

**Reading:** John 19:16-27

**Theme:** The Word of Compassion.

Those of us who have the privilege and honour of being parents can identify with the idea that we would rather suffer than see our children suffer. Perhaps our children have been ill or injured and we have wished it was us not them and we would take their place if only we could. We do not like to see our children hurt, or know they were suffering at school by bullying, teasing and the like. With all the technology about they can be cyber bullied and teased on social media, by texts or emails on their mobile phones even at home.

On the original Good Friday, Mary must have felt hurt, grief and confusion at seeing her darling boy suffering on the cross. Mary was among the group of women who actually got close to the cross of Jesus. The soldiers themselves probably let them get close - possibly being told "*She is His mother.*" With the little group of women was also John, the beloved disciple. We do not really need to use our imagination too much to imagine how Mary was feeling. She, like all mothers, had precious memories of her child; but the things she treasured up in her heart, were quite amazing - the announcement of Jesus' birth by the angel Gabriel; the amazing conception of Jesus; maybe the cutting, stinging words of rebuke she had received concerning her pregnancy out of marriage, the circumstances of His birth and Jesus being laid in a manger, the visit of the shepherds, the wise men and the escape to Egypt would all have been there in her heart and mind. The memories of His childhood, His growing into manhood and the memories of the past 3 years - of His teaching, preaching and the miracles done.

Yet all these precious memories would have been smashed time after time as wave upon wave of sorrow crashed into her life, for there was her beloved firstborn son hanging on the cross only a few feet away. How she would dearly have loved to take the crown of thorns off Him, wipe the spit off His body, bathe His mutilated back and even hold His hands, but she could do nothing for Him. Probably by this time Mary had been there at the cross for about an hour, perhaps up to 2 hours and was this close. She may have wondered "*Will He recognise me? Will He speak to me?*" Yes Jesus does recognise His mother and speak to her v26b-27. These are known as *the word of compassion*, they are the third saying of Jesus from the cross. These are quite amazing words for they show us that even in His pain, agony, suffering and knowing all that lay ahead of Him, Jesus still had a tender love and care for His mother, for her state and welfare. In fact, He had love for all His own

- as we are told in John 13:1 on the last evening of His life "*Jesus knew that the time had come for Him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved His own who were in the world, He now showed them the full extent of His love...*" Let's see 3 things concerning this word of compassion:

### **1. The Completion of Sonship.**

Jesus came to fulfil the word of God and even in His agony He demonstrated this. Although He was facing God's wrath, He did not have the attitude that it did not matter about the Law of God. He knew He had to be obedient even at that time. The 5th commandment had to be kept and fulfilled "*Honour your mother and father*" even knowing He would not live long in the land. Probably Joseph had died some time previously, but here was His mother, the one from whom His human nature had been taken, the one who had given Him birth, nursed and cared for Him throughout His early years, who cared for and loved Him. There she was in an agony of heart and mind, in great sorrow. The words of compassion come to her and to John. No doubt Jesus directed their attention to each other by His head and eye movements.

Jesus was making provision for her. She would need somewhere to stay, someone to care for her and comfort her. She was going to be in great sorrow and shock. Here is Jesus even though in agony and pain of body, even though He was going to go through far worse, yet He does not overlook or ignore the responsibility He had to Mary. Our honouring our parents is not only restricted to obeying them when we are young. Even when we are older and no longer under parental control, we still have obligations, for we have a great debt to them. We must always give them respect and seek their good. It applies to their memory too. This is a big area, but it is an area we must all, whether younger or older, consider. The Lord Jesus in this word of compassion demonstrates the completion, the fulfilment of His sonship even in circumstances that were far from easy or convenient. See:

### **2. The Commission to Sonship.**

In these words there was a commission to John to fulfil the role of her son in Jesus' place. John is given the responsibility to be the substitute son and to fulfil to Mary all that a son had to do. Mary was directed to John; and John to Mary. It may not seem fair; for John had parents that he and his brother James still had responsibility for. Yet John doesn't argue, or question. We read "*From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.*" (v27) This does not merely mean he opened his home to her, but he opened his heart and

life to her as well and she was treated as his own mother. Interestingly church history tells us that Mary lived with John for 11 years in Jerusalem and later moved with him to Ephesus.

Why did Jesus want John to take and care His mother? We read that Mary and Joseph had their own children by natural means and they could have looked after Mary? Wouldn't it have been OK for her to get off to Nazareth when Jesus was dead and buried? We are to realise that at this time Jesus' brothers and sisters did not believe on Him. They viewed their elder brother as strange, at times as beside Himself with madness. Would they be capable of understanding and caring for Mary in the right way when He was dead? I think Jesus knew they wouldn't. Mary would need to be with like-minded people, those who knew His love and would show that love to Mary and it was not by chance that "*the beloved disciple*" is given this responsibility.

Another important thing is that Mary was taken to John's home and there she, with others would grieve and mourn. Realise John's home was one of the first places the news of Jesus' resurrection reached - as John and Peter go to the tomb, John believed and returned to his home (20:10), where no doubt he told the news to Mary! Yet that Good Friday evening his house must have been filled with overwhelming sense of sorrow and I suspect on that first Easter morning unbelievable joy displaced it and filled the home. The Lord Jesus was so tender to Mary in placing her there in John's care and home.

I'm so glad that the risen Saviour now still deals with those who believe in Him with tender love and care and He wants us to be sharing such with each other. Those who do the will of the Father in heaven, are considered Jesus' brother, sister and mother (Matthew 12:48-50). Now that's a big thing for us to get hold of, but it means that we are to be careful how we treat and regard one another as believers. It means we have to care for each other as believers, regarding each other as special to our heavenly Father and treat and care for each other as would please Him. We, like John, have been given a great privilege and high responsibility. In John's case it was commission to sonship for Mary in particular, while we have the commission to care for each other as brothers and sisters, caring for other sons and daughters of our Saviour.

