

## Sermon at the Cathedral Eucharist

**Mothering Sunday**

readings: [Exodus 2.1-10](#), [Colossians 3.12-17](#), [John 19.25b-27](#)

19 March 2023

He was silent, quite still, his body limp and lifeless, like a rag doll, like a broken puppet.

And I thanked God that at last it was over, his ordeal finally ended.

But it wasn't, not quite. He moved again, just the faintest twitch,

the last flickering ember of life, but enough to prolong our hopes, enough to prolong his pain. He was still breathing, still suffering.

We watched wretchedly, torn by conflicting desires -

the longing to see him come down and prove his enemies wrong;

the longing to see him find peace in the cold embrace of death.

But suddenly his eyes opened, he looked at me and said: 'Woman, here is your son.' And before I could understand or react, he looked at John and said: 'Here is your mother.'

I've adapted this meditation but couldn't find the original author of it. It really helped me to place myself in the reading, and I hope it did you too. And as always it got me thinking...

Have you ever thought about what life might have been like for those two people if Jesus had never said those words?

I imagine that the women would have taken Mary home. They would cry with her, they would build a fire and get her to eat something, clean things up, and urge her to sleep a little. They would sit by her bed and brush her hair and hold her hand when she was overcome with grief. But then, sooner or later, they would have to leave. The sun would come up on a new morning and Mary would find herself once again back at the foot of the cross, every day, every waking hour...

What of John? Maybe he'd go back up to Galilee. Walk along the shore until the sun came up. He'd see the fishermen there, with their boats and their nets, and he'd think of that day with his brother James, and Peter and Andrew, and about the stranger who called him and changed his life. A stranger named Jesus, who became the best friend he'd ever had. And now, that friend was gone. And so John would keep on walking, day after day, town after town, the sun beating down on him, his lips cracked, his hair tangled, his clothes filthy. Sleeping on the beach, or wherever he could find a spot when he was too exhausted to walk any longer. And the nightmares would be the worst part... And so he'd wake up and start walking again.

If those words had not been spoken, would these two people wither away in solitary despair?

These words: Here is your Son. Here is your mother. These are profound words. These are words that point the way back to life, words that plant the seeds of resurrection before the resurrection even happened.

These words of Jesus, probably, made the difference between life and death for Mary and John.

Then I started wondering how did he find the strength to say them? When he was in such pain and could barely breathe? I wonder if he could speak these words of love, then, in the pain he was in, because he was first taught how to love by Mary?

From those first moments of his unusual conception Mary loved Jesus.

She kept him safe from birth, she told him off at the temple when he was 12 and gave him boundaries, At Cana – when he insisted that it was not his time – she knew better, as mothers often do.

Because of her insistence, Jesus starts doing what he came to do.

Never underestimate the power of encouragement. Mary loved Jesus into his future into his ministry, into who he was truly meant to be.

I would go further and argue that Mary's sometimes extravagant love for Jesus made it possible for Jesus to show extravagant love at other times — washing the feet of his disciples, handing himself over to be arrested in the garden, carrying his own cross, dying...

In his agony Jesus loves her back and wants to protect her and console her. He needed her to know he loved her as she had loved him.

That's how love works. How relationships work. His words made a difference to them and they should make a difference for us.

Am I saying that only those who have been loved well by parents can love well? No, though it does help. But what I hope this interaction between Jesus and those whom he loved dearly shows, is that we have a God-given gift of relationship with each other.

We cannot be who we are really meant to be in isolation. Friendship, true relationship with other people, that is the one gift that will carry us through good and bad times alike.

And I believe that is so because those bonds of love and friendship are reflections of the bonds of love God has for us. If we truly believed how well loved we are by God and let that love in, it would pour out of us – we couldn't contain it!

So my one question for you: what difference is knowing that you can only truly be you in relation to others, going to make in your life this week?

May you have your eyes and hearts open for possibilities! Who knows, maybe you will be given a chance to encourage someone into their future, or if your heart is open enough for it, you may even be encouraged yourself.

And may the Lord love us all.

Amen.

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