

In Death Christ Loved Us!

Tonight is a great evening. It is also a sobering evening. It is an evening that has positives, and it has negatives. The positives are that Jesus died on a cross to forgive our sins. His blood was shed. He died. He came back to life three days later. Now our sins can be forgiven—that's another positive. The negatives are the experiences of the people who were standing near the cross and what they went through.

MOTHER AND FRIENDS AT THE CROSS. Jesus died on Friday, April 1, of A.D. 33, or in the Jewish calendar on Nissan 14, A.D. 33. He was on the cross at 9 a.m. in the morning and died at 3 p.m. in the afternoon. Starting in John 19:17 we are told that Jesus carried His cross, He was nailed to the cross, there was an inscription put above the cross that said Jesus was a Nazarene, and He was king of the Jews. We are told in verse 23 that the soldiers took His garments, parted them and gambled for them. Then verse 25 says,

on three Marys - three ladies who are all named Mary. What is significant is that His mother and her sister are there. If we continue reading, we are told that the apostle John was there. What is not mentioned are the other apostles, the other disciples. They are not there. Jesus' brothers and sisters apparently are not there. Everyone else left or ran away. Just these brave individuals are there, or either they do not care about their life. They cared more about Christ than themselves.

HORRORS OF THE CROSS. The crucifixion started at 9



Therefore the soldiers did these things. But standing by the cross of Jesus were His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. John 19:25-26 (NASB)

Verse 25 is an interesting verse. I thought it was interesting that John says there were three women standing near the cross: Mary, Jesus' mother, and then His mother's sister, another Mary, and then Mary Magdalene. If you were to look at Matthew, Mark and then Luke, you find that there were some other women who were there. But John focuses

a.m. that morning. You can check that out in the gospel of Mark. Mark makes the point that the crucifixion began at the third hour. In Hebrew time that would be 9 a.m. in the morning. Jesus died at the ninth hour or 3 p.m. in the afternoon according to the way the Jews reckoned time. So Jesus hung on the cross for six hours before He died. I could not help but think about what it was like for Him to have the nails in His hands and feet and be hanging there for six hours. The blood would have been running down His body as He experienced the anguish and the horrible anxiety of the excruciating pain as the nails pulled on His hands and

pushed against His feet. He would have pushed Himself up against the nails as He tried to breathe. That would be really tough.

MARY AT THE CROSS. But what was Mary experiencing? What was Mary thinking about for six hours? What was Mary's sister thinking during those six hours? We do not know very much about her sister. We do know much more about Mary. Was she thinking about Gabriel's visit? The angel Gabriel had visited her and announced the conception of Christ. Do you wonder what she was thinking about? What did the ladies talk about? I doubt that Mary stood there silent for six hours. Something happened. Did she talk? What did she think? Did she reflect? Did she communicate the events of the past? Did she think about the fact that Gabriel had announced that His name would be Jesus? Did she think about the fact that He was to be the king of Israel and to sit on the throne of David forever? In verse 35 of Luke chapter 1, we are told that Jesus would be called the Son of God—that is, He would be God. What did she think about?

Or is it possible that she remembered the news that came from Joseph that Gabriel had visited him also? The angel had visited him also and announced that Jesus would save His people from their sins, that the baby would be called Jesus, and would be born of a virgin. Obviously that encouraged Mary back then since she was a virgin. She was told that He would be called Emanuel, that is, "God with us." That was the prophecy out of Isaiah 7:14.

Or did she remember the shepherds? An angel had appeared to some shepherds announcing the birth of Jesus. Excitedly they went looking for the child. They found the child wrapped in swaddling clothes in a manger. We are told that the shepherds shared everything with Mary and with Joseph. Then a few verses later, in Luke 2:19 we are told that,

Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart.

Luke 2:19 (NASB)

The word "treasured" in the Greek has the idea of hanging onto something or preserving something. In this situation it suggests that she memorized it. She remembered what

the shepherds told her. The word "pondering" is a present participle and has the idea that she kept thinking about what she was told. What an interesting event. We are never told anything about Joseph's reaction that evening. Mary was storing all this in her mind.

Eight days after Jesus' birth, Jesus came to the temple to be circumcised. Then some days later they took Him for His dedication. When He came to the temple, a man named Simeon, who had been waiting, made an interesting prophecy. It hinted that He would be crucified. Then there was Anna. She was a prophetess. We are told that she had been waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem—another hint about what Jesus would do.

SCRIPTURE IS SILENT ABOUT HIS YOUTH. Then scripture is silent. Twelve years later is the next event that is recorded. In Luke 2:45-50 we are told that Jesus' parents took Jesus to Jerusalem for the Passover. They leave, and later on their return home, because Jesus is not in the caravan that is going back to Nazareth, they search for Him and find Him in the Temple. He was talking with the religious leaders, and Mary was quite upset. She complained to the effect that, "Don't you understand the anxiety you put us through?" Jesus replied, "Did not you know that I have to be about my Father's business?" We are told that His parents were confused. Mary and Joseph did not understand what He was talking about. That was the first clue she really did not understand what He was purpose was. It was strange to tell His mother that He had to be about His Father's business, when His earthly Dad was right there. Isn't that interesting? It is no wonder they were confused. That tells us they really did not understand yet who this child was. Jesus must have been very unusual compared to the other children. He wasn't the only child. The gospels tell us that He had brothers and sisters. He must have been the standout child since He was holy—I mean, without sin, perfectly obedient. Wow, what a child. But they were confused.

