

Theme: “The People of the Passion” – Mary, the Mother of Jesus

Sermon Texts:

[Jesus’ presentation at the temple with Mary and Joseph 40 days after His birth] **(Luke 2:34-35)**

³⁴ Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, "Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against ³⁵ "(yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."

[Jesus’ crucifixion] **(John 19:25-27) ²⁵ Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶ When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold your son!" ²⁷ Then He said to the disciple, "Behold your mother!" And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home.**

Can you imagine what Jesus’ crucifixion must have been like for **Mary**? We have no writings in scripture that tell us what **Mary** was thinking or feeling as she watched her Son suffer and die on that Good Friday. However, she was Jesus’ mother who loved her Son very much so we can imagine that His suffering and death were especially emotional for her.

Think of what **Mary** had to go through. Especially those of you who are mothers, or parents of a child, you can imagine just how excruciating and painful it would have been for **Mary** to have to witness what Jesus had to endure during the hours leading up to His death. Think of the experiences and promises she had in connection with her Son Jesus. Remember the angel Gabriel’s announcement of this wonderful gift—the Son of God would be *her* Son! Think back to the words of joy and praise spoken by her relative, Elizabeth **(Luke 1)**; the adoration of the angels and shepherds at His birth **(Luke 2:1-20)**; and the worship and lavish gifts of the wise men **(Matthew 2:1-12)**. Think of how fond those memories would be for **Mary**! Think also of the “motherly pride” she must have beamed with as Jesus began His public ministry: hearing His Gospel preaching; His own declaration and claims of being the Messiah, the Son of God; His proof of this through His many miracles; think of the multitudes who flocked to Him and proclaimed His praises throughout the region of Palestine—and beyond! **Mary** not only loved Jesus as a mother loves her Son, she also regarded Him as the fulfillment of God’s ancient promise to send the Messiah—the Savior! Jesus was not only the object of her love as His mother, but also the object of her faith as her Savior.

Who, then, could ever fully appreciate the heartache, the soul-piercing misery that the cross caused **Mary**? No doubt she suffered worse than any of the friends or followers of Jesus; more than any of the onlookers who were there at the foot of His cross as well. It’s entirely possible that no mother in the history of the world suffered more agony than **Mary** did during the suffering and death of Jesus.

It’s also fairly evident from the Scriptures that part of **Mary’s** pain and anguish at Jesus’ death probably stemmed from some of her misconceptions and confusion over what it meant that her Son Jesus was as the Messiah, and what He really came to do (cf. the accounts of the boy Jesus in the temple **Luke 2:41-50**; Jesus first miracle at the wedding in Cana **John 2:1-11**). After all, the common belief and teaching among the Jews of her day was that the Messiah would come and retake David’s throne and physically restore the kingdom of Israel to its former glory. Hadn’t God made these very promises to her before Jesus’ birth?

How could **Mary** reconcile in her heart and mind the words and promises God sent her about Jesus through the angel Gabriel, **"He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. "And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end"** (Luke 1:32-33). This greatness which the angel spoke about, this **“throne,”** this **“kingdom”**—where were they? How could she reconcile these promises

with what she was seeing and experiencing now at the cross of Jesus? What could it mean? Had the angel been a deceiver? Was God's Word a lie? Were all the wonders of Jesus' life's work just a dream?

Well, we know the explanation now, and after Jesus' resurrection and ascension **Mary** would understand it too. You see, Jesus' was about to climb a much loftier "**throne**" than **Mary** could have ever imagined, and the cross was the only road to it. Remember those words Simeon prophesied when **Mary** and Joseph brought the baby Jesus to the temple, "**yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also**" (**Luke 2:35**)? This is what Simeon was speaking about and **Mary**, no doubt was feeling the force of this prophecy coming true as she stood beneath Jesus' cross. However, at that very cross where her "**soul was pierced,**" Jesus also provided **Mary**, His mother, with healing, even as He has for us!

