

April 2, 2021 – John 19:25-27

A couple years ago, I had to do something that was surprisingly difficult: I had to say goodbye to the house I had grown up in. Because my mother had come to the conclusion that she could no longer live in it.

It was a two story, 70 year old house with a full basement sitting on nearly an acre of property. The house required constant maintenance. The yard required constant maintenance. And my mother was not getting any younger. Living out in the country was becoming worrisome. Both to her and to me and my sisters.

And so when she told me that she intended to sell the house and that she had found a nice little two bedroom, one story house less than a mile from where my sisters lived, I couldn't argue with her. I wanted to. I wanted to tell her that she wasn't allowed to move. That she wasn't allowed to leave all those memories.

But I couldn't. Not just because it was her house to sell if she wanted to. But because her plan just made so much sense. And, in fact, gave me a lot of peace knowing that she was in a house she could take care of, living so close to my sisters, who could keep an eye on her. I couldn't be there to take care of her, but this was the next best thing. And I knew it.

The need to take care of our parents and make sure they are safe is a fairly universal human compulsion. We see it in just about every culture on the planet. God codified it in the Ten Commandment – “honor you father and mother” – but like “you will not murder” and “you will not steal”, I think it was a command that expressed a fairly fundamental natural law. Something that is written on our hearts, as well as in our Bibles.

And so, it doesn't come as much of a surprise to us that Jesus obeys this command as well. As he's dying on the cross, he looks down at Mary, his mother, and John, his best friend. And he tells Mary, in essence, “This man is your son now.” He tells John, “This woman is your mother now.” And John takes Mary into his home. And they live as mother and son for the rest of their days.

It makes so much sense that Jesus would do this, that he would honor his mother in this way, that I think we overlook how truly odd it is. Because Jesus, of all people, knows that this is not the last time he will see Mary and John. Every prophecy that Jesus makes of his death is also accompanied by a prophecy of his resurrection. He knows that this is not the end.

So why, in the midst of such unimaginable pain and suffering, does Jesus take this moment to say these things to Mary and John? Why does he use one of his last, dying breaths to give them a message that could just as easily have been given a couple days later? Well, like most conspicuously timed moments and messages in scripture, and certainly like those in the passion narrative, the people Jesus said these things to were not just Mary and John. They were said to us.

*“And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.”* That's the way that John describes what he does with Mary. And yet, the English words there don't really do the expression justice.

In Greek, it's actually an odd construction. The word “home” isn't there. It's simply, “He took her to his own <blank>.” His own house. His own family. His own income. His own food. His own inheritance. His own faith. He took her to everything that was his own.

But as unusual as that phrase is – and it is very conspicuous in Greek – it's not the first time we've heard it in John's Gospel. No, we heard it many chapters before, in the first chapter of John in fact: *“He came into that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.”* Jesus came into his own <blank>. His own creation. His own people. His own household. His own family. He came into everything that was his own. And his own did not receive him.

You see, throughout this Lenten Series, we've been moving through all of the events of the Passion leading up to Jesus' crucifixion. And we've been examining all of the sinfulness that took place by those involved. The disciples and their feeble prayers. The betrayal of Judas. The false witness of the Jewish authorities. The denial of Peter. The worldliness of Pilate.

We see Jesus walking on this pathway of sinfulness for the last 24 hours of his life. And yet, for Jesus, this road didn't begin at the Garden of Gethsemane. Or at his baptism. Or even at his birth.

No, it began all the way back in the Garden of Eden. Because it was there that Christ gave us of his own. Everything that was his own. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. We owe everything in all of creation to Christ. Even our very lives.

But we rejected him as our creator. We rejected the life that he had given us. And we chose to die. All because we wanted to be like God. We wanted to decide good and evil for ourselves. Without God's laws. Without God's commands. Without God at all.

And so, when the creator stepped into his creation, he came into that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. It didn't cease to be his own. You and everything else in this world are a creation of Christ whether you acknowledge it or not. He is the truth. His existence is the truth. His power over creation, that he demonstrated time and time again through his ministry, is the truth.

And his ways are the truth. His commands are the truth. Which means that to reject him and to reject his laws are to live a lie. To sin is to be trapped in a cloud of self delusion. Staring into the darkness of death while the light of life is right beside you.

*“But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.”* You see, the solution is fairly simple. If you don't want to live a lie, if you don't want to stare into the darkness, all you have to do is turn back to the light. Return to the Lord. Because you are a child of God.

A child not of blood, nor the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. Which is exactly what we are seeing on the cross. In his hour of agony, with his last dying breaths, Jesus looks at Mary and says, “Behold your son.” He looks at John and says, “Behold your mother.” And John takes Mary into his own.

Mary and John weren't the only people that Jesus was looking at from the cross. He was looking at all those sinful people who had put him there. Caiaphas and the high priests. Judas and the disciples. Pilate and the crowds. You and me.

In his moment of agony and his last dying breaths, he looks at us and says, “Behold your Heavenly Father.” He looks to his Father in heaven, and says, “Behold your son. Behold your daughter.” And with those simple words, God takes us back into his own.

He brings us back not just into his creation, but into his family. He gives us the right to become children of God. To be born again of water and the Spirit. To feed on bread from heaven and drink of living water. He grants us not just the temporary things of this mortal life, but the imperishable things of eternal life.

All because his Son endured the worst of this sinful world and still chose to forgive us. Still chose to declare us sons and daughters of God. *“The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”*

The Word became flesh, dwelt among us, and died on the cross, that we might see his glory. Not the glory of angel choirs or miracles or transfigurations. Not the glory of the law, given by Moses amidst the fire and earthquakes of Mt Sinai. But the glory of Jesus' grace and truth on the cross.

Return to the Lord. For by his Son's blood, shed on the cross, he has declared you his children. He has taken you to everything that is his own. And he has made you an heir to his kingdom and his resurrection. Amen.