

The Seven Last Words of Christ: Part 2 of 7

(subtitle: Woman, behold, your son!)

John 19:25-27 (New American Standard Bible)

²⁵ Now beside the cross of Jesus **stood His mother**, His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶ So when Jesus saw His mother, and **the disciple whom He loved standing** nearby, He *said to His mother, **"Woman, behold, your son!"** ²⁷ Then He *said to the disciple, **"Behold, your mother!"** And from that hour the disciple took her into his own household.

Introduction

This morning, we are going to think about the second word of Jesus on the cross. It was recorded by John the Apostle.

Imagine yourself a director creating a Jesus movie: the scene of crucifixion. You already put the three crosses on the hill: Two criminals on both ends and Christ at the center. The camera zooms in on Jesus first and turns around the angle and focuses on those standing at the foot of Jesus' cross: four women and a man (John the Apostle). Keep that image in your mind as we are ready to listen to the second word of Jesus spoken at the cross. He *said to His mother, **"Woman, behold, your son!"** ²⁷ Then He *said to the disciple, **"Behold, your mother!"**

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Let's look for the word 'standing' in verses 25 and 26. You'll find two standings: the first one is the four women 'standing' by the cross of Jesus in verse 25. The second one is John the Apostle 'standing' nearby in verse 26.

I'm going to show you how different those two standings are in the original Greek. In English translation, there's no difference: standing is standing, isn't it? However, the Greek verbs for each standing are different. The Greek word for the women's standing is 'hi-ste-mi.' It means to hold ground and stand firm 'with a purpose' (like a guard on duty whose job is to make sure that no one infiltrates and that no one comes through without checking on with him first). The same verb is also used in Revelation 3:20 where Jesus 'stands' at the door of our heart with a purpose: *"Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me."* That's how the women were standing there.

Whereas the Greek verb for John's standing is 'par-i-ste-mi.' It simply means 'to be present' (like someone standing by casually). From that difference, I draw the following

conclusion: the women were resolute here. Their eyes were so fixed on Jesus that they would not leave the place even for one second while their loved One is suffering and dying. That's why I consider these four women brave. Mary the mother of Jesus, of course, mother is always brave, isn't it? And her sister and Mary the wife of Clopas, and another Mary Magdalene (a lot of Mary's back then. It was a very popular name in those days for ladies and girls.). I would say, blessed are the women. Did you know that from the very beginning of Jesus' ministry, He worked with women? Women were an integral part of Jesus' ministry; the Bible says so.

Matthew 27, verse 55, shows us that besides these four women, there were more women at the hill. Of course, they were looking on from a distance, but they were the ones who had followed Jesus from Galilee all the way to Judea ministering to Him. Luke chapter 8 also says that women supported Jesus' ministry out of their own private means. They were faithful and they followed Jesus from the very beginning to the end. They went wherever Jesus went, even to the cross. Did you know that it was also the women who went to the tomb very early in the first Easter morning? It wasn't men, but women. Even today in the 21st century no church can imagine any ministry without women. Blessed are the women. By the way, women didn't pay me to say this 😊. Instead, I just shared with you what I have discovered in the Scriptures.

Let's go to verse 26: Jesus called His mother 'Woman.' Now a lot of us including myself may have trouble with His word thinking how in the world Jesus the Son calls His own mother 'woman?' Let me tell you this: this was not the first time He called Mary 'woman.' It was the second time. When was the first time when Jesus called His mother 'woman'? It was at a wedding in Cana of Galilee. Jesus, along with His mother and His disciples, were attending the wedding. After the ceremony, they had a banquet. Whatever happened there, they ran out of wine rather quickly. So, Mary came to Jesus asking Him, "Son, you have power. Do something." Jesus replied to Mary: *What business do you have with Me, woman?* (John 2:4). *My hour has not come yet.* Still, some of us may think that Jesus was rather rude to His mother. But let me tell you this: He did not call her in the same way some of us would call women in America today. In other words, it was not rude or disrespectful of Him to call His mother woman. Rather it was a common way for Jesus to address an adult female, oftentimes with admiration and respect.

