

Sermon Title: **“Motherhood at the Cross”**

Series: *Learn, Live, Lead*

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Text: John 19:24-27

Introduction

“Stand firm, and you will win life.” -[Luke 21:19](#)

We began this year with a look at what Kingdom endurance is. ***Standing Firm*** here means *Endurance* and is a very rich word embodying an ***upward, consistent, contagious, and outward*** motion that goes against the current. *It is swimming upstream after Jesus.* We saw this is the work the Spirit of God does in our lives, just as He did in Jesus’ - He leads us upward to higher ground and a higher life in Him.

We also looked at some of the outward challenges we face when going upward with the Spirit, including the spiritual forces of darkness which our on their way downward. As they are being cast out of God ’s Kingdom, we are being brought in. This is the nature of our Spiritual Battle. Unlike the generations that came before Jesus since His Ascension the Spirit has now come upon us to take the battle to where it truly is at.

What does this look like lived out in or lives? Following Jesus as His Disciples.



“Come, follow me,’ Jesus said, ‘and I will send you out to fish for people.”

-[Matthew 4:19](#)

This series is set to be a journey answering this question- *what does it mean to follow Jesus?* How do we today answer His invitation and see this journey with Him unfold as it did for the first-generation followers of Jesus? Together we will discover anew what it means to follow Jesus- *to be a disciple making disciples culture that **learns, lives, and leads!***

I. *Eve, the Mother of Humanity (Genesis 4:1-2; 25-26)*

“Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, ‘I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord.’ And again, she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a worker of sheep and Cain a worker of the ground.” -[Genesis 4:1-2](#)

In the very beginning we have the first man, Adam, and the first woman, Eve. Eve’s name in the Hebrew means life; in context to her role as the mother in which all humanity would spring forth from, her name means mother of all living (mankind). In Genesis, Moses is writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, weaving the verbally handed down traditions that flowed into

the line of Abraham and the Covenantal relationship between God and Israel, referred to as the Law. This is the inheritance to the Lamb of God, Jesus.

Eve would be the mother of the first male child who would take life and turn from God. Mary would bear a male child who would give life and turn the hearts of many toward God.

Cain would grow up alongside Abel and in a state of jealousy turn and act out his anger. There was no one to learn this example from. While sin can be passed on through behaviors we are raised in and with generationally, the fruit of sin needs no example to inspire or follow. We are not sinners because we sin; we sin because we are sinners.

In one generation (although we don't know how long Adam was in the Garden before sin) we see a transition from walking and talking with God in Eden to an act of murder against His Image. Cain murders his brother Abel and then puts his feet to a journey away from God that his heart had already started upon. That evening Eve would know the heartache of loss and death. For her, both of her boys were gone.

“And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and called his name Seth, for she said, ‘God has appointed for me another offspring instead of Abel, for Cain killed him.’ To Seth also a son was born, and he called his named Enosh. At that time people began to call upon the name of the Lord.” -Genesis 4:25-26

At the close of this chapter, we find humanity going in two different directions. Either toward God or away from God. Looking at how they lived, the blessings of the Creator were upon both through the provision of an earth yielding food and the creative expression that would shape into cultural identity. ***But for Eve, the mother of all living, she was to know the comfort of God through her husband in the creative act of childbearing. She was also transformed in her motherhood through this in ways we all- men and women- stand to be blessed with today.***

There is a difference between ***taking*** from God and ***receiving*** from God. ***Cain*** means, gotten or possessed. When Eve said *she has gotten a man with the help of the Lord*, the image the Hebrew conveys is the same sense of her taking possession of the forbidden fruit in the garden. There is a sense of ownership where we ask God to help us when we need that little extra. Like Cain, when he asked God to help in the sense of protecting him from others who would seek his life.

Whereas ***Abel*** means appointed or given and the Hebrew behind Eve's words this time, God has appointed for me another offspring instead (in place of) Abel, ***implies Eve in her grieving came to God with open hands and He placed another child into her hands.*** It is here we see Eve asking and waiting on God, and the line coming from Seth did the same, *calling upon the Name of the Lord.*

II. Four Women at the foot of the Cross (John 19:24-27)

“So the soldiers did these things, but standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and

*the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, 'Woman, behold, your son!' Then he said to the disciple, 'Behold, your mother!' And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home." -**John 19:24-27***

In this moment of Jesus' crucifixion, *this place of two kingdoms colliding*, lifted upon a cross between two others also sentenced to death, we find the soldiers casting lots over his garments. Such a tragic unfolding of events. From his trial and beating, a journey through the streets leading outside of the walls of Jerusalem, Jesus now hangs as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

It is here, amidst that horrific flow of detail that we have a sort of eye of the storm moment between Jesus and four women.

