

John 19:25-27

Seeing the Glory of Kingship in the Last Will and Testament of Jesus

Introduction

Throughout John's whole account of Jesus' arrest in the garden, and His trial before Annas the Jewish high priest, and His trial before Pilate the Roman governor, and His being flogged and mocked, and His crucifixion, and the dividing of His garments between the Roman soldiers, we've seen His sovereign kingship and authority. And we've seen this in the context of His perfect submission to His Father's will.

In the garden, Jesus, "knowing all the things that were coming upon Him, went forth" and said to those who had come to arrest Him, "Whom do you seek." When they answered, "Jesus the Nazarene," Jesus said to them, "I am," or, "I am He... so if you seek Me, let these go their way" (18:4-8). Then we heard Jesus say to Peter: "Put the sword into the sheath; the cup which the Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?" (18:11)

Against the backdrop of Peter's denials ("I am not"; 17:15-18, 25-27) we heard Jesus testifying to Annas: "Why do you question Me?" I am who I have always said that I am. I am He (18:19-21). When one of the officers standing nearby slapped Jesus and rebuked Him, Jesus said: "If I have spoken wrongly, bear witness of the wrong; but if rightly, why do you strike Me?" (18:22-23).

Later on, in the exchange between Pilate and the Jews, we saw how all along it was the word of Jesus that was being fulfilled, signifying by what kind of death He was about to die (18:28-32). In the following exchange between Pilate and Jesus, we saw how the roles were reversed—how Pilate, before whose tribunal Jesus was standing, is ultimately answerable to Jesus, whose kingdom is not of this world (18:33-40). We heard Jesus say to Pilate: "You would have no authority over Me, unless [this situation and set of circumstances] had been given you from above; for this reason [not because of your relative goodness, but because of the Father's sovereign plan] he who delivered Me to you has the greater sin." Then, in the flogging and mockery and crucifixion of Jesus we saw again the revelation of His true kingship. We saw in the cross, the "*lifting up*" of Jesus as the king of the Jews and the Savior of the world (19:1-22).

Finally, last week we saw that even Jesus' humiliation, as He hung upon the cross and the soldiers divided up His clothes among themselves—even this humiliation was a triumphant "filling up" of all the sufferings of God's anointed king (18:23-24).

And in seeing these things, we have believed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and in believing, we have come to have life in His name (20:30-31). In other words, in truly seeing all these things—and in believing—we're necessarily being transformed. This morning, we'll continue to see the revelation of Jesus' true kingship in His "last will and testament" that He speaks from the cross.

I. John 19:25–27 — But standing by the cross of Jesus were His mother, and His mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus then saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, “Woman, behold, your son!” Then He said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother!” From that hour the disciple took her into his home.

Notice again how stubbornly anonymous is this “disciple whom Jesus loved” – this disciple who was conscious of no greatness of His own, but only of having been loved and chosen and called by Jesus. Is this how we delight to see ourselves?

I believe this disciple whom Jesus loved is John himself, the author of this Gospel. So we see again the personal reminiscence of one who was there that day at the cross—who not only heard what Jesus spoke, but who was the very one to whom Jesus was speaking. Is this why John includes this account in his Gospel? Is this mainly a piece of autobiographical detail? John isn’t trying to “hide” that he’s the author, but he is working hard to make sure that he’s entirely peripheral—that he remains essentially “anonymous.” So if this isn’t an autobiographical “cameo” appearance, why does John include this scene?

This is a very moving moment. Even in His own deepest agony and suffering, Jesus takes thought for His mother and how she will be cared for after He is gone. Is the point, then, to show us the kind of man Jesus was?—A man who was selfless, and compassionate, and loving? These things are certainly true, and we do see these things in this scene. But if this was “all” there was to see, I think it’s safe to say John would never have included this account in his Gospel. Remember: Why is John writing this Gospel? So that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and have life in His name. But how does seeing what a selfless man Jesus was in caring for His mother call us to believe? How does this contribute to the revelation of Jesus’ true authority and kingship? How does this contribute anything at all to the *theology* of John? On this interpretation, this account is an ultimately pointless interruption that contributes nothing to the overarching theme—the driving theological agenda—of John’s gospel. To put it simply, on this interpretation, I can’t explain why these verses are here.

There must be another interpretation of this passage; one that enables us to see also in these verses the glory of Jesus’ true kingship, and so also to see how these verses call us to believe. John will go on to say in the very next verse: “After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had already been finished...” (19:28). It was only “after” Jesus had made this provision for His mother that He could know that all things had already been finished. But as we see in verse thirty, this is redemptive-historical language.

➤ John 19:30 — Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, “It is finished!”

Therefore, there must be some redemptive-historical import to this last will and testament of Jesus.