There are six times altogether in the New Testament where Jesus interacted with women and called them 'Woman.' Twice I already mentioned to you with His mother. I'm going to present to you the other four cases. You judge yourself if Jesus indeed insulted any one of them. First, in Matthew 15, Jesus had a meeting with a gentile mother. Gentile means non-Jewish. This mother came to Jesus and asked Him to do something about her daughter saying, "My daughter could use your help, and please make her whole again." To her, Jesus says, It is not right to give my children's food to the dogs. This woman says, Jesus, you can call me whatever you want. You can call me dog, but you know even the

dogs feed on the crumbs that fall from their masters' table. *Then Jesus said to her, "O **woman**, your faith is great; it shall be done for you as you desire."* And her daughter was healed at once (Matthew 15:28).

The second case appears in John 4 where Jesus had a conversation with a Samaritan woman at the well. Who were the Samaritans you may ask? They were mixed blood—half Jewish and half gentile. So, in the Jewish pure mindset, they were unclean, not kosher at all. So, the Jews in Jesus' time despised them and didn't speak to the Samaritans. Neither did they have interactions with the Samaritans. With such a woman, Jesus struck the conversation at the well. At the end of their conversation, Jesus said to her: **Woman, believe Me, I am the Messiah**" (John 4:21).

The third time is found in John 8. A woman was brought into the presence of Jesus in the temple court because she was caught in the middle of adultery. She was brought in by a group of men. Each man was ready to stone her to death. They asked Jesus, "*Teacher, this woman has been caught in the very act of committing adultery. ⁵Now in the Law, Moses commanded us to stone such women; what then do You say?*" Jesus said, "Anyone without sin, let him be the first one to throw the stone at her." Well, all men disappeared out of guilt one by one. Then, Jesus said to the woman. "**Woman, where are they? No one condemned you?**" (John 8:10).

The fourth case is found in Luke 13. One day, Jesus and His disciples were in a synagogue. There was a woman who was bent double and couldn't straighten up for 18 years. When Jesus saw her, He called her over and said to her, "**Woman, you are freed from your sickness**" (Luke 13:12).

Out of all these references, you don't see Jesus' being rude or derogatory toward women, do you? Going back to today's text, about Jesus' calling His mother woman, one commentary says: "It was an affectionate and intimate term rather than rude, insulting, and cold." By the way, if Jesus, as we claim and believe, is equal to God the Creator, and the King of kings and the Lord of lords, can we really find fault with Him for calling Mary, a human being and a creature, 'woman?' I cannot. Can you?

Let's move to verse 27. After calling His mother and John to attention, He said to them, "*Behold your son and behold your mother.*" Between these two individuals, Christ created a new relationship, a family relationship. Jesus was genuinely concerned about the well-being of His mother, so He asked John His disciple to take care of her on His behalf. Verse 27 says, "From that hour the disciple took her into his own household."

Did you know that John the Apostle already had his own mother? However, he also took Mary into his own household meaning that he treated her as his own mother from that moment on. Actually, I am quite impressed with his instant obedience to Jesus' command.

One last thought on Mary the mother of Jesus. From the moment of conception of Jesus to the very moment of His death on the cross, Mary the mother was with Jesus over 30 some years. From birth to death, she witnessed every aspect of her son's life. The entire memory of her life with Him must have flashed through her mind right there at the foot of the cross. Thirty some years ago, she remembered, the Angel Gabriel called me *“You are God's favored one.”* Indeed, I was blessed among women. I too rejoiced being part of God's salvation plan for humanity through my son. Yet, now, I painfully witness the agonizing death of my son the Savior at the cross. Mary might have also remembered another God's prophecy on her son made by a prophet named Simeon in Jerusalem. That day, in God's temple, seeing the mother and Jesus the child, Simeon blessed them and said to Mary the mother, *“Behold this child is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel. And for a sign to be opposed”* (Luke 2:34).

