



John 19:26 2-

Substituting for the Substitute

"Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews." That was the placard that Pilate, the Roman governor, had the soldiers put on the cross above the head of Jesus Christ. Pilate probably did it in order to get even with the Jewish leaders. History tells us he hated his subjects as much as they hated him, and he often sought ways to get even with them. The title was written in Hebrew, the national language, Greek, the language of the common people, and Latin, the language of the government. The chief priests objected to the title because they realized that the title had been thrown in the teeth of Jewish people. They protested, "Write not, the king of the Jews, but that he said, I am the king of the Jews." Pilate had accomplished his objective and answered, "What I have written I have written."

By midday the Roman soldiers stationed at the cross have divided up the garments of Jesus and are trying to decide who shall get his outer garment that was woven tightly without a seam. John thought about it and realized even this was a fulfillment of the Scriptures. He cites Psalm 22:18, "They divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots." The words of this Psalm reach beyond David and are fulfilled literally in the death of Christ. "Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His outer garments and made four parts, a part to every soldier and *also* the tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece. So they said to one another, 'Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, *to decide* whose it shall be'; *this was* to fulfill the Scripture: 'They divided My outer garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots.' Therefore the soldiers did these things" (John 19:23-24a).

Four women were about the cross. Their tender hearts for the one they loved is a strong contrast to the hardened Roman executioners. John tells us, "But standing by the cross of Jesus were His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the *wife* of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene" (Jn. 19:25). The eminent scholar A. T. Robertson suggests "Mary, the mother of Jesus, had been present in Jerusalem through all the dread ordeal of trial and crucifixion till now. It is comforting to know she was with women who loved her and loved Jesus. Not one of the apostles was present save John, the disciple whom Jesus loved . . ."

The historian Luke tells us Jesus has been praying during this time. It is imperfect tense in the original implying He kept it up. He kept saying, "Father forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing."

People stood by looking on as the rulers were sneering at Him, saying, "He saved others; let Him save Himself if this is the Messiah of God, His chosen one" (Lk. 23:35). The soldiers joined in on the mockery continuing to come up to Him and offering sour wine saying, "If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself!" (vv. 36-37). The criminals kept on "hurling abuse at Him," "Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!" How long this behavior went on we do not know. However, one of the criminals rebuked the other and said, "Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong."

we indeed justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." And he kept on saying, "Jesus, remember me when You come into Your kingdom!" (vv. 39-42). Jesus responded with a once-for-all statement of assurance. "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with me in Paradise" (v. 43).

What will Jesus say to His mother and His friends who are gathered about Him?

We must ever keep in mind the central figure at the cross is Jesus Christ, the Suffering Servant of the LORD. He speaks as Lord. He issues commands as a king upon His throne.

MARY'S SON (John 19:26)

A. T. Robertson observes, "No mother ever had a son like Jesus. No man ever had a better mother than Mary. Jesus deserved the best of mothers. The Eternal Father chose this maiden in the fullness of time for her high service to the Kingdom of God and to the race. Mary deserves the best from us all. She would say that we best honor her when we honor and worship and follow the lead of the Lord Jesus Christ who will not brook any rival in human hearts, not our own mothers, not even His mother" (*The Mother of Jesus*, p. 70).

"In the mystery of the Incarnation, the eternal Christ became a helpless child, who depended upon His mother for physical and spiritual sustenance. When God became man, He took no half-way measures. He went through the helplessness of every child, the development in body, mind, and soul that each of us has known. As Jesus was growing, someone taught Him to behold the lilies of the field and the birds of the air. Someone taught Him to observe so keenly the pathos and drama of village life, the silly pomposities of little people, and the inedible heroism which unknown folk bore the unbearable. The son of Man saw life with all the sensitivity of a woman, and that woman was Mary" (Unknown).

Mary knew as no one else did the perfect humanity of Jesus. She knew Him as the Son of God, for the power of the Highest had overshadowed her when He was conceived. No doubt His death was an even greater mystery. "He was still the Son of God although He had died."

Mary had suffered much because of this son.

