

## 'Jesus & His Mother' - Mothering Sunday – SJD – 26/3/17 – John 19:25-27

James Dobson tells the story of a mother who was sick in bed. She had the flu. And her little daughter wanted so much to be a good nurse. So she brought mom an extra pillow, and she brought her a magazine to read. And then she even showed up with a surprise cup of tea. And her mother took a sip of the tea, and she said, "Wow! I didn't even know you knew how to make tea!" And the girl said, "Oh, yes. I learned by watching you. I put some water in the pot, and then I put the tea leaves in, and I boiled the water, and then I strained it into a cup. But I couldn't find the strainer, so I used the flyswatter instead." And her mother said, "You what?!" And the girl said, "Oh, don't worry, mom. I didn't use the new flyswatter; I used the old one."

If you're a mother, I'll bet you've got stories just as gross as that! Right? And you laugh about it now, but when it was happening, maybe not so much!

Being a mom is not so easy! I heard about one woman who said, "Before I was married, I had three theories about raising children. Now, I have three children and no theories."

If you're a mother, you know that motherhood can be messy, and at times frustrating, and exhausting. And there are no foolproof formulas. Right? Kids are different. And you can raise two kids exactly the same, and they might turn out very differently!

Being a mom is not easy! And so today, it is very appropriate and right to pause and say "Thank You" to our mothers, and to honor them, and thank God for them.

It is no coincidence that at Jesus's time of greatest need, when he hung on the Cross, his mother was right there with him. We heard their brief interaction in our Gospel reading. Picture the scene with me.

Three heavy-laden crosses stand upon Calvary's hill. Jesus, the Son of God hangs upon the central cross. The mob jeers, the soldiers gamble, the religious leaders rejoice, and Jesus looks down and sees His mother standing near the cross. By her side is the disciple John. Jesus now lifts His voice and says to His mother, "Woman, look at John. From now on He will be your son." Then He spoke to John, "John from now on she is to be your mother." And from that time on, John took Mary to his own home.

This story speaks masses to me about how Jesus thought of his earthly mother and how God thinks about each of us.

**I. GIVES HER AFFIRMATION** - he remembers the 5<sup>th</sup> commandment – '*Honour your Father and your Mother*<sup>1</sup>. 'Honour' has many meaning in the OT including 'Prize highly'<sup>2</sup>, 'Care for'<sup>3</sup>, 'Show respect for'<sup>4</sup> and 'obey'<sup>5</sup>. Together they speak of the great value of motherhood and the respect that it is due. Jesus begins by recognising the great part his mother has played in his own life and positively affirming her in that role. Whatever else mothers do they make sacrifices, they put their children

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<sup>1</sup> Exodus 20: 12

<sup>2</sup> See Proverb 4:8

<sup>3</sup> See Psalm 91:15

<sup>4</sup> See Leviticus 19:3, 20:9

<sup>5</sup> S33 Deuteronomy 21: 18-21 cf Ephesians 6:1.

first, they never stop being concerned even when the child has left home. Being a mother is a life-long responsibility and as Jesus nears the end of his life he affirms all his mother has done for him. Perhaps he is also saying – don't worry all will be well, just wait and see!

**II GIVES HER ATTENTION** - Jesus spoke seven times while He was upon the cross. His first word was a prayer to God, asking Him to forgive His enemies. His second word was a promise to the dying thief. His third word was to His mother and to John<sup>6</sup>, the beloved disciple. All three highlight the fact that in spite of the pain Jesus was suffering he still had time to focus on all those gathered around him – those who had put him on the Cross, those who were alongside him on their Crosses and now those friends and family gathered at the foot of the Cross. In the midst of the great cosmic work Jesus is doing he never forgets those involved in the events of the day. How easy it is sometimes to get carried away by events and forget those who have brought you to that point. Words are difficult to utter when crucified and in pain but Jesus gives Mary his attention and his precious words as a sign of his own love and concern for her.

**III. GIVES HER AFFECTION** – Jesus remembers the loving care he has received from his mother down the years and returns it. Jesus knows the anguish Mary must be going through as she watches her son suffer – can't you all relate to that? Is there anything more agonising than being a parent and seeing your child in pain and feeling completely helpless? Jesus reaches out to comfort Mary even at his own time of greatest need. Jesus can't actually physically touch his mother but he does the next best thing by sharing his precious and apparently final thoughts and love with her. With this in mind he passes his responsibility for her over to John, knowing she will be cared for.

If Jesus' affirmation of his mother was based on the commandment given by God to Moses, then Jesus' affection for his mother reflects the new commandment he gave his followers, to love and care for one another.<sup>7</sup>

Affirmation, attention, affection - qualities Jesus showed to his Mother and which Mothers, from time immemorial, have poured out on their children. Such qualities reflect both the God we worship, and from whom they were ultimately derived, and the lives we all should lead. I leave you with one final quote about mothers.

***'Mothers are the people who can love us for no good reason. And those of us who are mothers know it's the most exquisite love of all.'* Maggie Gallagher**

As we think a little of that love we catch a glimpse too of the even greater love God has for us and how it drove Him to allow His beloved son to suffer on the Cross before his earthly mother!

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<sup>6</sup> Respectively Luke 23:34, Luke 23: 39-43 and John 19:25-27

<sup>7</sup> John 13:34