There is so much I love about John's Gospel; this being one of them. These four women had gathered closely and faithfully when all others close to Jesus had fled (aside from John- the eyewitness who writes this narrative of Jesus' life). We have *Mary* (Jesus' Mother), *Salome* (Mary's sister), *Mary* (the wife of Clopas), and *Mary Magdalene*.

While there is some dispute on the number of women, this along with Matthew and Mark's account remind us that many women followed Jesus and ministered to Him as did the Twelve named male disciples. All three names, aside from Mary Jesus' mother, appears in Matthew and Mark. John adds the identity of Jesus' mother, which collectively is where many have settled on those four being a part of John's narrative.

*For today's message, I want to invite you to join me as we look at these four women and how their lives continue to encourage us today. This is also a special message for mothers and those in motherly roles. **You are near to the heart of Jesus.***

A) Salome, Mary's Sister: Seeking Greatness for her sons.

Comparing Matthew 27:56 & Mark 15:40, many believe this relative to Mary was Salome, the mother of James and John also referred to as the sons of Zebedee and the sons of thunder. Little is noted about her in Scripture, yet we see a unique encounter she mediates between Jesus and her boys.

*"Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came up to him with her sons, and kneeling before him she asked him for something. And he said to her, 'What do you want?' She said to him, 'Say that these two sons of mine are to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom.'" -**Matthew 20:20-21***

What parent who is following Jesus prays for anything less than this? We all want to see our children successful. Note her request was not for this world; but in the world to come where Christ's Kingdom reigns without end. Salome is seeking honor for the boys she loves in that place where it does not end.

In this we know Salome is a believing follower of Jesus. She believes what Jesus is saying is truth. The challenge Jesus gently leads her through is that His Kingdom is not like the Kingdoms of this world, with greater honors flaunted above those with less.

“Jesus answered, You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink?’ They said to him, ‘We are able’ (sons of thunder!). He said to them, ‘You will drink my cup, but to sit at my right hand and at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father.’” -Matthew 20:22-23

Jesus directs His response to Salome’s sons, *James and John*. Their resolve to attain this may have prompted their mother to be the one to ask Jesus. The cup of suffering is one all who follow Christ must drink from. What God allows to touch each of us we must by faith believe He is good and faithful, and His Son is being glorified through our lives. James was beheaded while John was tortured and exiled, although also the only Disciple to die naturally.

“And when the ten heard it, they were indignant at the two brothers. But Jesus called them to him and said, ‘You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.’”
-Matthew 20:24-28

B) Mary, the wife of Clopas. *Leading her son to be known for another’s Name.*

This Mary we know very little about. Yet, what little we do know stands to bless us in our walk with Jesus. Mark notes,

“There were also women looking on from a distance, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. When he was in Galilee, they followed him and ministered to him, and there were also many other women who came up with him to Jerusalem.” -Mark 15:40-41

Mary was the mother of James the younger, or less, whom we know even less of other than Jesus chose him as one of his 12 Disciples. Yet, she followed and ministered to Jesus along with the other women mentioned.

Two things I’d like to note about Mary:

- 1) Her marriage was one that nurtured faith in James. John notes that she is the wife to Clopas. Both her and her husband followed Jesus, modeling a faith that trusting Him even when life did not make sense. *Clopas* is a rare name and has a few variations, one of which is *Cleopas*.

“That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them.

*But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, 'What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?' and they stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, 'Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?' -**Luke 24:13-18***

Some traditions along with contemporary scholarship hold that Mary, his wife, was the other unnamed Disciple. Which if that was the case, then that means Clopas was struggling to believe his wife's testimony of seeing two angelic men at Christ's empty tomb testifying He is Risen (See -> Luke 24:1-12)

- 2) Their son, James the younger (Less) is known for no more than simply following Jesus from the moment of His invitation until his death where history records around 62 AD he was pushed off a pinnacle of the Temple for preaching the Gospel, followed with being stoned and clubbed to death while praying as did Stephen for God's mercy to flow upon them.

