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Church

...to make and mature more followers of Christ

*A Mother Jesus Loves...*

John 2:1–11

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May 10, 2015

*Mother's Day*

Someone once turned to a mother of two and said, "What is it that you do all day?" She responded, "I am socializing two homo sapiens into the dominant values of the Judeo-Christian tradition, in order that they might be instruments for the transformation of the social order into the kind of eschatological utopia that God willed from the beginning of creation." Then she added, "What do you do all day?"

A four-year-old and a six-year-old presented their mom with a houseplant. They had used their own money to buy it and she was thrilled. The older of them said with a sad face, "There was a bouquet at the flower shop that we wanted to give you. It was really pretty but it was too expensive. It had a ribbon on it that said Rest in Peace, and we thought it would be just perfect since you are always asking for a little peace so that you can rest."

I hope all mothers here today find a little rest and peace as we seek to honor moms for the unique God-given role they play in our lives, our church and our society. You might find yourself in different groups this Mother's Day. You might be a busy mom and you are saying to yourself, "I'd like to be the ideal mom, but I'm too busy raising children!" You might be a mom here with grown or almost grown children pretty much on their own, hoping they call today to wish you a happy Mother's Day. You worry about them. Or you might be a woman without children. I hope you can relax today and not feel pressure or pain but only the tender love of a God that loves you, strengthens you, and has a beautiful plan for your life. We are children of the King.

I hope everyone here today will be challenged regarding the impact each of us can have on the next generation—your children, your grandchildren, your nieces, your nephews, students, neighbor's kids, those special little ones that you are able to impact through your life.

Today we will be looking at a very unique mother/son relationship. It's the relationship between Jesus and his mother Mary. You might ask, "How was this unusual?" Well, if you remember, Mary was a teenage virgin girl handpicked by God and then told by an angel that she would become impregnated by the Holy Spirit and that she would give birth and become the mother of the Messiah, the Savior of the world. She would have the responsibility to nurture, raise, and train him up into manhood. I would say that is off the grid.

But Mary's unusual story still relates to every mother's story. The scripture says that, "Mary treasured all these things up in

her heart." Like you, Mary was torn between the privilege of parenting a child because every child is a gift from God, and then accepting and dealing with the burdens of the daily and life-long responsibilities of her role. Let's consider for a moment Mary's burdens: Bearing the Son of God in her womb. What a privilege. And then enduring suspicion and rumors of family and neighbors: what a burden. Bringing forth this special child and having to do so in a stable a long way from home. Blessed by Simeon and Anna in the Temple; hearing of God's great role for her child and then learning that her sadness would be so great it would be like a sword piercing her own heart. Visited by the Magi with special gifts; hearing of murderous Herod's intentions; the midnight escape to Egypt. When Jesus was 12 years old, the family "lost" him in Jerusalem and had to return to search for him. It took three days to find their son.

We get a glimpse that Mary found it hard to accept that her son is growing up with a mind of his own and his own sense of how the Father is leading him. So, when she rebukes him for "treating us this way," Jesus informs her this should have been the first place she looked, that he had work to do. Literally he answers: "Did you not know that I must be about the things of my Father?"

Mothers, don't some of you find it difficult to begin to relinquish control as your child matures? And yet if the child is to become a responsible adult, this must happen. We can watch a nature program and see the mother lion run off her adolescent son; watch the eagle push her babies out of the nest when the time has come for them to leave the nest.

Can't every mother, every parent, relate to triumph and tragedy? Or life and death? Or bursting with pride one day and then languishing in disappointment the next? Or having control and then needing to let go? Or wanting to protect, but having to let go and trust? Does Mary understand us? Can we understand Mary? Yes we can.

On this Mother's Day turn in your Bible to John chapter 2. It's a story about real life and family.

**On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding (verses 1–2).**

The story centers on a wedding in a place called Cana in Galilee. A wedding was a common thing. If you remember what happened in John 1, at this point in the chronology there were five

disciples—John, who recorded our story, and he records that Jesus called Andrew and Andrew began to follow Jesus, and Andrew called his brother Peter to follow Jesus, then Jesus called Philip and Philip found Nathaniel and brought him to Jesus.

Then if you remember, Jesus told Nathaniel that he would see great things, things he had never seen before. We learn from John 21 that Nathaniel was from Cana and he was about to see an even greater thing in his home town. It says it was the third day. It was the third day after Jesus had his encounter with Nathaniel.

Why was Mary there? Historians speculate that this was likely a family member of Mary's or a good friend of hers that was getting married for her to make the trip which was about 18 miles from her home in Nazareth.

Traditional weddings in Jesus' day were different than our weddings today. What struck me most was in Jesus' day it was the groom's family who had the responsibility of paying for the wedding. Being a father of two daughters and having just made a deposit for a March wedding, you can see why that struck me. A typical wedding and reception wasn't four to five hours; it was four to five days. It was a big fat Jewish wedding. The wedding would start with a feast, then late in the evening the father of the bride would take his daughter on his arm and parade her through the streets of the village and everyone would come out and congratulate the bride. Finally the wedding party would arrive at the home of the groom. The actual ceremony took place at the front door of the groom's house. No church or expensive reception hall had to be rented. Then they would get torches and parade the bride and groom through the streets again. After that the real party would begin. Several days the newlyweds held an open house. The groom's family was expected to provide all the food and wine for this week of partying.

