

Midweek Lent – St. John 19:25-27

March 9, 2022 | King of Grace Lutheran Church, Waukon

March 16, 2022 | Saude, Jerico, & Redeemer Lutheran Churches

*The Seven Words from the Cross:
“Woman, behold, your son!” – “Behold, your mother!”*

In Nomine Iesu

+ + +

St. John 19:25-27

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. (ESV)

O Lord Jesus Christ, innocent Lamb of God, who carried Your cross and upon it the burden of our sin and sorrow, we humbly ask You, enable us by Your Holy Spirit to comfort ourselves at all times in true faith with Your perfect satisfaction for our sins, to praise and glorify You for Your [incomprehensible] love, and to bear our cross after You with patience and humility, that, having suffered with You, we may also by Your mercy be raised with You to everlasting glory, who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, ever one God, now and forever. Amen. (*The Lutheran Liturgy*, p. 110)

In Christ Jesus, who invites you to cast all your troubles, anxieties, and pains upon Him because He cares for you (1Pe. 5:7), dear fellow redeemed:

She gave birth to Him at Bethlehem in those humble circumstances. She nursed Him and tended to His needs. She saw Him crawl and take His first steps. But there were reminders that Jesus was no ordinary boy. Shepherds came to visit the night of His birth talking about a multitude of angels in the sky. Simeon and Anna spoke prophetic words about Him in the temple. Strange men from the East came and presented their gifts. Jesus unexpectedly went off on His own as a twelve-year-old explaining that He had to be in His Father’s house. All these things Mary treasured up in her heart and pondered them.

She watched Jesus grow “*in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man*” (Luk. 2:52). She was there in Cana when Jesus performed His first sign by turning water into wine. She saw Him heal the sick and the crippled and cast out demons. She listened to His teaching which was at the same time simple and very profound. She did not always understand what Jesus said and did, but she loved her Son. She knew He was destined for great things.

But now Mary stood weeping at the cross listening to Jesus gasp for breath and watching the droplets of His blood fall one after another to the ground. Simeon in the temple had told her long before that this day would come. As he held the infant Jesus, he said, “*Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also)*” (Luk. 2:34-35). She didn’t understand it then, but she did now.

Some have said that this means Mary had to suffer along with Jesus, so that their combined suffering would atone for all sin. But Mary's suffering was not for our redemption. Hers was the suffering of a mother for her Son—such a Son whose goodness and love never has and never could be equaled by another. Jesus was a perfect Son, and yet there He was on the cross. How agonizing this was for Mary!

Jesus saw her suffering even as He suffered under the weight of the world's sin. It is a remarkable thing! First He prayed to His Father that those who crucified and blasphemed Him would be forgiven. Then He turned His attention to a no-name criminal who asked to be remembered when Jesus came into His kingdom. And now He looked with compassion upon His mother. What love fills the heart of Jesus! His concern was not for Himself. It was for those around Him. Even while He suffered unjustly, His concern was for all those whose sins put Him on the cross.

Jesus now looked to His mother, but not like a child who is scared and needs his mother's comfort. His relationship to Mary was changed. Even after His resurrection, we are told of no direct interaction or conversation between the two of them. Mary would learn to think of Jesus less as her Son and more as her Savior.

That began with Jesus' words to her regarding John, *"Woman, behold, your son!"* Mary would not be left without care and comfort after Jesus' death. Jesus gave her another "son" to care for her, John, who described himself as *"the disciple whom [Jesus] loved."* And to John, Jesus said, *"Behold, your mother!"* John listened. He took Mary to his own home and cared for her.

This is a beautiful picture of the Church. Even if we are left alone as far as our earthly family is concerned, in the Church we are never without family. Here Jesus gives others to encourage us and help bear our burdens (Gal. 6:2). Here He provides others to rejoice with us and weep with us (Rom. 12:15). The apostle Paul describes the Church as *"the household of faith"* (Gal. 6:10). Here in the Church are fathers for you and mothers. Here are sisters and brothers. You are not alone.

And Jesus is behind all of it. The Church is His body. Each one of us is a member of His body by faith. We were baptized into Him. Paul writes that *"as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ"* (Gal. 3:27). We are covered in Jesus' righteousness. Through Baptism, we were joined to His death and resurrection and now walk *"in newness of life"* (Rom. 6:4). What this means is that Jesus animates us. He sends us toward a neighbor in need and helps us see them with eyes of compassion. He gets us moving, and He works through us.

That was even the case at the cross. The Word of Jesus moved John's heart to willingly care for Mary, and His Word moved Mary's heart to accept this change. Jesus did not leave them alone in the depths of their grief. He comforted them. He comforts you in the same way today. You might be here as one who has been cast aside by former friends, and you don't know quite where you belong. You might be grieving the loss of someone you loved dearly, even years after their death. You might feel lonely and wonder if you really matter to anyone else.

Jesus sees you. He knows your pain like no one else can. He went to the cross carrying all the world's pain, the world's trouble, the world's heartache. *"Surely he has borne our griefs and carried*

our sorrows" (Isa. 53:4). He carried His mother Mary's griefs and sorrows. He carried yours too. Jesus understands the pain that you don't even know how to put into words. And He knows how to set all wrongs right again.

The very thing that caused Mary so much grief—the suffering and death of her Son—was the solution to all sorrow and pain. Jesus gathered to Himself all that is evil in the world, everything that causes guilt and regret, everything that causes distress, and He poured out His holy blood to wash it all away. He died to atone for the wrongs others have done to you and the wrongs you have done to others. His holy blood cleanses you from all sin (1Jo. 1:7).

And Mary learned this. She pondered it and treasured it in her heart as all of us do too. She came to understand why Jesus had to suffer, why He had to give her to the care of another, why He had to die. It was because the world needed saving. It was because the world needed hope. It was because the world needed her Son just as much as she did.

The death of Jesus was the ending of her family as she knew it, but it was not the end of her connection to her Son. Jesus' words the night before His death were a comfort to her just as they are to you and me and to all the members of His holy Church: *"I will not leave you as orphans,"* He said; *"I will come to you. Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you"* (Joh. 14:18-20).

Jesus has not forsaken us. He has saved us, and He is still with us. Thanks be to God. *Amen.*

+ + +