For as moving as this scene is, it’s the one place where we can tend to overlook what everywhere else we would find objectionable. John refers four times to Mary as Jesus’ mother: “But standing by the cross of Jesus were *His mother*, and *His mother’s* sister... When Jesus then saw *His*

mother... He said to His mother... ‘Woman...’” Jesus doesn’t address Mary as “mother.” He addresses her as “woman.” The only other time that we see the mother of Jesus in John’s gospel is at the wedding in Cana all the way back in chapter two, at the very beginning of Jesus’ public ministry (cf. 2:11). John’s gospel is bookended with two scenes where Jesus’ mother figures prominently – the first is the opening scene of Jesus’ manifesting His glory (the miracle of the water turned to wine) and the second is the closing scene of Jesus’ manifesting His glory (His being “lifted up” on a cross). The other thing that ties these scenes together is that in both of them Jesus directly addresses His mother, and in both of them, He addresses her as “woman.” To grasp the significance of the closing scene, it will be helpful to go back and look at the opening scene.

II. John 2:1–3 — ...there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples. When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.”

Mary believes that Jesus is the Messiah; and she believes that eventually He must make Himself known. In light of the transition that’s taken place from John the Baptist to Jesus (Jn. 1:35-51), and also in light of the social shame and disgrace of the wine running out, Mary believes that now would be a perfect time for Jesus to reveal His messianic power and glory.

III. John 2:4a — And Jesus said to her, “Woman, what does this concern of yours have to do with me?”

This isn’t in and of itself a cold or disrespectful form of address (cf. Jn. 4:21; 20:13). It didn’t sound 2000 years ago in Greek (or Aramaic) like it sounds today in English.

- John 20:15 — Jesus said to [Mary Magdalene], “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?”
- Matthew 15:28 — Jesus answered [the Canaanite woman], “O woman, great is your faith!”
- Luke 13:12 — When Jesus saw [the woman who was “bent over and could not fully straighten herself”], he called her over and said to her, “Woman, you are freed from your disability.”

The real “problem” here is not the form of address by itself, but the fact that Jesus addresses His own mother in this way. Why does Jesus do this? There’s a sense in which Mary is presuming on her “connections”—her “influence” with Jesus. It seems that Mary had some “authority” at this feast since she can instruct the servants to “do whatever Jesus tells them” (cf. 2:5). How tempting it would have been to see the looming catastrophe at the wedding and then use her connections or influence with Jesus, the Messiah, to seek a solution! And how much more tempting would this have been if Mary saw in this the perfect opportunity for Jesus to reveal Himself? But can you see the problem here? In His identity as the Messiah there can be no thought of any privileged family connections of any kind. In His identity as the “Messiah” (which Jesus has just entered into formally at His baptism; 1:28-33) Mary can be to Jesus no more nor less than any other believing “woman” could ever claim to be. Mary’s relationship with Jesus was no longer to be defined as mother and son, but now as disciple and teacher, and even as disciple and Lord. For her own joy, Mary’s view of Jesus must not be clouded by any “special” or “exclusive”

relationship that she bears to Him because this would be in the end to cut her off from that one true relationship of faith that's most essential. This would prevent her from seeing in Jesus the Messiah that she needs.

Can we see the good news in this for us, too? If there are those who have privileged connections and influence with Jesus as the Messiah, that automatically results in people who are less privileged and who have lesser access and who enjoy a lesser assurance of His personal care and concern. What we see here, then, is the good news that we all have equal access together by faith.

- Ephesians 2:18 — ...*through Him* we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father.
- Ephesians 3:11–12 — ...*in [Christ Jesus our Lord]* we have boldness and confident access through faith *in Him*.

On the one hand, Mary was presuming on a “privileged” relationship with the Messiah; on the other hand, Mary believes that this crisis for the bridegroom would be an ideal time for Jesus to reveal His Messianic glory. This explains what Jesus says next.

IV. John 2:4b — “Woman, what does this concern of yours have to do with me? **My hour has not yet come.**”

Here at the end of John's gospel, we know that Jesus' “hour” *has* come, and we understand, now, all that's wrapped up in this simple expression. We understand that Jesus' “hour” is that time when His glory is fully revealed even in and through His sufferings and death on a cross (cf. Jn. 7:30; 8:20; 12:23, 27; 13:1; 17:1).

Mary can't comprehend, yet, this *true* glory of Jesus. When she says to Jesus, “They have no wine,” suggesting that He reveal, now, His Messianic power, she's speaking from her own limited and incomplete perspective (cf. Mat. 16:21-23). And so without giving any details that would have been too much for her to bear, Jesus says to her: “My hour has not yet come.” But if His “hour” has not yet come, what might this imply about the *nature* of His “hour” and the *kind* of glory it will reveal? We go on now to read in verse five:

V. John 2:5 — His mother said to the servants, “Whatever he says to you, do it.”

Mary hears in Jesus' words the promise that He *will* one day fully reveal His glory. She also hears an invitation to believe that prior to that “hour” there might still be the beginnings of the manifestation of His glory. She hears an invitation to reorient her thinking—to reevaluate her motives and assumptions—and then to watch and see what Jesus will do. Mary was a woman of faith.

VI. John 2:6–10 — Now there were six stone water jars set there for the Jewish custom of purification, containing two or three measures each. Jesus said to them, “Fill the water jars with water.” So they filled them up to the brim. And He said to them, “Draw some out now and take it to the headwaiter.” So they took it to him. Now when the headwaiter tasted the water which had become wine, and did not know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water

knew), the headwaiter called the bridegroom, and said to him, “Every man serves the good wine first, and when the people have drunk freely, then the inferior wine; but you have kept the good wine until now.”