JESUS' MINISTRY STARTS. We are told in John 2 when Jesus began His ministry at the wedding at Cana, that Mary came to Jesus. She told Him that there was no more wine. We get the first hint that Mary is starting to put things together, because Jesus tells her, "My hour is not yet come."

We are left with the impression that she understood His comment. That seems to be a hint that she understood He would die on a cross for every one of us, including her. But it is not obvious yet that she understands everything.

Next in Matthew 13:55 it becomes obvious that she is well-known, her children are known in the area, and she has a famous son named Jesus. He is teaching, doing miracles, signs, and wonders.

In John 7:5 we are told that His brothers did not believe in Him! Isn't that incredible? They had watched Him. They saw how He behaved. They saw the signs, the miracles, the wonders and they heard His teaching. They saw the response of the crowds, but they did not believe in Him. They did not understand. They just completely missed it. They did not respond at all. In fact, in that passage of scripture, they insult Him. They had a low view of Him at that point. What was Mary thinking about? I am sure she heard the discussion of His brothers. She could imagine what would happen when Jesus was gone and what her other sons would say to her. They did not believe in Jesus. I wonder, what had she said to His brothers? What did she tell His sisters? What happened inside the home? The home was divided. That is the message of John 7.

AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS. So what was Mary thinking about while she was standing there at the cross waiting for Him to die? Was she thinking about His brothers? Was she thinking about His sisters? Where was His father, called Joseph? What was going through her mind? Verse 26 reveals that Jesus had been thinking about her.

When Jesus then saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" John 19:26 (NASB)

Mary was there. His mother's sister was there. Mary Magdalene was there. John the apostle was there, the disciple whom Jesus loved was there. What did Jesus do? Jesus cared about His mother. He loved mom. We do not know if mom believed in Him at that point. We have no clue. Scripture does not tell us. I believe she was a believer at that point. She had seen the blood coming down His arms and roll-

ing off His head, running down His sides and off His feet and off His hands. Blood was dripping to the ground. That had been occurring for six hours. His back and chest had been beaten. The Roman flogging most likely resulted in His internal organs being exposed, pieces sticking out through the flesh. It must have been gruesome. She was standing there watching her son die on the cross - drop by drop! His death was necessary so that our sins could be forgiven! He had to die on the cross to fulfill the prophecies. His blood had to flow. But even in the midst of His pain and anguish, He thought about and loved His mother. What did Jesus do? He loved His mother so much that He asked the disciple whom He loved to take care of her. While hanging on the cross, He cared for His mother even though He was dying!

JESUS SUFFERED FOR OUR SINS. I wonder had Mary heard John 3:16?

For God so loved the world that He gave His Only Begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. John 3:16 (NASB)

Did Mary understand these words, if she heard them? I wonder if Mary understood what He was doing on that cross, as His blood was being shed. He was going to die for us, so our sins could be forgiven, including her sins. In John 10:17-18 Jesus said that He was the Good Shepherd. There He said that He would willingly die for the sheep (John 10:11). The Father told Him that if He died, He could also take His own life back, it was His choice (John 10:17). Obviously, we know that He did.

Acts 1:12-14 describes an event that occurred after Jesus had ascended back to heaven. He had been resurrected and verse 12 says,

Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away. When they had entered the city, they went up to the upper room where they were staying; that is, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas the son of James. These all with one mind

were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers. Acts 1:12-14 (NASB)

What do these verses reveal? Acts 1:14 reveals that Jesus' mother, Mary, believes, and Jesus' brothers believed in Jesus after His death and resurrection! They were with the apostles in the upper room. What an incredible insight. They are believers at this point.

What does that reveal for us? At some point Jesus' siblings had problems with their older brother, Jesus. They ridiculed Jesus in John 7:3-7. They did not believe in Him. After the resurrection, they became believers. It is really something special when your family believes in you. That is amazing. Mom believed in Him. His brothers believed. That says a lot. Imagine how Jesus felt when at last His family accepted and embraced who He was.

CELEBRATING THE LORD'S SUPPER. I want you to think about what did Mary and Jesus' brothers did. They became Christians. In the days that lay ahead, they celebrated the Lord's supper. We are not told that Mary and Jesus' siblings were in the upper room when Jesus instituted communion.

We can only imagine how they felt when they celebrated Jesus' death and one of the apostles explained the meaning of the Lord's Supper. Imagine hearing that the bread represented His body, and the cup represented the blood that was shed for our sins. Can you imagine the thoughts that Mary and His siblings had at that point? Wow! That was meaningful! There would have been tremendous meaning for them in a communion service. Remember that Mary was pondering and thinking about all that had happened. Now imagine sitting and celebrating the Lord's Supper and participating in it. She worshiped her Son. They worshiped their brother.

Today we are believers or Christians. We are not Mary. We are not His brothers. But we are spiritual brothers and sisters in the Lord. We are members of the body of Christ. We have the privilege tonight to rejoice and to celebrate Jesus' death because our sins have been forgiven. If you have put your faith in Jesus Christ, your sins have been forgiven. Now when God looks at you, He sees you as clothed in the righteousness of Christ, positionally speaking. So when you die, you will go to heaven and be with God forever. Hallelujah!