The true "healing" was, of course, found in the forgiveness Jesus won for all of **Mary's** sins, and the sins of the whole world, through His death on that cross. However, what about this sorrow and anguish of heart and soul that **Mary** felt at the death of her Son? Jesus' words to her before His death also provided her with the *emotional* and *spiritual* healing she needed. Our text tells us, **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 (John 19:26-27).** What Jesus was doing for His mother here is quite obvious: He is providing for her earthly, and even some of her *emotional* needs by entrusting her to His beloved apostle, John (Remember, John never used his own name in his Gospel, but often referred to himself as "**the disciple whom Jesus loved**"). But these words have also perplexed many Christians, simply for the fact that Jesus refers to **Mary** as "**Woman**" (v. 26) and not "mother." While Scripture does not tell us precisely what Jesus was thinking when He used this term to refer to **Mary** we can learn valuable lessons from it.

Some feel that perhaps Jesus used the word "**woman**" instead of "mother" because doing so would have hurt her more deeply emotionally if He reminded her of their relationship as mother and Son. While that certainly may have been one of the reasons, there seems to be a much deeper, much greater reason for Jesus' words to **Mary**. First of all, we know that Jesus, the sinless Son of God, did not use this term disrespectfully, but lovingly. He used this same word, the Greek word for "**woman,**" one other time when Jesus taught **Mary** a similar lesson at the wedding of Cana (**John 2:4**).

What was the lesson? In both instances He wanted **Mary**, His mother, to understand that His earthly connection to her as her Son must give way to a superior one, namely as the Son of God and Son of *all* mankind. With these words Jesus was showing **Mary** that her relationship to Him as his mother must give way to the higher and more important relationship of humble disciple. In this way **Mary's** heart and soul could be *truly* healed. For then she would not lose a Son, but gain a Savior. It would also therefore change a temporary relationship into an *eternal* one! More than she needed a Son, **Mary** needed a Savior, and this was God's plan of salvation which He was working out through her Son! **Mary** too was in need of redeeming; she too was in need of the forgiveness that Jesus death won for her. She was not sinless, nor is she the "queen of heaven" as many falsely believe. But we do know that she is now *enjoying* heaven because we learn from the book of Acts that after Jesus resurrection and ascension, she too joined the disciples in worship and prayer to Jesus (**cf. Acts 1:14**). **Mary** did not enter heaven because she was the mother of the Redeemer, but because she was His humble, believing disciple!

There is a great lesson here for us in Jesus' words to **Mary** as well. Yes, the thought of the horrific suffering a death Jesus went through because of our sins is emotional. When we think about His sacrifice, or when we watch a reenactment of all that He went through for us we may have to choke back the tears. But as we have learned throughout this Lenten season our "connection" with Jesus needs to be more than just *emotional*, it needs to be *devotional!* Jesus wants us to have more than just *compassion* for His *Passion*, He wants us to see Him by faith as our Savior from sin and He wants us to see His cross as the means by which He earned that forgiveness and salvation for us!

As we have learned through the example of His mother, **Mary**, it does not matter if our “connection” with Jesus is *relational* (through blood), but rather *spiritual* (through faith)! Jesus spoke of this during His ministry. We read in Matthew, **While He [Jesus] was still talking to the multitudes, behold, His mother and brothers stood outside, seeking to speak with Him. Then one said to Him, "Look, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, seeking to speak with You." But He answered and said to the one who told Him, "Who is My mother and who are My brothers?" And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, "Here are My mother and My brothers! "For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother" (Matthew 12:46-50).**

There is one other lesson this text provides for us, and that is the great compassion of Jesus. Yes, He is most concerned with **Mary's** spiritual well-being and her faith in Him as her Savior, but even in the midst of His pain and agony on the cross—with the nails driven through His hands and feet while He hung there on the cross—He is still thinking of her lovingly. Even in His death, although He had no silver or gold to give her, Jesus still provided for her with the “inheritance” of His beloved disciple John.

God has promised us this same sort of compassion in our lives. He showed the utmost concern for our eternal good when He provided His Son as the payment for our sins, but He also loves and cares for us enough to take care of the “details” and provide for all our physical and emotional needs as well. He has promised us in His Word that He is, **“A father of the fatherless, a defender of widows” (Psalm 68:5).** Just like He did for His mother **Mary**, Jesus has provided for us, His “brothers and sisters” through faith, an “inheritance” at His death. Not just the “inheritance” of His promise to provide and care for our earthly lives, but most importantly in His death He has provided us **“an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade-- kept in heaven for you” (1 Peter 1:4).**

Yes, the thought of Jesus' cross may bring us to tears—but may they also be tears of joy! For there, at the cross Christ showed His great love and compassion for you and me! Amen.