Clopas in the Greek means exchanges. Mary exchanged her identity in name for his in marriage; James exchanged his identity for Jesus.

C) Mary Magdalene: *Known for what Jesus saved her from; loving as loved.*

Second to Mary, Jesus' mother, this Mary is probably to most well-known. Luke notes,

*"Soon afterward he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with him, and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out." -**Luke 8:1-2***

While perhaps not a biological mother (perhaps not by choice but unable) to anyone, Mary certainly was a mother figure for those who knew and grew to love Jesus through her. Scripture notes that the Disciples brought their wives and families along the journey in both walking with Jesus and going out in Jesus' Name after Pentecost (See 1 Corinthians 9:5). Certainly, as in the church today, motherhood is a role many step into simply allowing the love of Jesus to both fill and overflow out of them into the lives of others.

D) Mary, the Mother of Jesus. *Leading others to see and obey Jesus.*

Blessed among women, Mary was chosen by God to miraculously bring forth His Son, Jesus. From her introduction in Scripture until her final mention on its sacred pages, Mary recognized that despite this incredible honor, this child was unique in ways her life would be different than other women. Despite the incredible circumstances leading to the delivery of Jesus, Mary would receive these prophetic words over her.

"And he (Simeon) came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, 'Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word;

*for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.’ And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, ‘Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.’ **-Luke 2:27-35***

John the writer of this Gospel that finds the four women before the Cross of Christ does not refer to Mary by name, but by her role as the mother of Jesus similar to his own role as either the son of Zebedee or the Disciple whom Jesus loved. From the wedding at Cana where Mary directs all eyes to her son and says, *“Do whatever he tells you.”* (**John 2:5**), to this moment where she stands and experiences the fulfillment of Simeon’s words.

The focus is not on her, but on He whom has her gaze. He whom her heart weeps for. He whom her very soul is torn for. Jesus.

In these four women, mothers directly or indirectly, we see the multiple places a mother’s heart seeks Jesus from. A place that see’s her children celebrated. A place that see’s her children exchange their old ways for the new Jesus’ offers. A place that see’s her children willing to be transparent with what Jesus saved and pulled them from. And a place that see’s her children broken over the cost of our sin being atoned for by a Savior who loves us.

In all these places in the heart, the true journey of motherhood must find it was way to the foot of the Cross on Calvary.

III. ***Motherhood at the foot of the Cross*** (1 John 4:18)

*“So the soldiers did these things, but standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, ‘Woman, behold, your son!’ Then he said to the disciple, ‘Behold, your mother!’ And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.” **-John 19:24-27***

Even while upon the Cross, Jesus sees to his mother being cared for. Jesus is this way because His Father is this way. God has always cared for the orphaned, widowed, fatherless, displaced people.

This message began with a look at our first mother, Eve. We saw her she learned the difference between *taking* from God and *waiting* to receive from God.

In the four women in John 19, we close as we walk up alongside Mary who does not notice us, for her gaze is fixed upon Jesus, to hear Him and obey with all hope that this is not the end.

Mary trusted and surrendered to Jesus for herself, her deceased husband, and the other children she had (Jesus’ brothers and sisters) who were not there and did not believe in Jesus’s message.

The Cross is the place where motherhood comes to confess

That it can love to the best of its ability but must learn and grow as the children do.

That it can strive in the greatest of strength and consistency and pray with tearful pleading from a soul that is pierced and broken.

That it yet waits upon God to give only what He can give.

Their children **safe** in His arms now and forever.

Their children **seeking** His Glory, not their own.

Their children **exchanging** their old ways for the new He offers.

Their children **loving** as they have been loved by Him.

Their children **next to them**, at the foot of the Cross, looking upon the Savior who loves them with a love that lives eternally.

Their children calling upon the Name of the Lord.

Motherhood at the Cross.

Going Deeper Questions for Reflection & Application

- 1) *What can we learn from Eve in Genesis 4? What is the difference between taking from God and waiting to receive from God? How do you overcome this struggle?*
- 2) *What can we learn from Salome?*
- 3) *What can we learn from Mary, the wife of Clopas?*
- 4) *What can we learn from Mary Magdalene?*
- 5) *What can we learn from Mary, the mother of Jesus?*
- 6) *Which Mother can you relate most to in this season of your life and why?*
- 7) *What happens, according to our message today, at the foot of the cross?*