

# Communion

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Date: 14 March 2010

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Let's bow our heads in prayer. Heavenly Father, we thank you once again for this great privilege and opportunity to gather as your people, as the family of God, to worship you, the living and true God.

We thank you that you have called us not to a solitary discipleship, but that we might be part of your family, the family of God.

And we pray that you would bless us as members of that family, that you would help us to enjoy the privileges of such membership, and also to recognize and to fulfill the responsibilities which are also at the same time privileges, to love one another and to support one another.

We have been reminded even this day of the manner of love that you would have us show to others, that it would be a deep and a genuine and a heartfelt love.

And so at this time, we would, as an expression of that love, bring before you and intercede for any of our number, any of the family who are suffering.

[ 1 : 3 6 ] Perhaps some, their suffering is such that they're unable to be with us this evening for reasons of ill health, for reasons of old age or infirmity, and for others perhaps other problems that are not physical, problems of doubt, of fear, of depression, problems of one kind or another that seem to envelop them.

And the panorama seems very, very dark and bleak. And so they find it difficult, even as your people, to gather with us this evening, and we pray for any such.

We pray for those who are here, who are struggling in one way or another. And we all have our struggles. Some have greater and deeper and more difficult struggles than others.

And often we do not know and are not aware of what others are going through. Sometimes because it's not possible, sometimes because we are insensitive and do not make the effort to discover and to sympathize with.

But we pray, regardless of what we may or may not know, we thank you that you do know. And so we pray that in your great and deep and loving knowledge, so you also would minister to our needs, whatever they might be.

[ 3 : 0 6 ] We pray that even our participation this evening in this act of worship, and as we would gather around your table to remember the death of Jesus, that it would serve as an encouragement to us, that it would serve to help us and to build us up in our faith.

Lord, we pray then that you would be with us and bless us this evening. And we pray especially as we would now turn to your Word, and we would hear what you would say to us, that you would speak to us through your Word this evening, that the Holy Spirit of God would be at work in our midst and in each of our individual lives, helping us to listen and to understand and to apply the truth of your Word to our own particular circumstances.

Be with us then, we pray, and these things we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Now turn with me, if you will, to the passage that we've read in John's Gospel and chapter 19.

And as already indicated, we're going to be considering that part of the chapter that we've read that speaks of how Jesus sees and responds to His mother Mary. We have before us here on the table at the front the symbols of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. We have the bread symbolizing the broken body.

We have the wine symbolizing the shed blood. Jesus offered Himself as a sacrifice for sin, as a sacrifice for our sin.

[ 5 : 11 ] And we know that in order for that sacrifice to be acceptable to God, it had to be without blemish.

It had to be perfect. Jesus had to be without blemish. He had to be perfect. It was necessary that Jesus be without sin. It was required that He have kept God's law perfectly, and nothing less would do. Every commandment perfectly obeyed. Every temptation, of which there were many, courageously defeated, courageously defeated, if Jesus had failed even at one small point, His sacrifice would no longer have been perfect. If in the very final moments He had failed, all His previous obedience would have been to no avail. This evening, we want to consider how, in the Lord's final moments, He obeyed one of the commandments in particular, and one that is perhaps particularly fitting that we consider today. We have in the Ten Commandments this one in particular, honor your father and your mother so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you. Honor your father and your mother. And Jesus, as a son, even at death's door, honors His mother Mary.

So, let's consider and learn from the manner in which Jesus honors His mother Mary. And we'll notice a number of ways in which He honors His mother. There are a number of features of this particular obedience here at His final time, His final hours before His death. The first thing that I would say is that He honors His mother is that He honors His mother in the midst of desperate circumstances.

We've read the passage and we're familiar with what it relates to us. And we can note what a moment it was for Jesus to be faced with the challenge of obeying this commandment, that He would honor His mother.

We know that all His life He had obeyed this commandment as He had all the others. As an infant boy, growing up in Nazareth, He was, in the words of the evangelist, obedient to them. He had always been obedient to Mary and to Joseph. As a young man, and as the eldest son, there was the need, so it would seem, at some point in His life, to step into the role of provider in His home. And He fulfilled that responsibility. He honored His mother. As He began and as He continued His public ministry, He never failed to honor His mother in obedience to this commandment of God. But now, as He hangs on Calvary's cruel tree, at the hour of greatest darkness, or as the hour of greatest darkness is soon to descend, as He has been. As He has been. As He has been. As He has been. As He has been. As He has been.

