

Today's Sermon
Christ's Sympathy and Sufficiency (John 19:25-30)
 Pastor Phil Layton, GCBC, May 13, 2023

Prayer in light of song, Paul, CBC, Cliff, Kathy E, Bernardo / Dague family

Last week our scripture reading took us from the upper room to Gethsemane where the Lord Jesus wept and sweat drops of blood. He took His disciples for support and told them to watch and pray against temptation because the flesh is weak (even His). Jesus fell to the ground and cried and questioned His Father if there was any other way, and if this cup of suffering sorrow could pass. But He submits Himself to the Father's will, not His desire. Today we continue that

This morning our text will be John 19 and our title will be Christ's Sympathy and Sufficiency. I preached last week how Jesus sympathizes with our weakness and how we need to hold up and support others in prayer and practical ways. Pastor Corey and I thought it good if we apply that more and we thought there may be no more appropriate message for us today. We'll be back in our regular series next Sunday, but this is a day to see Christ's word for mothers and sufferers and strugglers. It's good to survey the wondrous cross, to cling to the old rugged cross, and trust the power of the cross to help us see the dawn on the darkest day. That's what Jn 19 is all about.

It was a day of literal darkness for 3 hours where the Savior cried out '*my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*' But the light would dawn on the man next to Him who heard Jesus pray for His Father to forgive them. Jesus promised instant paradise to the one dying in faith. But His disciples couldn't make sense of it all. It didn't fit what they expected. They couldn't believe it, they didn't know what to say or do, it was stunning crushing grief. They're shocked, reeling, feeling waves of emotion and sorrow. But Christ's 'sorrow and love flow mingled down' here. He makes sure family will be cared for. In this text He experienced human need and expresses sympathy for needs of others. And we'll see Christ's all-sufficiency and His final cry of victory. In v. 23-24, soldiers at the cross only cared for themselves, but listen to Christ's care for others

John 19:25–30 *but standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶ When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" ²⁷ Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home. ²⁸ After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), "I thirst." ²⁹ A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth. ³⁰ When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. [this is the word of Christ from the cross for us]*

- There's a word here for **mothers on Mother's Day**, and those who take care of mothers.

- There's a word here for **mourners** on this day, with Christ's help to care for them.
- There's a word here for many going through difficulty, as many in this passage were.
- If you can hardly pray or say anything, all you can do is be there, that's these ladies here.
- If you feel deeply your need, so did Jesus here as He speaks of His deep need of thirst.
- If you feel you have to do something to atone for guilt, hear Christ's words: *it is finished!*
- If you have deep regret from the past or dark sin, so did someone here (Mary Magdalene)
- If you've lost a loved one, this is a word from the cross for the loss of a loved one.
- If you wonder how God will provide in the future, or if you struggle to understand what happened and why, so did a lady in this text who Jesus also has words of assurance for.

Have you failed the Lord and want to come back to the cross but aren't sure what He'll say?

- There's a word here to a disciple who had deserted the Lord but is still loved by Him and is about to be made closer than family and given a role of service by the merciful Savior.

These are the dying words of our now risen Lord. What He says and does on the day He died applies to our daily lives. There's something here for all of us. The Word of the Lord here honors mothers to His dying breath. Our Savior honors women and widows. His mother was apparently both as she's in need of a man to take her into his home to take care of her. She'd lost her husband and is losing her son, but scripture in v. 25 honors her for standing there and honoring Jesus. Mary and these women are the first we see truly honor the Lord in Jn 18-19.

v. 25 begins with *but*, in contrast to selfish soldiers in v. 23-24 caring only for themselves, the words on the cross show selfless care for others. Men are sinning, these women are standing.

He's been deserted by men closest to Him in the garden, disowned by Peter in the courtyard. The one who had pledged to die with Him had denied Him 3x, the Jewish leaders and Roman authorities had disrespected Him, and we want to cry out, as one lady told me reading this chapter, 'isn't there anyone willing to stand for what's right, to stand up for Jesus and stand with Jesus?' Here's the answer in v. 25 *but standing by the cross of Jesus were...these women.*

11 male disciples had run away in fear, *but*, v. 25 says, *standing at the foot of the cross* are **several women** who stand out in this dark chapter; Mary the mother of Jesus, her sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. From Matthew it seems the 4th woman, the sister of Mary mother of Jesus is Salome, wife of Zebedee, mom of James and John (Mt 27:46, 4:21). John doesn't name his mom or himself, he's '*the disciple Jesus loved*' in v. 26. The disciples all deserted Jesus but before the end John came back and came near at the cross at some point to join his Aunt Mary, mom Salome and the other Mary's. They're supporting Jesus and His mom

I imagine the thoughts: “He was only 33, such a beautiful life, this didn’t have to happen, He didn’t deserve this! This is wrong! God, what are you doing? Are you still there? Is it all true?”