**When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine" (v. 3).**

At some point early in the celebration, the wine runs out, which in this culture of hospitality isn't a little thing. This is potentially a huge embarrassment. We don't know the reason the wine ran out. Was it uninvited wedding crashers that drank it up? Was it that the groom's family didn't plan right? We don't know the reason, but we do know the consequence. A whole family would be embarrassed.

What is the solution? Mary thinks: Ask Jesus. That should work. Mary knows there is one person who can fix the problem: her son Jesus. Mary asks Jesus. I love the exchange we are about to see. Jesus was likely 30 years old at this time. He wasn't just a carpenter's son, he was a carpenter. But he is still "Mary's boy." Notice that she doesn't ask Jesus, she pretty much tells him the problem. We can't hear the inflection in her voice, we can't see her eyes, but there is no question what she is saying to Jesus: Son... fix it!

Mothers, be encouraged. A mother Jesus honors can ask for anything.

## **The Mother Jesus Honors....**

### **Can ask for anything**

Whether it's "on earth" or "in heaven" Jesus honors your display of faith, when you ask him to fix it. You may be here this morning feeling you are out of wine. You want to know if you can ask Jesus to "fix it." You believe yet you struggle with unbelief. There is a stanza to a beautiful poem titled *Listen Lord*.

Listen, Lord, a mother's praying low and quiet; listen, please.  
Listen what her tears are saying,  
See her heart upon its knees;  
lift the load from her bowed shoulders  
till she sees and understands,  
You, who hold the worlds together,  
hold her problems in your hands.

Mary understands that Jesus holds her problems in his hands. We are right to ask Jesus to fix it. I love that Mary gets this. It should be such an encouragement to us who have situations that need fixing. Mary is saying, "I remember what the angel announced before you were born. You will bring peace on earth and good will to all man. Son, we need some good will right now at this wedding. You have taken care of me over the years, surely you can take care of this 'no wine' problem and protect this family from embarrassment. I know you didn't ask for your mother's opinion on this. But I am going to give it to you anyhow. I think now is just the right time for you to go public on your messiah role."

I'm going to jump ahead and solve the "will he or won't he fix it" question. The fact that he does fix it tells us some very simple and reassuring things. He comes to rescue us from our guilt, even our guilt of miscalculation. He comes to rescue us from our shame over things going wrong. He comes to rescue people. But before he does fix it we need to unpack Jesus' response to his Mother. Look at verse 4.

**"Woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My hour has not yet come."**

Why would Jesus refer to his mom as "woman?" It sounds kind of harsh for a son to talk to his mother that way, doesn't it? I know if I had talked to my mom that way, it wouldn't have been pretty. It sounds to us as disrespectful, doesn't it? But Jesus isn't disrespectful. He always did honor his mother.

This isn't the only time Jesus speaks to Mary in this way. The other time is recorded in John 19. Jesus is hanging on the cross knowing he will die and he looks down and he sees his mother and he also sees John standing next to her. Do you remember what Jesus says in those last minutes of his life on earth? He says, "Woman, behold your son, and John, you take care of my

mother." In total agony moments from his own death, when no one would expect Jesus to be thinking of others, we hear tender and compassionate words directed to his mother, "Woman, behold your son."

But it's the next phrase that gets harder. "Woman, why do you involve me?" Literally, "Mother, this is an earthly matter. What has this to do with me?" Jesus is saying, "We are on two different planes here. This is about the earthly kingdom and I am about the Kingdom of God. I have other obligations, heavenly obligations." I love how the *The Message* Bible says it. "Don't push me." My interpretation: "Mother, I'm 30 years old why are you trying to run my life." But she is his mother, this is her boy. It's refreshingly real.

His next phrase: "My hour has not yet come." This phrase occurs five other times in John's gospel. Each time when Jesus refers to "my hour," he is talking about his death. When Jesus is talking about his death it is a direct reference to not his mother's business, but his heavenly Father's business. He is saying, "Mother, I have a mission to complete from my heavenly father and if I make known everything now through some public display of God's power for all to see in my first week of my public ministry, they will come to kill me now and I will not be able to do my Father's will." Mary gets it. She backs off. She trusts her son.

**His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you" (v. 5).**

I love it. She doesn't try to tell Jesus **how** to fix the problem. She simply tells the servants to "do whatever my Son tells you to do."

What mother in this room doesn't get anxious from time to time? What mother doesn't get angry when she is overly tired? What mother here doesn't at times fail and then feel terrible? You won't always do right by your children, but you will never go wrong by telling your children, "Do whatever Jesus tells you."

Mary is a mother. She asks for what she wants and Jesus honors her. Mary is a mother and a believer. She asks for what she wants, but she yields to Jesus because she knows that he knows what is best. And Jesus honors her.

### **Learns to yield to Jesus in everything**

Jesus knows what is best for us in exact proportion of what is needed. They need some wine, but when he does this miracle it's virtually done in secret.

**Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons. Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim (verses 6–7).**

These big stone jars were used for religious purification through ceremonial washings. So by selecting these stone water jars Jesus was saying, the old religious rituals are dead. I'm filling the

jars with new life, the new covenant, not water, but wine, which symbolizes joy and gladness.

**Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet." They did so, and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew (verses 8–9a).**

The emcee of the wedding didn't know where it had come from and apparently the guests didn't know. Who are the only ones who knew? The servants and the disciples and I'm sure Mary eventually knew. The emcee after tasting the water that had turned into wine was surprised at what he tasted. So he went to speak with the bridegroom.

**Then he called the bridegroom aside and said, "Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now" (verses 9b–10).**

"Uh, bridegroom, I've been to a lot of weddings. No one ever saves the best wine for last. What this servant just brought me is the best wine I have ever tasted. And believe me, I've tasted a lot of wine. Why did you start out this party with Boone's Farm when you had the best stuff in reserve?" You are supposed to toast the expensive wine, and once everyone got a little glad, then you bring out the cheap stuff and they won't care that it's the cheap stuff.

What does this miracle teach us? By performing this miracle of turning water into wine, Jesus was telling his disciples and his mother that the Messiah, the one they were waiting for has arrived. He brings good news of great joy for all the people. He brings the best wine, like none they have ever tasted.

Jesus was telling his disciples that you have used these stone jars in the past for external cleansing with water. I am going to give you something that is internal. All these external purifications? Don't put your trust in them. They are only signs pointing to the internal purification that I will ultimately provide.

There will come a night that he will say, "Take this cup of wine and drink from it all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."

### **Waits for and receives the best thing**

Of course life has sorrows. Mary experienced almost unbearable sorrow. The scripture says that Jesus was a man of sorrows, familiar with suffering. But the overall tenor of his life was to bring us joy.

When that emcee said, "you have saved the best until now," it tells us to be hopeful. Although our life may feel that it is not getting better, and you feel that you are wearing down, remember life with Christ is better so drink him in. Natural wine will lose its

sparkle over time; the wine Christ offers never loses its sparkle; it gets better with age.

**What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him (v. 11).**

Mothers, be encouraged this morning. Go and ask God for anything. But yield to God in everything and wait and receive from God the best thing.

My mom went to be with Jesus 11 years ago after a 3-year battle with cancer. My mom was a woman who wasn't perfect but she could ask God for anything, and she learned to yield to God in everything and she waited and received from God the best thing.

The day she died, I was fortunate to be by her bedside. The moment she died you just knew that she had left the room and it was obvious that the lifeless body left on that bed was only the container that held her during her time on earth.

The night she died my oldest sister had a dream. I'm really not big into dreams and visions and interpretations, but the message of this dream was grace to me. In my sister's dream she saw my mom in heaven, with her sister and her two brothers and her mother, my grandmother, sitting around a table in an outdoor café. They were eating fresh bread and drinking coffee. And they were laughing and enjoying each other's company. It was a grand reunion. At one point, my mom looked out from the table toward my sister and said, "Don't worry about me. I'm fine. Enjoy your life and I will see you soon."

And you know why I will see my mom again? Because John's story didn't end when he finished writing his gospel. John's story ends with the book of Revelation. In chapter 21 we read of another wedding feast. John tells us that all of world history will consummate on that last day when all peoples who have trusted in Jesus from every nation, tribe and tongue will gather for what John calls the great wedding feast of the lamb. At this great wedding feast the people of God will form a new city called The New Jerusalem. And this beautiful city will house every believer in Christ and every believer will be prepared as a bride, and God will be there too. The Great I Am will be there and he will wipe away every tear from their eyes. And you know what else? My mom will be there too. And I have a hunch it will smell like fresh bread and great coffee. ***"I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his***

***people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away"*** (Revelation 21:2-4).

This week I found myself on the card aisle at CVS. I was looking at Mother's Day cards. I saw one I thought she would have liked, but it can never be delivered, unless the U.S. Postal Service can find a way to get it to eternity! But it reminded me of a poem that I remember reading when my mom was pretty sick. I don't know the author. It's titled, *My Mother*.

Your love, I know – I've seen your tears;  
You've given to me my life.  
You've walked through hours and days and years  
Of heartache, toil and strife.

To see that I could have the best  
That you could give to me,  
You gave up needs and often rest—  
You viewed eternity.

To do His will my highest call  
And by your special care  
I stood and walked and did not fall,  
You held me up in prayer.

Though strands of gray may brush your hair,  
And miles divide our way,  
I know that by your quiet prayer  
You've helped me day by day.

You've shown me how to give, to share  
To put my own needs last.  
You've helped me see and be aware  
That life... is so soon past.

To spite your love I would not dare,  
For there is not another  
Who spreads her gentle love and care  
Like you—My loving Mother.

So here is my final encouragement to you. Enjoy today. Be grateful. Squeeze every drop of joy from each day. Ask Jesus for Anything. But yield to Jesus in Everything, and then wait to receive the Best Thing. And if you can, send your mom a Mother's Day card.

*This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.*

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Catalog No. 1411FC