This word of compassion does not only include in it a completion of sonship and the commission to sonship, but most importantly it includes:

### 3. The Cessation from Sonship.

We have seen some obvious things about Jesus caring for His mother and the wise and loving way in which Jesus choose John to care for her. Yet it seems strange that John, as he wrote of this incident, seems to emphasise the fact four times that she was Jesus' mother (v25-26), but in contrast to this is when Jesus spoke to Mary He does not call her "*mother*", not even "*Dear woman*" (NIV) but simply, and it appears coldly as "*woman*" as a number of versions translate it. It does seem a cold, distant, hard and indifferent term to use. We can imagine her in her grief and sorrow wanting Him to speak to her and call her "*mother*", but when He addresses her, He calls her "*woman*"!

This cold term must have hurt her, but I feel that this term would also have hurt Jesus. This shows us that He was deliberately cutting Himself off from the love of His mother. Yes, He was aware of it, could see her grief, that what He was going through was causing her great pain and grief. Yet as dear as her love was, as deeply as He was tied to her, He nevertheless has to cut Himself off from such. This was because such things could hinder His greater work and so He had to remove even the loveliest obstructions and hindrances. Here He renounces, lets go of His mother's love. Jesus was the Man of Sorrows and in that nothing could comfort Him, in fact His mother's love would only hinder His greater work and He removed it away from Him.

Some may say that Jesus hurt His mother here, even more than she was hurting already. Yet she had already been forewarned of this by old Simeon - her heart, soul would be pierced (Luke 2:35). Even though she is hurt, her suffering is nothing, is incidental to what Jesus was going through and **cannot ever** be compared to what He went through a short while later and that she, thankfully, was spared from seeing. The Lord Jesus sacrifices Mary's temporal happiness as preparation for His awful sufferings, as He faced, totally alone, the unlimited anger of God, separated from the felt love of God the Father and Holy Spirit which He had eternally known and delighted in. There was to be nothing on earth to distract Him as He faced what was to come and so He renounced His sonship to Mary.

We have to realise it was not a cessation of love to Mary, but it was the display of a far greater love. As He called her "*woman*" we have to question and realise as to why He called her such and to realise to what He was pointing her and us to! Jesus had use this term to Mary before - at the wedding of Cana in John 2:4 and literally He said to her there "*Woman what about you*

*and me?"* There He wanted her to remember that she was but a woman, a mere mortal, a sinner, yes one who had been given great honours and privileges, but as she very well knew He was God the Word made flesh. She really had no claims of birth or parentage or rank upon Him. I feel that here Jesus used the same term to remind her, to remind us all, of who He was and what He was doing. He says in effect *"Woman don't see your little boy dying on across, but woman see much more!"*

Just pause a moment and think of the first promise of the Saviour in the Bible. It is found in Genesis 3:15 *"And I will put enmity between you and **the woman**, and between your offspring and hers; He will crush your head, and you will strike His heel."* The seed of the woman would bruise the serpents head! Jesus wanted Mary, the woman, to see what He was doing, that He, the seed of the woman, was really bruising Satan's head i.e. destroying him. He may have been suffering, it would be an awful suffering as He took the wrath of God upon Him as well as all the physical suffering, but it was His heel being bruised so that He might crush the head of the old serpent. Calvary would be the battle ground where the victory over sin, death and the devil would be secured at great price by the seed of the woman – *"though two had wounds, there conquered One – and Jesus was His name."*

Jesus was not there as Mary's boy child, her darling son, but He was there as the Saviour of the world. Jesus was dying to be the only hope of salvation, the only way to God, the only way there is for people like us to be right with God. In fact He is the only hope and way to God for Mary herself. Mary was addressed as *"woman"* to show that she had no special claims upon the Saviour because she was the highly favoured one to give Him birth. Mary had the same relationship with the Saviour as we all have - sinners, those who have done wrong before a pure, holy and perfect God. Mary had no more claim on Jesus than did either of the dying thieves, or than we have.

She and we are reminded of not presuming on our relationship to anyone to make us acceptable to God as here even His mother is termed *"woman"*. Not one of us can put confidence in any earthly relationship. It doesn't matter if our mother, if our parents, or children or whoever are Christians. We, like Mary did, need to trust the Lord Jesus as our own Saviour. Mary did trust the Lord Jesus as her Saviour. The next time we find her mentioned is with the disciples praying to and worshipping Jesus (Acts 1:14). Mary came to see

Jesus died for her, her sins and she needed Him as her own Saviour, as did the others in her family.

What about us here? Have we seen Jesus died to save us that first Good Friday? That He took onto Himself all our wrong words, deeds, thoughts and desires (*what the Bible calls our sin*) and He also took all the eternal punishment our sin deserved from God upon Himself there on the cross. Have we, like Mary, entered into a far greater relationship with Jesus than we ever thought possible?

We are to consider the Lord Jesus, not just this word of compassion, but all He said and did; all He is and has accomplished and we are to realise that *"there was no other good enough, to pay the price of sin; He only could unlock the gate of heaven, and let us in."* Jesus died in such a way because people like you, me and Mary needed saving from our sin. I pray we would all realise this, even as we remember that first Good Friday and that we would make Him our own Saviour and know His ongoing love and care in our lives. If we have trusted Him as our Saviour we should marvel again that this glorious One should love us, when we did not deserve it one little bit and that He gave Himself over to death on the cross to make us His forever and to have us see His fullest glory there in heaven.