His mother couldn’t hold Him anymore like when He was a baby and He cried. She nursed Him as a newborn, now He says “I thirst” and there’s nothing she can do to soothe her son’s need. Those hands and feet she caressed and kept warm in swaddling clothes are now nailed to a cross and that sweet head she used to kiss is a sacred head now wounded that bows as ‘it is finished.’

Simeon ‘said to Mary his mother, “Behold...a sword will pierce through your own soul...” (Lk 2:34-35). Now Jesus says to His mother the same word ‘Behold...’ and as she beholds her son with nails piercing Him through and then a spear to His heart in v. 34, she must have felt as if her heart had been pierced through, too. But amazingly v. 25-26 twice highlights that Mary was standing there, not fainting as others might, not fleeing. Christ’s men ran but His mother stands

A.W. Pink: ‘who can estimate what she passed through as she stood there...who can fathom ...The crowds are mocking, the thieves are taunting, the priests are jeering, the soldiers are callous and indifferent, the Saviour is bleeding, dying—and there is his mother beholding the horrible mockery. What wonder if she [collapsed]...turned away...fled from such a scene! But no! There she is ... in her grief—she stands. Her action and attitude are unique. In all the annals of history of our race there is no parallel. What transcendent courage. She stood by the cross.’¹

Only the Lord could enable someone to keep standing in something as horrible as this

Mary wanted to comfort her son in His pain, but He’s about to comfort her instead in her pain!

2 takeaways in the text: **Christ’s Sympathy and Christ’s Sufficiency.**

1st Christ’s sympathy

v. 26 says ‘*Jesus saw his mother...*’ It was then Jesus was moved to speak. He had no words for Herod and virtually nothing to say to His accusers and the authorities, He went silently to His own suffering, but when He saw His mother’s suffering, and someone who could help her, He looks in sympathy and speaks in empathy. Earlier in the gospel Jesus saw a woman who had suffered greatly over 12 years, Mt 9 says ‘*Jesus turned and saw her. “Take heart, daughter,” he said...*’ (v. 22 NIV). Then ‘*when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd*’ (v. 36 NKJV)

Isa 53 says Jesus is the ‘Man of Sorrows, well-acquainted with grief...He carried our sorrows’

In Lk 7 there was a widow whose son had died. It says ‘*When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, “Don’t cry”*’ (v. 13 NIV). Much more now, when the Lord saw His own mother, did His heart go out to her! In Jn 11 when Lazarus died and

his sister Mary was grieving, it says ‘*When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled ... Jesus wept...*’

He said in the garden ‘*my soul is very sorrowful, even to death...*’ (Mt 26:38)

They said of weeping Jesus after Lazarus died ‘see how much He loved him.’ How much more His own mother! Jesus saw her in Jn 19:26 with the same eyes that had looked with sympathy on sufferers from the diseased to the disabled to the demon-possessed, those eyes that looked with love on a rich young ruler who rejected Him, those eyes that cared for harassed and helpless crowds, those eyes that saw everything about the woman at the well and still loved her despite her sexual sin, those eyes that moved Peter to repent after he denied Jesus, those eyes now see a suffering struggling mother at the foot of the cross needing compassionate sympathy

Those eyes in v. 26 see and speak the word ‘*woman.*’ Hendriksen: ‘It was very kind of him to say “Woman,” and not, “Mother.” The word “Mother” would have driven the sword even more deeply into the soul of Mary, that sharp and painful sword of which Simeon had spoken (Luke 2:35). Here at the cross, exactly as at Cana’s wedding [where He first spoke to her of His hour to come] it was very kind of Jesus to emphasize by the use of the word *woman* that Mary must no longer think of him as being merely her son; for, the more she conceives of him as her son, the more she will suffer when he suffers. Mary must...look upon Jesus as her *Lord.*’²

