

Mar 12, 2023

Behold Your Son...Behold Your Mother *Jn 19:25-27*

Each week of Lent we've been unpacking the 7 final words—Or as I said last week, statements from Jesus that reveal what was On the heart & mind of our Lord as he died on the cross For the sins of the world—for our sins...mine & yours.

I think it important for us to realize that it took great effort from Jesus to speak from the cross.

He was in much pain & it required great exertion—crucifixion was horrific—and death comes from some combination of: exhaustion, shock, blood loss, buildup of fluid around the heart and in the lungs, and asphyxiation. So to **speak** while being crucified would require great effort as one would have to pull themselves up while nailed to a cross—in order to expand the diaphragm to speak.

So...WORDS...were sparse among victims of crucifixion. Knowing this intensifies for me, the importance of Jesus' Final Words...To listen deeply...to pause and reflect each week...For Pastor Jess & I to preach upon each final statement, and for us as a church to study in more depth within small groups these Final Words.

~Our Lord's first Words were a prayer: "Father forgive them..."

~The 2nd Words spoken to a criminal, a sinner alongside our Lord, were a full embodiment of his mission on this earth to seek & save the lost: "Today you will be with me in paradise."

~And this morning our 3rd statement of Jesus' Final Words are spoken Intimately, tenderly to beloved ones standing at the foot of this horror: Jesus' mother, his aunt, a female disciple-whom Jesus healed of demons, & the lone male disciple of the 12—John.

Let us hear from the Gospel of John 19:25-27 (NKJV)

Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother's sister,
Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.

When Jesus therefore saw His mother, & the disciple whom He loved
standing by, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold your Son!"

Then He said to the disciple, "Behold your mother!"

And from that hour, that disciple took her to his own home.

This is the Word of God for the people of God...

These Final Words on this 3rd Sunday of Lent are important for each of us as Jesus is teaching us & the HS is revealing that this work on the cross has the power to save us—indeed through our relationship with God the Father as revealed in and through the Son and our Savior...

AND these Words are important for us as the church of Jesus Christ, his disciples, who on this day stand at the foot of the cross...for these words have saving power to help our relationships w/each other. For Jesus was all about building relationship. It is no wonder that the Gospel writer of John emphasizes the importance of relationships & community at the foot of the cross. Jesus is always putting people in touch with other people, Connecting them in ways that bring synergy, love and light.

Indeed John's Gospel, the last one written, has what most scholars agree as the most developed Trinitarian theology in Chapter 14—"I am in the Father and the Father is in me." John 14:11 And then he adds: "The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name." John 14:26 Our God is Three in One—Father, Son & Holy Spirit—Talk about loving relationship in action!

Today's 3rd Final Statement from John's Gospel compels me to spend time together as Jesus' disciples, We who represent one particular church family at 1st Methodist Church among many, many diverse and beloved church families—to talk about what it means to be in relationship with each other.

Rev. Adam Hamilton's study guide states that from these Words of compassionate, loving care to his mother Mary and the beloved disciple John—Jesus now reveals a NEW family of loving care. He writes, both the disciple and Mary represent the way that family ties, can be transcended in the church by & thru the ties of the Holy Spirit. Jesus' mother and the beloved disciple are figures representative or symbolic of a larger group—the emerging Christian community or family of faith.

The Gospel writer intends us to understand from Jesus that, now as his disciples, WE are responsible to care for one another, EVEN taking on the role of parent, or child, or sibling to another—who needs us. (*Hamilton, 57*)

The Gospel or Good News of Jesus Christ is all about relationships! Jesus is showing us what it means to be the church. "Woman behold your son...Behold your mother." John's Gospel centers on Jesus' provision for the future. A future NOT just for his mother & John, But for a mutual, communal love for ALL his beloved ones a future for all who believe in him.

Jesus is showing us what it means to be the church; an expansion on last week's challenge of what it means to fulfill the Lord's mission of reaching all in his love and grace—especially the lost, the last, the nobodies.

The Gospel of John's model for the church is revealed in today's Final Words. We are called to—Behold your son or daughter...Behold your mother or father.

