

**Luke 11:27-28**  
**Faces at the Cross: Mary, the Mother of Jesus**

**Rev. Janet Chisom**  
**April 7, 2019**

**Prayer for Illumination:**

O God, come upon us with quietness and still our souls, that we may listen for the whisper of Your Spirit and be attentive to Your nearness. Empower us to hear Your word anew, so that we may proclaim Your praise and show Christ to the world through our words and our actions. Amen.

*The sermon today continues our series of “Faces at the Cross,” this time from Mary, the mother of Jesus’ perspective. Listen first to the scripture that is about Mary from earlier in Jesus’ ministry.*

**Scripture: Luke 11:27-28**

While he was saying this, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him, ‘Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts that nursed you!’ But he said, ‘Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it!’

**Sermon: Faces at the Cross: Mary, the Mother of Jesus<sup>1</sup>**  
Mary’s Story

I am just so upset. Words can hardly express what I feel and what I’m thinking. Today is a day I never thought would happen and I never wanted to experience. No mother expects her Son to die before her. Children are supposed to bury their parents, not the other way around. And for my Jesus to die in such a terrible way . . . hung up on that cross. It was just awful to watch!

I keep asking myself, “How could this have happened? What did *I* do wrong?” I knew there were problems. He said things that bothered the religious leaders. He did things that challenged society, but I never thought it would come to this! Who would have thought that Jesus would be arrested, falsely accused, and put through the mockery of a trial—held in secret and at midnight!—and then nailed to that terrible cross. I never expected *my* Son who never did anything but good for others, to hang on a cross.

I know there are people who will say that I am biased about my Son being perfect—all mothers say that about their kids—but Jesus really was without sin. I know that Jesus took some risks. He associated with some questionable folks. I didn’t understand why he kept company with some of those people. If He was guilty of anything, it was of loving people too much and of making friends with sinners. He went out of his way to encourage and heal and lift up the people who society shunned. He loved people from every walk of life. Children occupied a special place in His heart. He loved to tell them stories. He cared about their problems and really paid attention to what they had to say.

I think Jesus saw the good in everyone. He could see past the fake smiles, and seemed to see inside the people to notice their heartache, or shame, or despair. He could make friends with just about anyone. He accepted Zacchaeus, the tax collector who cheated people. Zacchaeus’ life changed after meeting Jesus.<sup>2</sup> And there was that Samaritan woman that Jesus met at the well in

the heat of the day, whose life was full of scandal and who was looked down on by everyone. Jesus offered her compassion and “living water.” She thought He meant water to drink, but Jesus was talking about something deeper, something that was much more life-giving than just a cup of water.<sup>3</sup>

Jesus cared for those who were on the edge of society, but he could certainly hold His own with the rabbis and leaders, too. Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council, didn't know what it meant to be born from above, but Jesus explained to him about how the Spirit of God changes a person when they believe in the great love of God.<sup>4</sup> Jesus wanted all people, young and old, low class and leader, woman and man, to understand that abundant love of God. Jesus was something special, I tell you . . . from the very beginning.

Oh, the beginning! I remember back when the angel spoke to me out on the hills near Nazareth. I was so young and naïve. There were a lot of things I didn't understand. When the angel told me that God had chosen me—ME! an insignificant young nobody from a poor, working class family—to be the mother of God's only Son—I tell you, I went through a whole range of emotions really quickly. At first I was confused, and then I was afraid. Somehow, maybe my visit to Elizabeth helped, but I was able to say, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to Your Word.”<sup>5</sup>

I used to wonder why God chose *me*, instead of a princess. I'll never forget what my husband, Joseph, said to me one day. (He was wiser than I in so many ways.) Joseph said God sent His Son to a poor couple to show the whole world that God wasn't standoffish, that he wanted to bless *everyone*. God wanted His Son to be a friend to poor folk, who have so many difficulties and struggles. God wanted us poor folk to know that we had someone working with us, and for us, and that we had a protector from the injustices of this world. I realize that for over thirty years, I had the opportunity to see God's love at work in my home, and in the community, and in all the places where Jesus went. He touched so many people's lives. I'm in awe that so much could be accomplished in such a short life.

But now my heart is heavy, and I can't stop crying for my Son who is hanging on that cross. I don't know how I will go on. What happened today is so disturbing that I don't know what to do. I need make this insensible thing make sense somehow. Maybe time will help. I need to believe that there is some reason that all this happened. There has to be something that I learn and take from it. There has to be *something* that guides my life into the future. What can the past teach me about the future? How can the lessons Jesus taught help me go on?

There are people who want to put me on a pedestal, just for being the mother of Jesus. Early on in his ministry, a woman shouted to Jesus, ‘Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts that nursed you!’<sup>6</sup> I get it! The woman in the crowd who said that was so appreciative of Jesus' teachings that she was praising *me*, who bore him. But Jesus was so right in redirecting her. He didn't want the attention to be on himself, or me! He didn't even want the attention to be on the disciples who followed Him. Jesus was always pointing to God. Jesus said, ‘Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it!’<sup>7</sup> He always valued actions, not adoration or empty promises. He wanted people to hear and experience God's love and for that to change them. His call was one to action . . . living and obeying the Word of God.

I can think of so many times that people's lives changed, their actions and orientation changed, once they met Jesus. He taught us so much! Jesus taught us about love; loving ourselves and loving our neighbors. Jesus taught about gratitude; and taking the time to express it. He praised the one person out of ten who came back to thank Him for healing him.<sup>8</sup> Jesus taught us about second chances; to make the most of things after being healed from disease or mistakes. So many of the people healed were told to take up their mats and rejoin society . . . and they did! Jesus taught us about forgiveness; that we must forgive many, many times . . . seventy times seven times.<sup>9</sup> And He taught about judging when he said, "Let the one without sin be the first to throw a stone."<sup>10</sup> It was no surprise that they all dropped their stones.<sup>10</sup>

As he was hanging on the cross, Jesus was still praying for us. He was still offering words of forgiveness to the thief beside him. Until Jesus cried out saying, "Father, into Your hands I commend my spirit," and bowed his head, and took his last breath, Jesus lived nothing but love for all people. His life gives people hope . . . hope that things can be better here and now, and also hope beyond the present. He showed how life could be different when each of us puts our trust in God.

As I said, this is a heartbreaking and awful day! No mother expects to see her Son die. I'm hopeful, though, that with time, and some reflection, I can find some meaning and reassurance from Jesus' death. I remember that Jesus told his disciples that "he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life."<sup>11</sup> He also talked about "rebuilding the temple in three days."<sup>12</sup> I'm not sure what that means. It makes me wonder what is going to happen three days from now. I think we might be surprised in some way. In the meantime, I need to remember the lessons that Jesus taught and the time shared with Him. I need to think back on our many interactions and what I learned so that maybe I can gain a clearer awareness of who I am and what is expected of me. If I can grasp some understanding of the will of God and allow it to transform my words *and my actions*, this day will not have been for nothing. What a day!

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<sup>1</sup> Dan, Barbara. "Mary, the Mother of Jesus, Coming from the Scene of His Death" in *At the Foot of the Cross: Easter Dramatic Readings*. Bloomington, IN: WestBow Press, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Luke 19:1-10

<sup>3</sup> John 4:1-30

<sup>4</sup> John 3:1-21

<sup>5</sup> Luke 1:38

<sup>6</sup> Luke 11:27

<sup>7</sup> Luke 11:28

<sup>8</sup> Luke 17:11-19

<sup>9</sup> Matthew 18:22

<sup>10</sup> John 8:7

<sup>11</sup> Matthew 16:21

<sup>12</sup> John 2:19