²⁶ *When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, “Woman, behold, your son!”* [i.e., see John as your son now]²⁷ *Then he said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother!” And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.* Carson: ‘it is wonderful to remember that even as he hung dying on a Roman cross...he took thought of and made provision for his mother... Jesus displays his care for his mother... passing through...darkest hour...’³ Another writer calls this ‘one of the loveliest things in all the gospel story... Jesus committed Mary to John’s care and John to Mary’s, so that they should comfort each other’s loneliness when he was gone. There is something infinitely moving in the fact that Jesus in the agony of the Cross, when the salvation of the world hung in the balance, thought of the loneliness of his mother in the days ahead ... To the end of the day, even on the cross, Jesus was thinking more of the sorrows of others than of his own’¹⁴

- This convicts me, as I struggle I think of myself, my concern, comfort; Jesus thinks of her
- He’s not self-absorbed like me, He’s absorbed in her care to the end, to ‘honor thy mother’

Jesus said hours earlier we're to love as He loved. He doesn't want us to just *marvel* at His love, we're to *model* His love. Are you taking care of those in your family the Lord calls you to? Do you honor your parents? If you haven't recently, think of the cross and

Christ's words from the cross. If you struggle to honor and have sympathy on sinful family, look to the sympathetic Savior who also said on the cross of those sinning against Him, '*Father, forgive them.*' They did worse to Jesus than anyone to you has or can, but the Lord has a forgiving heart of compassion for sinners, and we're called to have that same heart. As Jesus saw John He didn't berate him for sleeping in the garden or fleeing with the rest, Jesus sees John as a sinner coming back to the cross, and Jesus speaks to John as closest family. Despite his sin he was one that Jesus loved.

A Getty song says 'hands that should discard me, Hold wounds which tell me, "Come."
Beneath the cross of Jesus, My unworthy soul is won.
Once strangers chasing selfish dreams, Now one through grace alone...
Beneath the cross of Jesus, **His family is my own**—⁵

That was John's story, he had selfish dreams of top seats in the kingdom, he was unworthy but grace had changed him from a son of thunder to be a son of Jesus' mother, part of His family!

²⁸ *After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), "I thirst."* That's from the Psalms and the prophecies of Messiah as suffering servant taking on weakness.

Spurgeon said 'if Jesus said, "*I thirst,*" then he knows all our frailties and woes. The next time we are in pain or are suffering depression of spirit we will remember that our Lord understands it all, for he has had practical, personal experience of it. Neither in torture of body nor in sadness of heart are we deserted by our Lord; his line is parallel with ours. The arrow which has lately pierced you, my brother, was first stained with his blood. The cup of which you are made to drink, though it be very bitter, bears the mark of his lips about its brim... Let the sympathy of Christ, then, be fully believed in and deeply appreciated, since he said, "*I thirst.*"⁶

Jesus had taught about a rich man suffering in hell begging for a drink to relieve his thirst, and Jesus suffered hell's wrath on the cross for us. Hebrews 2 says '*he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone...he too shared in their humanity...he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest...Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are...tempted*' (v. 9-18 NIV). And Heb 4:15 adds that He's '*able to sympathize with our weaknesses*' and so we can come confidently to His throne of grace for mercy and help in our need from our sympathetic Savior. This should encourage us to pray to a Lord who knows.

With people suffering or facing death, this should motivate us to pray to our sympathetic Lord.

Phil 2 applies it further: '*if there is any...sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love...Let each of you look not only to his own interests,*

but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is...in Christ Jesus...' We need the mind of Christ so that we can model Christ in His sympathy and love and looking to others.

1 Pet 3:8 *live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate (NIV).*

APPLICATIONS TO GRIEVING MEMBERS

Our text closes moving from Christ' sympathy to Christ's sufficiency

³⁰ *When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.*

The other gospels say His last words were with a loud voice. This is a victory shout, like we sang earlier "Curtain torn in two, dead are raised to life, finished the victory cry." The work of salvation is done, it's complete. Jesus is an all-sufficient Savior. The verb '*it is finished*' means also '*it was accomplished*.' His dying breath has brought me life, I know that it is finished.'⁷

