

Communion Saturday

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Preacher: Duncan Macleod

[0 : 00] Father, from that time on the disciple took her into his home. I want us to look at the characters that are referred to in these verses, and what Jesus said to them, and what lessons we can learn from this lovely little incident for ourselves in relation to our love for God and for one another in the church of Jesus Christ.

Because here in these verses, Christ demonstrates that he loved not only his God, but that he loved those whom God had given him in this life.

He loved his mother, and he loved his disciple John. And we too, if we are to please God, must be characterized by these two great things, love for him, and love for one another.

And at the preparatory service before the Lord's table, it is surely important that we examine ourselves as to whether or not we know this Jesus, and as to whether or not we are in any way like this Jesus, in our demonstrating of our love for God, and of our love for each other.

So let's look just for a few moments at the characters that are referred to in these verses. We're told that Jesus was there on the cross, and that he saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved.

[1 : 44] And it is surely appropriate that we begin with Jesus himself. Where is Jesus at this moment? Jesus is on the cross.

The Saviour, which is what the name Jesus means, is at this point, bearing the penalty that our sins deserve.

He is there on that cross between two thieves, bearing shame and scoping good, in our place condemned, he stood.

He is there in order that through his cross we might experience salvation. He is there for us in every sense of that word.

And it is the cross of Jesus that we must focus on in all our churches. God forbid that we should boast sailing the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[2 : 52] And it is on the cross of Christ that we ought to focus especially on a weekend such as this. There are so many other things that so often take away in a promise focusing on the Lord Jesus Christ hanging on the cross.

There are so many other things that distract us. There are so many other things that so often get in between us and him. But this evening and throughout this weekend let's look at Jesus.

Let's behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. and let's remember that he is on this cross in order that we might never experience the curse that our sins deserve.

Curse is everyone that hangs on a tree. And here the blessed is cursed for us that we who are under the curse might know the blessing of God.

And so the most important character in this scene is Jesus. And we must never lose sight of that or of what he is doing on this cross at this time.

[4 : 11] It's quite astonishing that we should read these words at all in scripture. The cross of Jesus. Sometimes we become so familiar with these words that they lose the sense of wonder that they ought to bring to our minds and hearts.

That Jesus the Saviour should be on a cross is the most amazing truth. And yet it is just that the truth. And he is on that cross for us.

And we are here this weekend primarily to speak of him and thank God for the cross on which the Prince of Glory died.

So Jesus is here and he is the main character in this incident just as he must be the main character in every incident that any of us ever experienced in our spiritual lives.

He must be at the very centre of it. If he is at the centre of it then our experience is genuine. If he is not at the centre of it then our experience ultimately is worth nothing.

[5 : 26] But Jesus is there. Not only is Jesus there we are told in these verses that there are other women there too. His mother's sister Mary the wife of Clopas and Mary Magdalene are all there.

And we could take time to focus on each of them in turn. but in the verses that we are looking at the focus is not on them it is on Mary his mother.

And Mary of course was no stranger to sorrow as the mother of her Lord. Although Mary was indeed blessed above all women Mary experienced sorrow such as few if any others have ever experienced.

a sword was to pierce into her very soul as old Simeon prophesied when the child Jesus was presented to him in the temple.

He spoke and forecast that a sword would pierce his mother's soul his mother's heart. And that prophecy of Simeon is now coming to pass.

[6 : 42] As Mary stands there looking at the cross and seeing on that cross numbered with the Prince Precious her own son the son whom she had brought into the world the son who was not only to be the saviour of the world but her saviour too.

Mary is there and who can understand what was going on in Mary's mind and heart at this time but her devotion to her son is such that it takes her right there to his cross.

What about us? In our following the Lord Jesus Christ we too can expect suffering. We too can expect sorrow.

There is such a thing in the Christian life as the fellowship of his suffering. but the great question for us tonight is this where do these suffering take us?

