

A Mother's Love

Matthew 20:20-23

A. Mothers are teachers. Mothers are disciplinarians. Mothers are cleaning ladies. Some mothers are gardeners & mowers of lawns. And most mothers understand that baking cookies is more important than washing windows, too.

Mothers are nurses & doctors & psychologists & counselors & chauffeurs & coaches. Mothers are developers of personalities, molders of vocabularies, & shapers of attitudes. Mothers are soft voices saying, "I love you." And mothers are a link to God, by being a child's first impression of God's love. Mothers are all of these things & much, much more.

B. Maybe with all this in mind we can better understand Mrs. Zebedee, the mother of James & John. Turn with me to [Matthew 20:20-23](#).

Mrs. Zebedee was aware of the teachings of Jesus about His kingdom. She was also very aware of the fact that her sons, James & John, were close to Him. They were two-thirds of the inner circle of Peter, James, & John.

So she was certain that when the Lord formed His kingdom that they would have positions of responsibility & authority. But in the first part of this same chapter, Jesus tells a story that must have disturbed her.

It was a story about a landowner who went out to find laborers early in the morning. They agreed upon a fair day's wage & started working. Then at noon he went out & found some more, & they started working. Then towards evening he went out & found some more & they started working. Yet, when the Lord paid them off at the end of the day they all received the same wage.

It must have caused Mrs. Zebedee to wonder, "Will my sons really have positions of authority in the Lord's new kingdom?" So when the opportunity presented itself

she came to the Lord. Matthew says that she bowed before Him & made this request, "When you establish your kingdom, I would request seats on your right & left hand for my two sons."

We might very well criticize Mrs. Zebedee for her presumptuousness. But since today is Mother's Day, maybe we ought to think for a few moments concerning some positive things about Mrs. Zebedee.

We need also to recognize that when she came to Jesus, while Jesus did not grant her request, neither did he deny it. He simply reminded her of the cost of being seated on the right or left & then told her that it is the Father who determines who will be seated there.

I. SHE PRAYED THAT HER SONS MIGHT BE A PART OF THE KINGDOM

Now, what are some of the good things about Mrs. Zebedee? First of all, she came to the Lord, praying that her sons might be a part of His Kingdom. I can think of no more important task of motherhood than that - to seek to ensure that your children are a part of the Kingdom of God.

A. I know that many mothers pray. Sometimes they pray out of necessity. Sometimes they pray because motherhood is not easy.

James Dobson tells about a time he came home when his son, Ryan, was a small baby. It had been a terrible day for his wife. Ryan had been sick, & had cried all day long. Once, as she was changing his diapers, the telephone rang & Shirley reached over to answer it before fastening up his diapers. Just then Ryan had an attack of diarrhea. She cleaned up that mess & put him in clean, sweet-smelling clothes. Then she took him into the living room & fed him. As she was burping him he threw up all over himself, & her, & the couch, too. Dobson writes, "When I came home I could smell the aroma of motherhood everywhere." Shirley cried out to him, "Was all of this in my contract?"

B. Sometimes mothers pray just out of the frustration of it all. And sometimes in the frustration of trying to teach our children we realize the difficulties of communication.

Being a parent is not easy. Sometimes it is filled with joy & sometimes with sadness. Sometimes your children make you so proud you want to pop your buttons. At other times you can't find enough handkerchiefs to dry your tears.

What good is it if our children are successful in making money, & driving fine automobiles, & living in good neighborhoods, but they don't know God? What does it matter if they gain the whole world, but lose their souls?

Being a parent is not easy. It is difficult. But Mrs. Zebedee gives us a valuable example, for she prayed earnestly that her sons would be a part of His kingdom.

We need that same concern for our children. I hope that in the heart of every mother & father here this morning there is a burden to go to the throne of God & to pray for your children - to pray that they will be saved, saved from eternal damnation, & saved for eternal life. That is the place to begin.

II. SHE PRAYED THAT HER SONS WOULD BE INVOLVED IN THE WORK OF HIS KINGDOM

Secondly, not only did Mrs. Zebedee pray that her children would be a part of His kingdom, but she prayed that they would be actively involved in the work of His kingdom.

Maybe it is not enough just to be saved. Churches are full of people content just to fill a pew on Sunday mornings. There are plenty of people willing to sit back & receive the blessings, but seldom do they get involved in doing any of the real work of the church.

But where does the spirit of service begin? It begins at home, with mothers & fathers setting the example & praying that their sons & daughters might be involved in the work of the kingdom - as teachers & leaders, discipling others - that they might be the ones to go out into the world & find the lost - to see that the church continues on until Jesus comes again.

Mrs. Zebedee prayed that her children would be actively involved in the work of His kingdom. And we need to walk in her footsteps, too.

III. SHE HAD BIG EXPECTATIONS

A. Thirdly, Mrs. Zebedee had big expectations, & I like that. She didn't just pray that her children would be doorkeepers. She wanted them on the right hand & left hand of Jesus.

When you're working in a kingdom, there are no higher positions than those on the right & left of the King himself, & that's what she wanted for her sons.

We may consider Mrs. Zebedee brash & presumptuous. But I admire her boldness. Too often we have settled for mediocrity in the church. For too long we have been content with just barely making it through the door. For too long we have been content to sit back & let things happen.

It is time for some of us to take our positions on the right & left hand, to become leaders - molding & fashioning the outreach of the church - mobilizing to make sure the message of Christ goes into all the world.

It is time to strive for excellence - to reach for the very best there is. The Lord calls us to be His disciples, & to be effective laborers in His kingdom.

B. I suppose that is why today is very special - because we recognize that a

mother's love is probably the closest example we have to God's love. It is a love that goes through the valley of the shadow of death to bring life into being. It is a love that sacrifices itself over & over again & would even dare to lay down its life for its own offspring.

The true story is told of Solomon Rosenberg & his family.

Solomon Rosenberg & his wife & their 2 sons & his mother & father were arrested & placed in a Nazi concentration camp. It was a labor camp, & the rules were simple. "As long as you can do your work, you are permitted to live. When you become too weak to do your work, then you are exterminated." Rosenberg watched his mother & father marched off to their deaths, & he knew that next would be his youngest son, David, because David had always been a frail child. Every evening Rosenberg came back into the barracks after his hours of labor & searched for the faces of his family. When he found them they would huddle together, embrace one another, & thank God for another day of life. One day Rosenberg came back & didn't see those familiar faces. He finally discovered his oldest son, Joshua, in a corner, huddled, weeping, & praying. He said, "Josh, tell me it's not true." Joshua turned & said, "It is true, poppa. Today David was not strong enough to do his work. So they came for him." "But where is your mother?" asked Mr. Rosenberg. "Oh poppa," he said, "When they came for David, he was afraid & he cried. Momma said, 'There is nothing to be afraid of, David,' & she took his hand & went with him."

Now that is the definition motherhood.

CONCLUSION: Mothers, this is your day, and may God bless you in it. And I pray that if there is someone here who has never experienced the love of God that is so close to the love of a mother, that this will be their time of decision.

I pray that if you have felt that you have had to walk through that valley alone so many times, that you will recognize that there is a hand reaching out to you, saying, "There is nothing to be afraid of. I'll go with you."

And I pray that you will recognize that Jesus has already gone through the valley of the shadow for you, & made it possible for you to live forever.

He extends His loving invitation in much the same way that a mother opens the doors of home & invites her children to come back again, He invites you, too. I pray that you will come as we stand & sing together.