[ 9 : 04 ] That will dry or will draw from His lips the cry, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? At this point, He must once again obey this commandment. He must fulfill all righteousness. And if ever He might have argued, not now. If ever He could have spoken of, or considered, or others looking on might have considered that there were mitigating circumstances as a reasonable defense for non-conformity to this law, to this demand that was upon Him. If ever this might have appeared to be the occasion, but Jesus obeys. He honors His mother Mary, even in the midst of these desperate circumstances. If you listen with me to what John Calvin says with respect to the obedience of Jesus in this particular moment, we read as follows,

I say nothing about the reproaches which he suffered. But through horrible blasphemies against God, though horrible blasphemies against God filled his mind with inconceivable grief, and though he sustained a dreadful contest with eternal death and with the devil, still none of these things prevent him from being anxious about his mother. Now, we will never thank God and know what Jesus endured in this hour of death. But in our own difficult circumstances, though they are, of course, not to be in any way compared to what Jesus endured. But nonetheless, in our own difficult circumstances, let us, like Jesus, hold firmly to our convictions and seek resolutely to obey God, even and especially in such times. So, Jesus honors His mother. He obeys this commandment, and He does so in the midst of

His circumstances. There's a second thing I want to notice concerning the manner in which Jesus honors Mary, His mother. And it is this, that He does so, He honors Mary in a manner that is in perfect harmony with honoring His Father. If we can maybe just take a step back and seek to explain what it is we mean by that. And maybe you can do so by posing the question, why is Jesus hanging on this cruel cross?

Well, He is there out of loyalty, out of obedience to His Father. His Father had sent Him to die. He is fulfilling His Father's mission. It was for Him, His reason for being, His reason for coming, to do His Father's will. And so, here He is, hanging on Calvary's cross in obedience and loyalty to His Father.

His unwavering commitment to do His Father's will. His obedience to the Father that reveals His love for His Father, and indeed His great love for those for whom He dies. So, His great priority, His first priority, we might say, is obedience to His Father. So, can we say, can we say then that having obeyed His Father in handing Himself over to death on a cross, can we say that having fulfilled that duty, He now turns to a lesser duty, that of honoring His mother? Would that be a fair description?

[ 13 : 15 ] Well, I would suggest no. Rather, honoring His mother as He does in this hour of His death. Honoring His mother is, in actual fact, a further demonstration or means of honoring His Father. For in honoring His mother, He is obeying the law that His Father has commanded Him to obey. He doesn't need to choose between competing loyalties. Yes, His great loyalty is to His Father. But in honoring His mother, in obeying this commandment, He is acting in perfect harmony with this great priority of honoring His Father. There is no competition between the commandments. If we can put it this way, the second table of the law is not simply to be attended to once we have fulfilled the rest. Rather, they all stand together in perfect harmony. And Jesus' fulfilling of the law is done in perfect harmony. He honors His

Father. He honors His mother. And in honoring His mother, He also is honoring His Father. There is an integrity, if you wish, in His obedience, which also serves as a challenge and as an example for us that our lives, too, would demonstrate in a measure of that harmony and integrity as we would honor God above all things, and yet also recognize that in fulfilling our responsibilities to others, we are also honoring God.

So, His honoring of His mother Mary is done in a manner that is in perfect harmony with honoring His Father in heaven. But there's a third thing we want to also notice this evening regarding the manner in which Jesus honors Mary and fulfills this commandment. And it is this, that He does so motivated by genuine, genuine, and heartfelt love for His mother. Genuine, and heartfelt love for Mary. And we say this because perhaps what has been said thus far might suggest or could be misunderstood as suggesting that the actions of Jesus towards His mother are driven exclusively by the imposed duty of obedience. It is necessary as we began the sermon this evening, it was necessary for Him to obey perfectly God's law. It was necessary for Him to be without blemish, and so it was necessary for Him to obey this commandment at this moment as He hangs on Calvary's tree.

Yes, it was necessary. Yes, it was necessary. Yes, it was necessary. Yes, it was required of Him. And yes, He does obey at one level because it was required of Him. We can say that He obeys driven by this mission that demanded perfect obedience. And He does perfectly fulfill this requirement.

to use the language that is used these days. He ticks all the boxes that were required that He would be a perfect sacrifice, a perfect and adequate mediator between sinful men and the Father. But do we conclude that these things that these things were His only motivation for honoring His mother? Can we not, and must we not, also say and recognize and celebrate that He also obeys this commandment to honor His mother, motivated by love for Mary, motivated by love for His mother? Listen to the text that we have before us and how it describes the manner in which Jesus lifts up His head and sees Mary in front of Him. We read there in verse 26, when Jesus saw His mother there.