Do they take us where they took Mary? Do they take us to the cross? Do they take us to the foot of the cross? Do they take us where Jesus is?

[7 : 59] That's where they took Mary. Mary didn't resent the fact that her son had to suffer. Mary realized why it was that her son had to suffer.

And Mary is here at the cross wanting to be as close to him as she possibly can even in the brokenness of her heart.

When we in our lives as believers go through times when our hearts are broken, when in our souls we're shedding tears. Where do these experiences take us?

Do they take us where they took Mary? Do they take us to the cross? Jesus is there. Mary, his mother, is there.

And John, the beloved disciple, is there too. John, like the rest, had forsaken and fled Jesus, fled from having to suffer the consequences of what was happening to his Lord.

[9 : 12] We're told that the rest forsook and fled. But John can't stay away. John comes back to where his Lord is because John loves his Lord and knows that his Lord loves him.

and we as the followers of Jesus, the disciples of Jesus, learners in the school of Christ, we too at times may forsake him and flee like the disciples did, like John did.

But where there's true love in our hearts, we'll be lured back by our Lord to where he is and we won't be happy to remain distant from him.

We'll want what John wanted, to be where Jesus is. Identify yourselves with him, even when others are shouting, away with him, away with him, crucify him, crucify him.

We want to be identified with Jesus when others reject him, when others nail him to the cross. We want to be there where he is, unashamedly identifying ourselves as his followers.

[10 : 34] That's the kind of character John was, by the grace of God. Is that not the kind of Christian you would want to be? Is that not the kind of Christian I would want to be?

Again, by the grace of God. John is also so self-defeating. He writes this gospel and doesn't even name himself.

He's simply speechless himself, as the disciple whom he loved. Now, of course, John knew that he loved the others too.

But what was so amazing to John was that Jesus loved him. That was what astonished him above everything else but his Lord loved him. And when he spoke of himself and of his own experiences, he didn't want the attention to be focused on him, but on the fact that his Lord loved him.

What a wonderful example, John says, when it comes to the way that we ought to go about giving our Christian testimony. that we should be able to humbly and from our hearts speak of ourselves

as those whom he loves.

[11:55] What great humility there is there. And yet at the same time there is a willingness to confess his Lord as the one who loves him.

And as we prepare for tomorrow, this ought to be our desire too, that all may know that the Lord loves us. We so often speak of our love for him, but the scriptures tell us that we only love him because he first loved us.

And let that be what matters to us above everything is, that our Lord loves us. And that he loves us so much that he goes to the cross that we might be saved.

That he goes all the way for us, having loved his own who were in the world. He loved them to the end. He now showed them the full extent of his love.

Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. But here our Lord lays down his life for those who are his enemies, for those who are sinners, for those who are hell bound and hell deserving.

[13:13] Christ died. God commends his own love towards us. In that whilst we were still sinners, Christ died for us. John speaks of himself as the disciple whom he loved.

By God's grace may all of us be able to do likewise. And so we've seen the characters and what we can learn from Jesus healed as the main character dying for outland, bearing shame and scoffing wood on the cross on our behalf, condemned in outland.

Mary in all her grief of soul, Mary there looking at her son and yet wanting to be near her son and identified with her son, even though a sword is going right through to the very core of her being as she sees her son and as she hears the cries of the multitude asking that her son be put to death.

Whatever grief, whatever depths we may plummet at times in our Christian life, may these times, may these experiences take us with it to Christ, may they take us to the foot of the cross.

John there, demonstrating his love for his Lord, but declaring his Lord's love for him and showing by coming back to where Jesus is that although he may have joined the rest for a time in for Satan, his love for him is such that he cannot keep far from and that he wants to be as near to as is possible for him to be.

[15:09] But we see in the second place tonight, not only who the characters are in our text, but also what Jesus says to them. Dear woman, here is your son, Jesus says to his mother.