My parents divorced when I was 10; it was the middle of 5th grade for me. My mom, brother & I moved to live with my maternal grandparents.

Since then...over a time span of 48 years since we left...I have actually only physically been with my father 3 times:

~I visited him for 1 week when I turned 13,

~Then at my wedding when I was 20 & he met my husband Rich

~And then at the Boardwalk in Disney World for 1 evening when he drove down from

Pensacola to meet his granddaughters—Krista & Rebecca for the 1st time when they were 14.

Unfortunately, my dad has chosen for almost 50 years to not be in relationship with me, or my brother, or his 5 awesome grandkids and 4 amazing great-grandkids.

And it really hit me this week hard—because I was stunned & once again saddened, when I realized I've only seen my father 3 times in 5 decades...despite my best efforts to connect and my desire for a relationship. Its sad and still hurts.

I grieve having no loving, caring father in my life, and each Lent re-opens this loss and pain for me, because this is the time of the year that my parents split & we moved away.

But then I hear each lent, each & every year, These amazing Words from the cross...Words of loving care & connection, Words of Relationship: "Behold your son...behold your mother."

And I **instantaneously**, miraculously hear Jesus say as I am standing, Kneeling, bowing at the cross in each church I have been a part of: I HEAR Behold your **daughter**...behold your **father**. And every time...every time...joy & hope & love pours into my being, My soul, my life.

Each Lent I am reminded that I have lived 5 decades with so many spiritual dads who embraced me, loved me, cared for me, laughed and cried with me, encouraged me, challenged me...men who simply saw me. Spiritual Dads who all helped raised me up to become the woman I am. Oh this passage is life-giving to me.

Perhaps you have experienced this as well, "adoptions" by a spiritual mom or dad; a new relationship with a spiritual brother or sister—a sibling in Christ, someone in this church family or another church where someone intentionally developed a caring, supportive, loving relationship with you. and its made all the difference.

Because the Gospel of Jesus Christ is all about relationships! "Behold your mother, father, grandparent...Behold your son, daughter, child, sibling."

Person to person is the way God's love is best communicated:

Person-in love with-person; person-caring for-person; person-healing-person; person-forgiving-person; person-reaching-person; Person-crying with-person; person-laughing with-person—all become the opening...flowing streams of soul and Spirit.

When we see such relationships within our church, with our families, Within our friendships, within our communities—we see God.

Countless people over the 200 plus year history of First Methodist Church Have intentionally developed caring relationships with people who are either older or younger than they are.

To follow Jesus' call to "behold your child" was so important...our church built an entire education wing 2 decades ago to help raise up children and families in Christ's love and teachings.

First Light Preschool launched 17 years ago as WE took to heart as a church family to be in a loving, nurturing relationship With kids from surrounding communities... "Behold your child..."

Today we commissioned 10 Care & Connection Ministers who have: assessed their spiritual gifts, engaged training for ministry & care of the elderly, and humbly said: "Here I am Lord...I want to be in relationship with people who are perhaps older than me or are in need of care & support." Indeed today we celebrate that they heard and claimed the Words: "Behold your mother...behold your father...behold your sibling..."

Today at the foot of the cross we see a picture of what it means to be the church—Christians caring for those who are younger and those who are older, those who grieve and those who are lost and alone—as though those in NEED were OUR children or OUR parents or OUR siblings.

Today we are reminded of this call from Christ our Lord—To care for those whom Jesus cares for...As if they are our own family. It made all the difference for me—loving spiritual dads whom I am still in relationship with today.

Its made all the difference in each child who has sat with a SS teacher, a youth leader, or in a First Light classroom.

This 1st team of 10 Care & Connection Ministers have already begun to make a difference & impact the lives of 22 shut-ins & homebound members of our church family.

Oh my friends, the Gospel of Jesus Christ is all about relationships. Indeed LOVE is the Gospel in action, revealed—in our relationships, in how we communicate person-to-person, in just SEEING each other, in loving as Jesus did reaching all whom he cares for, and by following as he asked, commanded, plead with his Final breaths: "Behold your mother...your father... Behold your son...your daughter..."

May it be so as we grow the family of God. Amen and Amen.