*An older hymn says: It is finished-- The Messiah dies For sins, but not his own;
The great redemption is complete, And Satan's power overthrown.
It is finished -- All his groans are past; His blood, his pain, and toils,
Have fully vanquished all our foes, [God] crowned him with their spoils.
It is finished – [Jesus said] ... And gospel ages run;
All old things now are passed away, A new world is begun.⁸*

This is a perfect tense verb, meaning 'it is finished and will always be in the state of being finished!' Nothing can ever be added to Christ's sufficient atoning work. It's not a potential redemption, it's a particular redemption for His elect. It actually atones completely for believers and finally fulfills the OT Law and prophets. Once-for-all time, Jesus is the all-sufficient Savior

He's sufficient for comfort. He's sufficient to help us comfort others. If you feel insufficient, you are, but He's not. 2 Cor 3:5 *Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God,* ⁶ *who has made us sufficient to be ministers...*

9:8 *And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work...12:9 he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*

When you're tempted to fall into the performance trap, remember Jesus said *it is finished*. We never stand before God based on our performance, it's always His

performance for us. If you fall into the trap of wanting to make a fellow believer pay for his sins, Jesus already paid for it.

Jesus didn't pay it *some* and now you need to make believers pay some more, Jesus paid it *all* for their sin and your sin of trying to make them pay, or wanting to. And for those who die in sin, there will be payment, but you don't need to add to that as if God's is not enough. And don't beat yourself up or punish yourself for past sins, all that is finished. Preach to yourself He is sufficient, Christ is enough for me, everything I need is in Him. Rest in His finished work.

It's been said 'A servant would use [this verb *it is finished*] when reporting to his or her master, "I have completed the work assigned to me" ... When a priest examined an animal sacrifice and found it faultless, this word would apply...When an artist completed a picture, or a writer a manuscript, he or she might say, "It is finished!"... merchants [said] "The debt is paid in full!"⁹

This is the very Greek verb Jesus uses as the servant who completed the work assigned to Him. He completed the picture God had been painting and the story God had been writing in the OT. He was found to be the faultless Lamb of God whose blood paid in full all the sins of believers.

That's the message of Christ's finished work and final words on the cross. You can't do anything to save yourself or earn your way. Other world religions are about what you must do to get to the divine state, Christianity is about what must be done for you by the divine Savior. Religions say *do*, the Redeemer says '*it's done...by me.*' Men say 'you're good, just do good works;' the Master says 'you're not good and can never do enough good, that will never work, but trust what I did in my finished work on the cross.' Don't put faith in your accomplishments or what you hope to accomplish in your life to be saved, trust in Christ alone, His accomplishments, that *it is accomplished*. He alone is sufficient to save. Come with nothing in your hands to bring, to the cross cling in faith. Christ alone is sufficient for the salvation and the satisfaction of your soul.

Jesus had tears in His eyes as He went to the cross. He said in Jn 19 '***I am thirsty***,' in the beating sun, and scorching heat. But as our sufficient substitute, Revelation says of believers '*never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat...he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes*' (7:16 NIV).

Mary in tears saw her son not sparing, she could scarcely take in it, but on the cross her burden Jesus was gladly bearing, to take away her sin. That should make souls sing, how great Thou art

I love the hymn that starts with 'Man of Sorrows what a name'
'Lifted up was He to die, **'It is finished!' was His cry**

Now in heaven exalted high, **Hallelujah! What a Savior!**¹⁰

Let's pray.

Our God, how great Thou art. Thank you for the great truths of Christ's sympathy as the Man of Sorrows and His sufficiency as our merciful Savior. We thank you for His humanity and family that He makes by His blood. Help us to think of family, children and parents rightly. Help us care as Christ shows His followers here. In Jesus' name, all the family of Christ said...

Amen!

¹ Arthur W. Pink, *The Seven Sayings of the Savior on the Cross*, chapter 3, "The Word of Affection."

² William Hendriksen, *John*, p. 433.

³ D.A. Carson, *John*, p. 616-17.

⁴ William Barclay, ed., *The Gospel of John*, vol. 2, p. 257.

⁵ Getty Music, "Beneath the Cross of Jesus."

⁶ C. H. Spurgeon, "The Shortest of the Seven Cries," in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 24 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1878), 221.

⁷ "How Deep the Father's Love."

⁸ "Behold the Savior on the Cross," *Scottish Psalter*, 1880.

⁹ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 384.

¹⁰ "Hallelujah, What a Savior!"