Now of course, there is a sense in which we can't take these words as referring to himself, because he was her son, and here he was, her son, on the cross, and she was aware of the fact that he was her son, as no one else could be aware of that fact, and that at a very human level must have caused us great grief and great pain.

But I don't believe that in the context that that is for Jesus, the same. So much that he is pointing Mary to John as someone else whom she ought to regard, as being a fellow member of the family of faith, because Jesus by what he says here, I believe is demonstrating whose love for Mary and for John, by declaring to them that they belong to one another as members of the family of God. Dear woman, he doesn't even call her mother, dear woman, here is your son, he says to her, and to John he says, here is your mother.

And from that time on that disciple took her to his own home. Of course Jesus is here showing his care for his mother.

[17:11] He's fulfilling the fifth commandment in a wonderful way here, by making sure that his mother is provided for in her time of great need, when he himself has been taken from her and been put to death.

He's demonstrating a love for his mother and an honouring of the fifth commandment in relation to honouring his mother, that all of us would do well to seek to emulate.

He took the commandment seriously, and even here as he's been put to death and caught up with all that is happening to him, spiritually as well as in others' ways, he still cares for his mother.

He still got time for his mother and he commits her to the care of his beloved disciple. An example to us to follow so that no matter what our circumstances may be in life, no matter how consumed we may be at times with what we ourselves may be going through, our care and our concern and our commitment must at the same time be evident in relation to other people.

It's not enough that we love the Lord our God with all our heart and with all our mind and with all our soul and with all our strength. We must also love our neighbours as ourselves. We have a duty and a care and a responsibility towards each other.

[18 : 49] On the human level members of our own family and wider circle of our soldiers and within the Christian family. We ought to put the interest of others before our own.

We ought to seek to be like Jesus care in caring for others even when there may be circumstances in our own lives that might almost excuse us for being caught up exclusively with what is happening to ourselves.

Who would have found fault with our Lord if he had only been concerned with his own circumstances at such an hour of this? and yet in the midst of all that he's experienced his care his concerns his commitment for and to his lovers and for and to his beloved disciples shine through. Indeed it becomes all the more apparent given what he himself is going through at this time.

And not only that but we have a reminder here of the importance of our obeying the Lord in relation to the way we deal with one another because when Jesus speaks to his mother and to John in this way and makes it obvious what he wants them to do with Jesus.

[20 : 32] We're told that from that time on the disciple took her into his home. Now that must infer that she agreed to go with it and it also inferred that he was willing to do this for us.

what a wonderful demonstration again of love for one another that Mary should be willing to go with John and receive the help that ask his son in the family of God he is able to give and that John should be prepared to look after her as his own mother.

An example of the very practical way in which genuine piety expresses itself in human relationships and as we examine ourselves before the Lord's table we ought to ask ourselves whether our piety is one that expresses itself in this personal practical way in our dealings with one another.

How alert are we to the needs of others within ourselves? How prepared are we to go the second mile to minister to one another as members of the family of God of the household of faith?

How seriously do we take the commandments of God in relation to every area of our lives? The sum of the ten commandments is that we love God and that we love our neighbour ourselves and as we think of the importance not only of belonging to those who trust in the Lord but also of belonging to those who obey the Lord we must bear that in mind that genuine obedience is to be found in our loving each other with his love and in our doing as Mary and John do here accepting each other and embracing each other and caring for each other and showing genuine Christian love for one another within the church and at a time such as this when it's a congregation you find yourself still without a minister it is as important if not even more important than ever that as this vacancy goes on you continue by God's grace to minister to one another that's what your

[23 : 20] Lord would have you do and that you do it no matter the circumstances in relation to the vacancy that you continue to do it after the congregation is that you have this ongoing desire to care for one another and to show your oneness in Jesus and that you're taking seriously the words that Jesus speaks here from the cross words of affection that remind his mother and that remind John of the fact that they are indeed members of his family that they are indeed related to one another as those who are brothers and sisters in Christ and that's the way God wants us to be true to relate to one another in such a way and to take his commandments seriously as we approach the

