
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.

~Prayer~

O Jesus Christ, be my righteousness. Let your life be my life, your death my death, and your victory my victory. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, who perfectly kept God's law in your place, so that you could be regarded as saints, dear fellow redeemed!

Jesus summarizes the Ten Commandments when he says, "**You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.**" (and) '**You shall love your neighbor as yourself**'" (Matthew 22:37, 39). Love God; love your neighbor. Oftentimes, we think of keeping God's commandments as simply not doing things we shouldn't—you shall have no other gods, you shall not misuse the name of the your God, you shall not murder or hate your neighbor, you shall not steal, and so on. But to keep God's commands is more than just not doing something—it also means to fulfill his commands. Not only are you not to murder or hate your neighbor, you need to help and befriend him in every need. To keep the seventh commandment doesn't mean just not to steal from your neighbor but also help him to improve and protect his goods and means of making a living. To keep the eighth commandment doesn't just mean not lying or slandering your neighbor, but excusing him, speaking well of him, and interpreting everything in the best possible way. For every "you shall not," there is a "you shall."

As we think about our life it's easy for the many good things we have left undone to weigh on our conscience. As we look back upon our life and our day, it's easy to find times where we could have been a better spouse or parent, child or friend. I should have said or done that! It's easy for us to feel remorse and guilt for failing to fulfill God's command to love him and our neighbor. Because it's true. Not only have we broken God's law and sinned, but we have also many times not done what we could have or should have done. We let opportunities that God place in front us go to waste.

That's why tonight, as we focus on Jesus' great love and mercy from the cross, taking care of his own mother, I want us to focus on the great comfort of Jesus' active obedience for us.

When we speak about the saving work of Christ and his obedience, we distinguish between his active and passive obedience. By his innocent sufferings and death, Jesus suffered, in our stead and for our benefit, the punishment which we deserved according to the law of God. We call this his passive obedience. Though he was completely innocent, he suffered for the sins of the world so that we could be forgiven. He took our sentence of death so that we could go free. "*Chief of sinners though I be, Jesus shed his blood for me.*" The other part of Christ's obedience was his active obedience. By his holy life, Jesus has

perfectly fulfilled the law in our stead and for our benefit. Jesus loved God above all things and his neighbor as himself. He did this throughout his life, so that we who were unable to obey God's law perfectly, might be credited a righteous life on his account. And we have a wonderful example of how Christ perfectly fulfilled the Lord's command to love in our lesson tonight.

These were the last few hours of Jesus' life. As the only innocent man to ever live, he was scourged and beaten, lied about and betrayed, and sentenced to crucifixion. The Roman's didn't invent crucifixion, but they did perfect it – ensuring it to be the most painful form of death at the time. Jesus now hung from the cross. We know from Scripture that a few women and a disciple watched this all take place from a distance, but now we are told they stood by the cross. Mary the mother of Jesus, his aunt, Mary Magdalene, and John, the disciple whom Jesus loved. They would have seen first-hand Jesus' aching body, the sweat, the wounds, the blood, and the tears. They had come to grieve and mourn and offer what support they could to Jesus who was not only in extreme physical pain, but in spiritual affliction as he bore the weight of the world's sins.

Yet instead of them offering him what little comfort they could, Jesus offered it to them, specifically, to his mother. He knew he would no longer be able to fulfill his obligation as a son. But as her Lord and Savior, he ensures that his mother, likely a widow, was cared for by his beloved disciple. John would later write of Jesus, "**having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end**" (John 13:1). He loved them to the end. Surely, the Psalmist is right when he writes that God is "**A father of the fatherless, a defender of widows**" (Psalm 68:5). God does not forget his people. Jesus shows us this.

When we are in pain, it is normal for us not to think about anyone else. It's natural for us to be selfish and want others to care for us. A couple weeks ago I was rinsing out a tin can and sliced my finger as I was washing it. I stomped my foot in pain. But it made me think, "how would I have responded if my wife in that moment would have asked for me to change our daughter's diaper?" I am not too optimistic about how I would have responded. Of course, she didn't ask for help but offered to help me.

Here hangs Jesus, at a time when anyone would understand not thinking about others – but still he loves. He perfectly cares for his neighbor, fulfilling the law of God for us. We are told that John took Mary to his home that hour, he made her part of his family. John took care of Mary until the end of her life.

John, perhaps better than anyone else, understood what it means to love our neighbor. Here, Jesus laid before John his own opportunity to show love – by caring for Mary as his own mother. To help her in her grief and support her in old age. We often call the apostles saints. Like St. Paul, St. Peter, and St. John. Why do we do that? Is it because they lived a holier life than most? Or performed certain miracles? While they lived fine Christian lives and did amazing things through God, that is not why we call them saints. They are regarded saints because they believed in Jesus. As Scripture says, "**Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness**" (Romans 4:3).

Even John as he cared for Mary couldn't have done it perfectly. John himself writes by inspiration, **"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."** But John believed in Christ. He confessed his sins and trusted in Jesus. And he says, **"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"** (I John 1:8,9).

You and I have sinned. We have broken God's law. What's more, we have often failed to live up to the life that God demands of us. Yet we know that Jesus has not only paid for all our sins and failures on the cross, but that he also lived the life that God demands in our place. Jesus left no good deed undone. Our Savior did all things well for you.

Maybe you're feeling guilty for your failure to love your children, your spouse, your parents, or your coworker the way you could or should have. Maybe you missed opportunities to show love. Don't let the devil cause you to despair. Look to Jesus. See how in his agony he still loved. He perfectly fulfilled God's law. And he did it for you and for your benefit – so that his perfect life could be credited to you.

In willing and loving obedience to his Father, Jesus laid down his life and freely offered himself as the spotless Lamb of God for you. **"For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous"** (Romans 5:19). By his willing obedience, active as well as passive, Jesus has fully atoned for our sins, reconciled us to the Father, and made us children of God and heirs of eternal glory.

Could anyone accuse Jesus of failing to live up to God's command to love? No. Here's the amazing thing: through faith in Jesus, neither can anyone accuse you. Because his life is your life, his death is your death, and his victory over death is your future. Yes, you are a sinner, but by God's grace through faith, you are a saint fit for heaven. God has declared it. Behold your Savior! Amen.