The “glory” that Jesus reveals here is not the simple power of a miracle-worker. The miracle itself is barely mentioned. The miracle is just the “sign” that’s pointing us to something deeper and more wonderful – to the *true* glory of Jesus. In Jesus, the water of the Old Covenant (symbolized by the water jars for the Jewish custom of purification) has been replaced with the infinitely superior wine of the new and better things that were coming. The point here isn’t wine for the stomach, but Jesus Himself as the true spiritual wine and the true provision for all our true happiness (cf. Ps. 4:6-7). He is the substance of which all the Old Covenant types were, comparatively speaking, the faintest shadows. In Jesus, all the distress, and mourning, and sorrow associated with God’s judgment is taken away forever. In Jesus, all the true blessings of God’s favor and kindness are promised to us forever.

This is the true glory of Jesus, and this is the glory that will be fully revealed only when Jesus “hour” has come — only in and through His suffering and death. So John concludes his account with these words:

VII. John 2:11 — Jesus did this in Cana of Galilee as the *beginning* of His signs, and manifested His *glory*, and His disciples believed in Him.

Even if John is referring specifically to the twelve disciples (and he probably is), we can assume that Mary must also have believed—as a *disciple* of Jesus. She believed, but her faith cannot be fully formed until the glory that she has seen in the changing of water to wine is fully revealed in the cross.

Fast-forward, now, to John chapter nineteen, and the next time in John that we see Mary, the mother of Jesus.

VIII. John 19:25–27 — But standing by the cross of Jesus were His mother, and His mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus then saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, “Woman, behold, your son!” Then He said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother!” From that hour the disciple took her into his home.

Here, at the cross, is the full revelation of the glory of Jesus – the glory that Jesus first began to manifest in chapter two when He changed the water into wine. Can Mary see, yet, in the cross, the true glory of Jesus? This is something she’ll only be able to see after Jesus has been raised from the dead. And yet there is something in Jesus’ words that might have caught her attention even then.

Even when Jesus is carrying out the *filial* obligation of a *son* to his mother, He still addresses Mary *not* as “Mother,” but as “Woman”—even as He would any other beloved disciple. In chapter two, at the wedding, there was a gentle rebuke in this address. In chapter two, Mary needed to see that her relationship with Jesus was not to be defined as mother and son, but now

as disciple and Lord. In chapter two, Mary needed to see that the true glory of Jesus was different and more wonderful than what she imagined. The true glory of Jesus was such that no one—not even Mary—could claim any privileged or exclusive relationship with Him. That was in chapter two. But now, here in chapter nineteen, there’s no rebuke at all in Jesus’ words. Mary has gladly taken her place with the other women—with her sister, and with Mary the wife of Clopas, and with Mary Magdalene—as a disciple of Jesus. And yet for all this, to this point Jesus has apparently performed all the filial obligations of a son for his (widowed) mother. Now, as He performs this final filial obligation, He would have us see this not primarily as the “last will and testament” of a son for his mother, but as the last will and testament of the King for all of His disciples.

“When Jesus then saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, ‘Woman, behold, your son!’ Then He said to the disciple, ‘Behold, your mother!’” Jesus speaks here, even from the cross, with the authority of the King who is even now—by His death—forming His disciples into a brand new kind of community. Jesus speaks, here, from the cross, as the one who is even now—even in these very words—manifesting His glory.

In chapter two, Jesus said to Mary, “My *hour* has not yet come.” I believe this gives us insight into John’s choice of words here in chapter nineteen: “From that *hour* the disciple took her into his home.” From that *time* on? Yes. But also, from that *hour* when the glory of Jesus was finally and fully manifested. This new family relationship that Jesus establishes between this “woman” and this “disciple” is to be a relationship that could only be possible *from that “hour” on*. It’s a relationship that could only be possible within the newly formed community of Jesus’ disciples – a community that He was—even at that very moment—purchasing with His own blood.

Conclusion

In this “last will and testament” of Jesus, He speaks from the cross with all the authority of the true King who is over all kings because His kingdom is not of this world. And so there’s a real sense in which we’re meant to hear Jesus saying to each one of us as He points to those sitting around us: Behold, your sister! Behold, your brother! Behold, your mother! Your father! Behold, your son! Your daughter! (Cf. 1 Tim. 5:1-2) This is the last will and testament of our King before He went back to the Father. Jesus said to His disciples in Mark chapter ten:

- Mark 10:28–30 — “Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel’s sake, except one who will receive one hundred times as much now in the present age—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life.”

And it was only the night before the crucifixion that Jesus said to His disciples:

- John 13:33–35 — “Little children, I am with you a little while longer... A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

How are we living in obedience to this last will and testament of our King? How are we living out the miracle of this new family that He has brought into being through His death on a cross—and through which He is even today manifesting His glory? The Apostle John writes in his first epistle:

- 1 John 3:16–18 — By this we have known love, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.