to honor our father and mother as long as we are alive. That's not just a suggestion. It's the fifth of the GREAT COMMANDMENTS. It's not optional.

We are to honor our parents as long as we live. You say, "You don't know my mom and dad." No, I don't. But it doesn't matter what they've done or failed to do. It doesn't matter if they were bad parents or if they ignored you. Maybe you never even knew your parents. Your parents may have been awful, still God commands you to honor your father and mother. Some of us were denied the attention of our parents. They just weren't there for us. We can't do anything about that but we can refuse to do the same thing to our children. Love pays attention. That's what Jesus did. He saw his mother in her pain, grieving her son on the cross, and he paid attention to her.

SECOND, WE LEARN FROM JESUS THAT LOVE PROVIDES FOR REAL NEEDS. These simple words, "*Mother, behold thy son*" and to John, "*Behold thy mother*" are Jesus' last will and testament. In the midst of all His suffering He says to his closest disciple, "John, take care of my mom." And to His mother, He says, "Mom, take care of my best friend." He knew they were going to miss Him and by putting them together He was creating a relationship that would benefit them both. Jesus doesn't have anything to leave to His mother. He doesn't have a house or a car or stocks or bonds. He doesn't even have the clothes off his back because they were already taken from Him by the Roman guards. So what does He do? He provides for her needs by taking commissioning his disciple to care for her. He takes the man he trusts the most and says, "My mother is now your responsibility to care for." To his mother he says, "My best friend is now your son." Take care of each other.

The Bible tells us that we are to provide for the needs of our family. In 1st Timothy we read, *"Show respect for the widows who really are all alone. But if a widow has children and grandchildren, they should learn first to carry out their religious duties...."* Did you know that caring for your family is a religious duty? Caring for elderly family members is a religious duty. The verse continues, *"...they are to care for one another and in this way repay their parents and grandparents, because that is what pleases God."* (1st Timothy 5:3-4)

Learning to love like Jesus starts at home. Learning to love like Jesus doesn't start on a mission trip. It doesn't start by serving your country or your community or even your church. We must first learn to love our own families by providing for them. 1st Timothy 5:8 says, *"If anyone does not provide for his relatives and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever."* (1st Timothy 5:8) That's pretty clear. That's how important it is to care for your own family before anyone else. Love starts at home. Love starts with your own family, even the ones who have let you down; even the ones who have failed you. And if you're married, it includes your in-laws. It includes stepchildren and even stepparents.

THIRD, WE LEARN FROM JESUS THAT LOVE GIVES EMOTIONAL SUPPORT. If we are going to love like Jesus, we are going to have to learn to give emotional support to others. Here we have one of the tenderest scenes in all of Scripture. Mary, the mother of Jesus is watching her son be tortured and John, his best friend, is standing there with her and they are in agony for Jesus. Their hearts are being ripped out as they watch Him die. They are overwhelmed with grief.

Mary was no stranger to grief. Her life as the mother of Jesus had been filled with grief from the very beginning. As a young woman she experienced an

unexplainable birth. She had to live through the real possibility of being stoned to death for it. She had to live with the fact that even though she hadn't had sex, she was pregnant. And the child she carried was no ordinary child but the Chosen One. I think she stopped telling people these things because no one believed her, which only further alienated from others. When the baby arrived, on the eighth day, they took Him to the temple to be dedicated. They run into this guy named Simeon who says, "I need to tell you a little bit about this baby." He tells Mary and Joseph how their child is going to have a life of suffering, and by the way, Mary, the sword is going to pierce your heart as well. You're going to suffer right along with Him as only a mother can.

Not much later, Mary and Joseph have to flee the country with Jesus, because King Herod is out to kill him. He puts out a decree that all male children under two years of age are to be killed. They have to flee in the middle of the night to Egypt, because the government wants to kill their baby. It doesn't get more serious than that.

When Jesus begins His public ministry, He starts raising people from the dead and healing people left and right. He goes back to His home town of Nazareth and announces that He is the Son of God and the people don't handle the news very well. They try to throw Him off a cliff. Mary's standing there, watching all her friends and relatives try to kill her son. And her heart is filled with grief.

Now he's hanging on a cross like a common criminal, unjustly condemned by a series of illegal court hearings. He's hanging there dying a gruesome, gory, bloody death. His mother is watching as he dies, completely unable to do anything to help Him. She's suffering major grief as she watches her nail pierced son suffer. Jesus looks down, through all his pain and suffering, to give his mother emotional support.

If we are going to love like Jesus, we are going to have to learn to give support to others no matter what. The Bible says, "***A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.***" (Proverbs 17:17) "A brother is born for adversity" doesn't mean that siblings are supposed to cause each other trouble but that they are to help each other in difficult times and give emotional support to one another. That's how God wants us to treat the people in our family.

Friends, you should know that when you become a Christian, you enter into the FAMILY OF GOD. The people in your church become your family. You've heard the phrase "blood is thicker than water." That's true. But there is something even thicker than blood and that is the spiritual bond between Christians that will last for all eternity. Spiritual bonds will outlast physical bounds. Spiritual families will outlast physical families. Jesus said, "***Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and my sister and my mother.***" (Matthew 12:49-50)

Christians used to address one another as brother or sister. For thousands of years believers addressed one another as brother or sister. They understood that we are the family of God and as such we are to care for one another. In 1st Timothy 5, the apostle Paul commands, "***Do not rebuke an older man, but appeal to him as your father. Treat the younger men as brothers, treat the older women as mothers, and treat the younger woman as sisters...***" (1st Timothy 5:1-2) In Romans, chapter 12 he says, "***Be devoted to each other like a loving family. Excel in showing respect for each other.***" (Romans 12:10) In Galatians, chapter 6, Paul says, "***Whenever we have the opportunity to help anyone we should do it. But we should give special attention to those who belong to the family of believers.***" (Galatians 6:10) We are to pay attention to one another and help one another with real needs. We are to give one another emotional support.

FOURTH, WE LEARN FROM JESUS TO SEE OTHER PEOPLE'S PAIN EVEN WHEN WE ARE IN PAIN. That's what He did. He reached out in love in the midst of his terrible pain and suffering and He wants us to do the same.

FIFTH, WE LEARN FROM JESUS TO MEET OTHER PEOPLE'S NEEDS EVEN WHEN WE ARE IN NEED. That's what he did. He had so many unmet needs while he hung dying on the cross but he didn't let that stop him from reaching out to meet the needs of those he loved.