[ 17 : 46 ] When Jesus saw His mother there, and at one level it's simply a description of the events. This is what happened. Jesus had been crucified. He looks up, and there He sees His mother. The events are being accurately described.

But isn't there more than simply an accurate description of events? Are we not entitled to go beyond these bare words and imagine in as much as we are able to see the sentiments and the emotions that would have flooded the Lord as He looks up and sees His mother there? He looked up, and there He sees Mary in front of Him.

What would He have thought? What emotions would have flooded His being? All the memories, I imagine, of a lifelong loving relationship between mother and son, son and mother. There would have been surely in Jesus also a deep sense of gratitude for the manner in which His mother's love finds such expression that she is there.

Others had scattered. Others were nowhere to be seen. But Mary is there. Mary is there at His hour of greatest need.

And so, He would have been deeply grateful for that love, deeply grateful for the loyalty of Mary that has her there at such a painful and difficult time.

[ 19 : 28 ] But would there not also have been in Jesus as He sees His mother there? Deep pain. Deep pain that she should have to witness this appalling and heart-wrenching scene of her son, the one she loved deeply, the one she loved deeply, hanging from that tree, suffering in so many deep and profound ways.

And her pain becomes His pain as He is torn by recognizing, yes, she is there because she loves Him, and this is a reason for gratitude, and yet also competing with that, that sense of, why does she have to witness this?

Why does she have to suffer in such a fashion, seeing her firstborn son, the one she loves, suffering and dying in this way?

And would there not also have been in Jesus? And evidently, there was, due to what we see that follows. Not only the memories of a life lived with His mother, not only the gratitude that she is there, not only the pain of sympathizing with what she is enduring, but there is also this great concern for her future welfare, as He is about to face death. And evidently, very evidently, that is so in what follows, and that we will be noting just in a moment.

So all of these things, all of these emotions as He sees His mother there, and all of these things flowing from a profound and pure filial love, this love of a son for His mother.

[ 21 : 33 ] But fourthly, we also want to note that He does so, He honors His mother by means of a practical provision for her needs.

We've read the verses.

We've read the verses.

And no doubt, it has been asked often, why commend His mother to John? Why should he be the one responsible for attending to her?

Now, at one simple level, we can say, because there was nobody else there. Yes, we know there were other family members. There were other sons upon whom, presumably, this responsibility should first have been laid upon.

[ 23 : 30 ] But there are nowhere to be seen. And so at that very simple level, John is the one commended. John is the one commissioned, because he's there. and no doubt there are simple lessons there that could be applied but we won't do that nobody else is there but i don't think that's the only reason that Jesus fixes his attention on John as being the one suitable for attending to his mother can we not say that John wants the very best for Mary he loves her so and he wants the very best for her and who better than the disciple whom he loves who better than the one who loves Jesus so much and that love that John has for Jesus that deep love of John for Jesus is as it were a guarantee that that same self-love will direct and inform his care for Mary there will be as it were a transference of the love and not that he would no longer love Jesus but the love that he has for Jesus would be the same quality of love that he would gladly and willingly shower on Mary such a privilege that he would be given this great commission and so Jesus because he loves Mary so much ensures that the most eminently suitable protector should be a commissioned and who better than the beloved disciple and so Jesus honors his mother by means of a practical provision for her needs Jesus obeys this commandment to honor his father and his mother he obeys this commandment even at this hour to the letter and beyond in the midst of desperate circumstances in perfect harmony with honoring his father motivated by heartfelt love and by means of a practical provision for all his mother's needs is there any more that needs to be said well just very briefly one final an important point Jesus honors Mary Jesus loves Mary Jesus provides for Mary also and crucially as he dies for Mary you see on that tree where he hangs he is carrying Mary's sins also on that tree he died in her place too and there can be no greater expression of his love for his mother no more generous and suitable provision for her for her needs than that he would die for her a sinner and in this greatest expression of his love for Mary can we say that she is especially favored in much of what we have considered this evening of how he commends his mother to John we can i think rightly say well this is love that is finding expression and that is being showered on Mary particularly and yet in this greatest expression of his love for Mary in dying for her is she especially favored well no you see this greatest act of love for Mary is the same act of love that he has bestowed on you and on me you see as she is the object of this great love of Jesus

as he dies for her so you too Christian friend if you are trusting in Jesus as your Lord and as your savior then you can look on him as he hangs on that tree and know that there he hangs for you in the words of the scriptures he loved you and he gave himself for you let us pray