

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 wondering where you fit this Mother's Day 2017. 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 with grown or almost grown children pretty much on their own, hoping they call today to wish you a happy Mother's Day. You still worry about them. You may be a grandmother worrying about the world your grandchildren will inherit long after you have gone home to be with the Lord. You may be a son or daughter and Mother's Day reminds you that your own mom or grandmother who was such a loving influence on you is not here anymore, and you miss her terribly.

You might be a woman who has wanted more than anything to have children of your own but you can't. You might be a son or a daughter and your mom was not a good mom to you and it's difficult for you to honor her on Mother's Day. And it was really hard for you to get to church today because the whole day reminds you of your disappointment and sadness of what might have been.

My prayer is that God's spirit would lead everyone here today to a place of peace, a place of comfort, and a place of gratitude; that we would be assured today of God's love for us, his strength available to us, and the unique and beautiful plan he has for us. Because no matter how each of us relate to Mother's Day, we are all 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, and 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 in this room. Mary's story relates to everyone who sees their calling to impact the next generation. 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. Then enduring suspicion and rumors of family and neighbors.
- 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.

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, by getting 'lost,'" Jesus informs her that the temple should have been the first place she looked and 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. Turn in your Bible to John chapter 2. It's a story about real life and real 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 (John 2:1-2).**

The story centers on a wedding in a place called Cana in Galilee. A wedding was a common thing. We know from John chapter 1, at this point in the chronology, there were five disciples—John, who recorded our story. John tells us 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 chapter 21 that Nathaniel was from Cana and here in chapter 2 Nathaniel was about to see the greatest thing to ever happen in his hometown of Cana. It says it was the third day. It was the third day after Jesus had met up with Nathaniel.

Why was Mary there? Historians speculate that this was likely a family member of Mary or a good friend of hers who was getting married. So she RSVP'd "yes" and made the eighteen-mile trip from Nazareth to Cana to enjoy a wedding along with Jesus and his first disciples.

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 the father of two daughters, you can see how that little fact struck me. Having paid for our oldest daughter's wedding a year ago, and still seeing the dent in our bank account, you can see why that struck me! A typical wedding and reception wasn't 4-5 hours, it was 4-5 days. These were big fat Jewish weddings!

The wedding would start with the wedding 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. Eventually 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 winery, or ranch in Carmel had to be rented. They would get torches and parade the bride and groom through the streets again. After that the real party would begin. For 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!

### **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 son. But I am going to give it to you anyway. 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 right now. The fact that he does "fix it" tells us some very simple and reassuring things. He comes to fix us from our sin and guilt. He comes to fix us from our shame over things going wrong. He comes to fix people.

He comes to tell us that a wedding feast is a preview of the greatest wedding feast and that the joy of wedding wine can't even hold a candle to the joy of the wine that will be served for eternity. And he comes to tell us that in order to "fix it" he will have to suffer and die so that we might drink that eternal wine.

To "fix it" he identifies himself in the role of a bridegroom who sacrifices for His bride. A bridegroom who waits in anticipation for his beautiful bride to walk down the aisle to meet him. And he identifies us as his bride.

I've officiated at close to 150 weddings in my lifetime. At every wedding I get to watch from a very unique place, at the front, usually on a platform. At every wedding it is only the groom and I who see the face of the bride walking down the aisle. I have seen a lot of brides. But I can tell you no matter what a bride looks like at any other time in their life, when any bride is walking down the aisle all made up in that beautiful dress,

with the fancy makeup and hair, the groom is stunned by her beauty. I must say, when I stand up next to the grooms and see 150 brides walking toward me, I have never once seen a bride who wasn't ravishing. There is just something about beautiful brides. Every groom would tell you and every pastor would tell you the same thing.

Back to our story... Before Jesus fixes this wedding feast we need to unpack his response to his mother when she tells him, "They have no more wine..."

**"Woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My hour has not yet come" (v. 4).**

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 chapter 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 paraphrased version from *The Message* translates it. "Mother, don't push me." My interpretation: Mother, I'm 30 years old. Why are you still 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 doesn't get all the details, but she knows enough. 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 or crabby when she is overly tired? What mother 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."

Back in verse 3, we see Mary is a mother. She asks for what she wants and Jesus honors her. But in verse 5, 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.

## **The Mother Jesus Honors 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 water jars were used for religious purification through ceremonial washings. So by selecting these ceremonial jars instead of the normal wine containers, Jesus was saying, the old religious rituals are dead. I'm filling the jars with new life, the new covenant with God through Christ—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 either. Who are the only ones who knew? The servants knew and the disciples and Mary would soon know. The emcee tasted the water that had turned into wine and 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 at 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 ready to go? Didn't you know that 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 when he would 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."

### **The Mother Jesus Honors Receives the Best Thing**

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

When that emcee said, "you have saved the best until now," it tells us to be hopeful. Although outer 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. The wine Christ offers never loses its effect; it springs eternal and truly 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. The kind of mother that Jesus honors asks God for anything but yields to God in everything and waits and receives from God the best thing. My mom went home to be with Jesus eleven years ago after a three-year battle with cancer. My mom was a woman who wasn't perfect but she knew 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.

January 2006, I was in a hospice room in Colorado Springs with my mom. She had fought her cancer bravely. We prayed for physical healing knowing that God could heal her. Doctors told us we would have two years, and we got three. My mom, like most moms, was not a one-dimensional mom. She was a woman who lived a full life and it would have been full whether she had kids or not. She wasn't perfect; she was real.

- Back in the 50's she turned down scholarships to college to go to work after high school to support her ailing father.
- Later in life she went back to school to get her English degree.
- She was an artist, a gourmet cook and a self-taught investor.
- But her passion was writing. And I thank God she taught me to write. I remember back in January in the Hospice room, we had all her books on a table beside her bed. She wrote children's books and Christian Romance books. She liked me to proof her manuscripts. I told her, "Mom, I can look over your children's book, but it's kind of creepy to proof a romance novel that was written by your own mother."
- She was a speaker and an editor for aspiring young writers.

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

- But I think most of all she loved her children and grandchildren.

Did she have any regrets? Sure. Would she do some things differently if she got a "do over"? Of course, we all would. I wish my CPC church family could have known her. At the moment she died, I was fortunate to be by her bedside. I could tell 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 my mom passed, my oldest sister had a dream. I'm really not big into dreams, 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 know I will see my mom again and that the best things are yet to come? 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. This beautiful city will house every believer in Christ. Every believer will be prepared as a bride for Christ. And 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" (Rev. 21:2-4).**

This week I found myself on the card aisle at CVS. I was looking at Mother's Day cards with no real reason to buy one. I saw one I thought my mom would have liked, but it can never be delivered. So here is my final encouragement to you: Enjoy today. Be grateful. Love the mom in your life. Squeeze every drop of joy from each day. And moms? Be the mom Jesus honors. Ask Jesus for anything. Yield to Jesus in everything. Then wait to receive the best thing. Because Jesus has "fixed it." And if you can, get your mom a Mother's Day card.

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