Lord's table tomorrow we hope to gather round the table as the family of God and if we belong to the family of God we're left in no doubt as to what his desire for us in relation to the Lord's supper and it's not just a desire it's a command this do in remembrance of me what joy and happiness Mary and John would have had as they entered into John's home together and enjoyed fellowship with one another at a time when their Lord had been taken from them what a wonderful time of Christian communion they would have had even at this dark of all in the history of the church when the Lord of the church is dead yet they're there enjoying real living fellowship in Christ and that's what the Lord wants us to enjoy with each other this weekend genuine Christian communion no matter what the season whether our skies are bright or dark he wants us together to enjoy Christian fellowship the one with the earth in himself I want to finish tonight by referring to a sermon by John Piper the well known American preacher on these words and John Piper tells us there are at least three reasons why this word of Jesus spoken to his mother and to his beloved disciples ought to be a tremendous encouragement to our faith the first reason this pastor is this if Jesus was so eager to care for his mother in her hour of need how much more is he eager to care for his disciples who today hear his word and do it if Jesus cared for his mother and for

John he cared for us too there was a time when Jesus' mother and brothers did not believe and Jesus said my mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it so tonight if we belong to those who are hearing and doing the word of God then just as Jesus here cares for his

mother and for John so he cares for us indeed will he not much more provide for our needs who seek first his kingdom and his righteousness the second reason says Piper that this word to Jesus' mother is an encouragement to our faith is this if Jesus could provide for the needs of his own in a moment of his deepest weakness and humiliation how much more can he provide for your needs in his present power and exaltation need get that

Jesus is here in his deepest weakness and humiliation on the cross still providing for the needs of his own Jesus tonight is exhausted to God's right hand where he ever lived to intercede for us if from the cross he was able to provide for the needs of his people how much more ought we to expect him tonight from heaven interceding for us at God's right hand to provide for our every need my God shall supply all your needs according to his riches in glory through Christ Jesus and the third reason and I finish with this says that Jesus' word to his mother encourages us in our faith is that it illustrates for us the benefits of the church the body of Christ

[29 : 02] Jesus would put Mary in the chair not of her son according to the flesh but in the chair of his disciples his beloved disciples whom he wanted her to regard as her son in the faith Jesus encourages us to become members of his church that we might receive the blessing that he wants us receive through the ministry of our brothers and sisters in Christ and then go on along with them to minister to others in the name of Jesus Christ we speak of those of that communion we get may our communion not only be pious but at the same time practical both in terms of our relationship with God and love for God and our relationships with one another and love for each other and may we heed this word of affection spoken by our Saviour from the cross and speak words of affection and show affection to each other as members of his family and may

God in that way prepare us all for whatever he has for us tomorrow at his table should he swear us to see it and in whatever lies ahead of us should anything lie ahead of us in this life till he takes us to be with himself in glory when Jesus saw his mother there and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby he said to his mother dear woman here is your son and to the disciples here is your mother from that time on this disciple took her into his home may we take the Lord with us into our homes and all who are as peaceful take them with us tonight in our heart to our home and embrace each other in the faith as we prepare for his day and all for the sake of his glory Amen Lord bless these thoughts to each and every one of us forgive us for any injustice that we may have done to your truth and bless anything that was at one with your own mind and will for us for Jesus sake Amen our closing psalm psalm 113 singing verses 5 to 8 that's on page 393 to God's praise praise the poor that very load of life and from the dung hill lift the man oppressed with poverty psalm 113 verses 5 to 8 on page 393 to God's praise psalm 113 unto the Lord our God that dwells on high who can compare himself and come blessings to see in heaven and earth the time he from the dust doth raise the poor that heavy lows apply and from the tongue hill lifts a man all breast with poverty that he may highly him advance and with the princess said with those that of his people are that he be princess great now may grace mercy and peace from father son and holy spirit one god rise on and remain with each one of us tonight and forever hear remember that he