

A Mother's Prayer

Today, we are going to look at one of the mothers of the Bible as we honor motherhood. We each need to give special recognition to our own mothers and those who are like mothers in our lives, but we also take this moment to honor those whom God has naturally equipped with the sensitivity and insight that accompanies motherhood. In other words, we recognize all women who cherish the spirit of motherhood and contribute so much to our lives. Let's look at this heart which was in the mother of Zebedee's children. Her sons were known as the "sons of thunder."

1. A mother's prayer.

The first thing we are going to see in Mrs. Zebedee is her prayer to Christ, "Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom."

Matt 20:20-28 Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him.

²¹And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom.

²²But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able.

²³And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father.

²⁴And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren.

²⁵But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them.

²⁶But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister;

²⁷And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant:

²⁸Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

She didn't pray for herself. Instead she prayed for her boys. By contrast, first think of the product of self-centered promotion in our day:

...two welfare mothers were charged with first degree murder in Miami. They left their children locked in a room and went out for a night on the town. The children got out and one of them drowned.... Bill Bennett tells the story of watching Oprah and seeing a single mother defend her active social life by saying that she needed a life. Mr. Bennett said, "In 5 minutes, I watched 5,000 years of civilization turned on its head."

— Roberto Rivera, Daily News Summary (09/13/95). C.T., Vol. 39, no. 12.

Next, consider the heart of a mother who died protecting her daughter as they both went down in a plane crash.

On August 16, 1987, Northwest Airlines flight 225 crashed just after taking off from

the Detroit airport, killing 155 people. One survived: a four-year-old from Tempe, Arizona, named Cecelia.

News accounts say when rescuers found Cecelia they did not believe she had been on the plane. Investigators first assumed Cecelia had been a passenger in one of the cars on the highway onto which the airliner crashed. But when the passenger register for the flight was checked, there was Cecelia's name.

Cecelia survived because, even as the plane was falling, Cecelia's mother, Paula Chican, unbuckled her own seat belt, got down on her knees in front of her daughter, wrapped her arms and body around Cecelia, and then would not let her go.

Nothing could separate that child from her parent's love—neither tragedy nor disaster, neither the fall nor the flames that followed, neither height nor depth, neither life nor death.

Such is the love of our Savior for us. He left heaven, lowered himself to us, and covered us with the sacrifice of his own body to save us.

— Bryan Chapell, *In the Grip of Grace* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992)

A healthy mother's love will drive her to heroic efforts. Although Mrs. Zebedee was not called upon to give her life for her sons, she *was* driven with the boldness to address Jesus.

She didn't pray that they would get good jobs, marry nice girls, stay out of trouble, although all of those are important prayers, too. She was not just asking for something from a worldly point of view. She did not seek some political office for them, nor some kingdom...she saw that only as they were connected to the work of Christ were their lives to have any meaning.

She realized what was most important and dared to ask Jesus for it. She was not asking so much for greatness, but to be servants of Jesus Christ, although I don't think she realized the fulness of what she was asking.

2. The Savior's challenge.

Jesus challenged her, essentially saying to her, "Do you realize what you're asking?" In order to be first in heaven you have to be last on earth. James and John were going to end up drinking of the cup that Jesus drank and the baptism that He was baptized with. They had that example set for them in their mother as she sought nothing for herself, but for her sons. Mothers often exemplify the attitude of putting themselves last.

One mom wrote to Christian Parenting Today magazine, "My three young children love to get up early and watch out the window for the garbage truck. They take great delight in watching the guy empty the can, then work the lever that causes the truck to compact the trash.

On the morning of my thirty-fifth birthday, my husband said to the children with a smile, 'Kids, do you know what makes today so special?'

It should have been no surprise to us when our 5-year-old rushed past my outstretched arms to the window and replied, 'It's garbage day!'"

— Sheri B., Portage, Michigan, "Life in Our House," Christian Parenting Today (March/April 2000)

It is easy to assume that someone is "just" a mother, but in reality, she is so much more.

One author and preacher said that when his wife was at home full-time with their children and

someone would ask, "And what is it that you do, my dear?" she would respond, "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 would ask the other person, "And what do you do?"

— John Ortberg and Ruth Haley, *An Ordinary Day with Jesus* (Zondervan, 2001), p. 122.

If you're waiting for people to take notice of what you do, it's easy to feel neglected and unappreciated, but God knows exactly what you do. Three times, in the Sermon on the Mount, it says, ""thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly," Matt.6:4,6,18.

One church member lamented, "I work my fingers to the bone in this church, and what thanks do I get?" Their pastor wrote: Is that the way it is? Your service was for thanks? Are you in your right mind? Servanthood begins where gratitude and applause ends.

— Timothy Keller, Pastor,
Redeemer Presbyterian Church
in New York

This is an attitude that must be passed on to the next generation.

Promoting servanthood has never been popular, especially when materialism and self-centeredness abounds. Submission has become a dirty word.

Show me a person who has trouble with submitting, and I will show you someone who is doomed for failure. Show me someone who will only submit when it will help him accomplish his goals and agenda and I will show you someone who is doomed to mediocrity.

Show me someone who will practice submission seek opportunities to serve and I will show you someone who is destined for greatness. Mothers are those who submit to God's work not for self advancement but for the blessing of others, starting with their children.

Matt 19:16-26 And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?

¹⁷And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.

¹⁸He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness,

¹⁹Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

²⁰The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?

²¹Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.

²²But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions.

²³Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.

²⁴And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

²⁵When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved?

²⁶But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is

impossible; but with God all things are possible.

3. The desire honored.

Mrs. Zebedee's desire was honored. James was among the first apostles to die... killed by the sword. Although John died in old age, he often tasted of this bitter cup throughout his life, spending years in prison on Patmos.

The most a mother can do, ultimately, is pass on the values and opportunities for their children to fulfill their calling. It has been said that it takes a village to raise a child. We are distressed that in too many cases that means that it takes a village of doctors, lawyers, psychologists, social workers, counselors, government programs, police, and judges. Charles Spurgeon said,

I cannot tell how much I owe to the prayers of my good mother. I remember her once praying, "Now Lord, if my children go on in sin it will not be from ignorance that they perish, and my soul must bear swift witness against them at the day of judgment if they lay not hold on Christ and claim Him as their personal Savior."

— Charles Spurgeon.

Nobody in today's modern village will pray this prayer that Spurgeon's mother prayed over him. The prayer a mother prays might lead a child to a martyr's grave, but that martyr's grave leads to a greater glory.

Heb 11:33-35 Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions,
34 Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight,

turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

35 Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection:

If you are a child of a mother, your mother, in her best moment, would desire for you to receive the love of God in salvation and be seated with Jesus. If you are a mother, to give the greatest gift, the gift of salvation you must first have it to give.

1. A mother's prayer. Matt 20:20-28
2. The Savior's challenge. Matt.6:4,6,18, 19:16-26
3. The desire honored. Heb 11:33-35