Mary began to wonder, *“What does that mean?”* Simeon continued, *“And a sword will pierce even your own soul.”* No parent wants to hear that kind of prophecy on their child. But that prophecy was fulfilled before her eyes that day: a sword indeed pierced her soul. The worst thing any parent could go through is a child's death before theirs. Yet, Mary was determined than ever before to say it again to the Lord as she did 30 some years ago: *“Behold, the bond slave of the Lord. May it be to be done according to your word”* (Luke 1:38).

Based upon this interpretation, I'm going to draw three simple lessons for us to remember and act on.

#1: Treat women with respect as Christ did. At the cross by calling His mother woman, Jesus was not disrespectful of her. Instead, He called her with intimacy and affection. When it comes down to women, Jesus positively acknowledged them and worked with them. As a matter of fact, He was the first one in my humble opinion who elevated the status of woman from property to person with dignity. He treated and worked with them as equal partner in ministry. For instance, in Matthew 26, you see Jesus sitting in a house with His disciples. A woman came in with a very expensive jar of perfume. We called it an alabaster jar. She broke it and poured the perfume onto Jesus. It was very expensive which cost her about 300 denarii. In today's dollars, it would be close to \$15,000. She poured that expensive oil onto Jesus. It was so shocking to the disciples that they grumbled among themselves, *“What in the world is this lady doing? We could have sold it and helped the poor. What a waste!”* Jesus said to them, *“Stop! Don't give her a hard time. She has done something good for Me. She's preparing for My burial.”* Indeed, it was a few days before He was crucified and that's what He was referring to. Jesus said to His disciples, *“From now on, wherever and whenever the gospel stories are preached, make sure you include her story”* (Matthew 26:13). I say, what an honor the lady received from Jesus! If we treat women as Jesus did, we won't need any feminism, amen?!

The second lesson is this: **new family relationships are created in Christ.** When I came to our church 11 years ago, I didn't know one single soul in Manahawkin and you didn't

know me, either. However, in Christ, we have become brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers. We are related not by human will or blood but by God's will in Christ. Let me tell you why I say so. One day Jesus was staying in a house. He was the celebrity back then. Wherever He went, hundreds and thousands of people followed. That day was no exception. He was staying in a small house but even inside the house He was surrounded by people. There was a knock at the door. Someone said, "Lord, Your mother, Your brothers and sisters are waiting outside to have a private moment." If I were Jesus, I would say to the people in the room, "Folks, I'm sorry. My mom wants to talk to me. Please excuse me." Then, I would've gone out. I am sure that's what you would've done, too. But you know what Jesus did? He didn't even stand up. And this is what He said to the people: *Whoever does the will of God is My brother, My sister, and My mother*" (Mark 3:35). Was Jesus too harsh? I don't think so. He's telling us that new relationships are always created and formed in Christ. Whoever does the will of God is brother, sister, mother, and father in Christ.

The third lesson is this: **submit yourself to God's will in all circumstances.** As I was thinking of Mary the Mother, my heart went out to the parents who lost their children to death. It is the worst thing that can ever happen to any parent, isn't it? Losing your own child before you go. Mary the mother witnessed her own child dying in excruciating pain for several hours. She understands, therefore, those parents who lost their children. She may say to them right now: *You are not alone. I have been there, and I too have witnessed my child's death with my own eyes.* However, her sorrow soon turned into joy; to be exact, three days later, with the resurrection of her own son. Likewise, parents, your sorrow will turn into joy when you see your children again in resurrection in the presence of God. Each time you miss them, each time you feel sad, consider Mary. Put yourself in God's hands and you will see the glory of God as she did.

Conclusion

Jesus speaks to us again: first, respect women. They are integral partners of our faith and practice. Secondly, we are the members of God's family in Christ. New relationships are born in Christ. We are brothers and sisters and mothers and fathers in Christ when we do God's will. Finally, I'm speaking to the parents who have lost their children. Do not lose your heart or hope in Christ. You will see them again on the day of resurrection. Amen.