Simeon's prophecy is recorded for us in Luke 2:34-35. "And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary His mother, 'Behold, this *Child* is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a sign to be opposed —and a sword will pierce even your own soul —to the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.' "

Someone has eloquently written about this piercing of Simeon's sword: "There her son hung before her eyes, but she was helpless. His wounds bled,

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"There her son hung before her eyes, but she was helpless. His wounds bled, but she dared not staunch them. His mouth was parched, hot like an oven, but she cannot moisten it. His body ached, arched from the pain of the scourged, the tearing of the thorns, the piercing of the nails, but she cannot sooth Him. Those out stretched arms used to clasp her neck; she used to fondle those pierced hands and feet; now the nails pierced her as well as him. The thorns around his brow were a circle of flame about her head. The taunts flung at Him wounded her likewise. To add to her agony, Jesus was dying the death of a criminal. Mary was going through the experience prophesied by Simeon. 'A sword shall pierce through thy own soul also'" (Source unknown).

However, the sharpest edge of that sword was revealed when Jesus said, "Woman, behold your son." That was when the sword cut the deepest into her heart.

But the sword of Simeon had pierced her heart often by the rattle of the tongues of gossip.

Mary's relationship with Jesus

At age twelve Jesus made the declaration to his parents "I must be about my Father's business." After the public ministry of Jesus begins, the Gospels keep Mary in the background. At the wedding in Cana of Galilee Jesus said to His mother, "Woman, what have I to do with you. My hour has not come" (John 2:4). Two years later Jesus was teaching at Capernaum. Rumors have it that Jesus is suffering from a nervous breakdown (Mk. 3:30-35). Mary came to check up on her son and sent word to Jesus. The Pharisees said to Him, "Your mother and your brothers are outside wanting to see you." Jesus responded, "Who is my mother? And who are my brothers?" (Matthew 12:48-50). "Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my mother, and sisters, and brother."

Now at the cross, what will Jesus say to Mary? Will He have some special position for her? What special privilege of grace will He assign to the Virgin Mary?

In effect Jesus says, "From now on, not I, but John, is your son." The amazing fact is Jesus does not call Mary, "mother," but "woman." He did not say "mother." He could just as easily have said "mother." He said, "woman." Jesus is not being disrespectful. But He must terminate the earthly relationship. It is as if Jesus said to Mary: "Mother, look to John. Call him son. He will be with you and take care of you. . . I must be about my Father's business."

Jesus could have addressed Mary as "mother" at this time, but He chose not to. He called her "woman."

If Mary needs a son to love and cherish, and provide for her needs, she must look to the disciple John.

Important spiritual principle for us today

Spurgeon stressed that Jesus denied to Mary any special privileges based upon her earthly familial relationship. She must not become His rival. No human being is closer to the Savior than the penitent thief, or you, or me—not even Mary!

Acts 1:14 records the last reference to Mary in the Bible. It is after the resurrection and ascension of Jesus. About 120 believers have gathered together praying. Luke records the events, "These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with *the* women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with

continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with *the* women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers." A. T. Robertson says, "A delicate touch by Luke that shows Mary with her crown of glory at last. She had come out of the shadow of death with the song in her heart and with the realization of the angel's promise and the prophecy of Simeon. It was a blessed time for Mary." Now we find Mary, accompanied with her, the brothers of Jesus who had once disbelieved in Him (Jn. 7:5). "Jesus had appeared to James (1 Cor. 15:7) and now it is a happy family of believers including the mother and brothers (half-brothers, literally) of Jesus. They continue in prayer for the power from on high." The half-brothers were now whole-hearted believers in Jesus the Messiah. The family is once more reunited. Their Jewish theology was unable to find room for a suffering and dying Messiah until after Jesus rose from the dead. When He opened their minds they understood the Old Testament Scriptures like the rest (Lk. 24:45).

Mary lost a son, but found a savior. This Son of Mary became her Savior. Never forget He was her substitute dying in her place on the cross because Mary was a sinner in the need of a savior. Mary needed the Savior. She brought a sin offering in obedience to the law after the birth of Jesus (Luke 2:22, 24; 1:47). The mother was Levitically unclean for forty days after the birth of a son (Lev. 12:1-8).

MARY'S SAVIOR

Jesus is the central person in the drama before us. God will not share his glory with another, not even the earthly mother of Jesus.

Jesus fulfilled the last detail of the Law.

Jesus was fulfilling to the last detail the letter of the Law. "Thou shalt honor thy father and thy mother."

Even at the cross Jesus provides for Mary (v. 26-27). When Jesus then saw His mother, and 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 own *household*. How easily it would have been to rationalize "I am dying, let her other sons and daughters take care of her." But that is not what Christ did. He was in charge even on the cross.

Jesus demonstrates self-sacrificial love.

This is possibly the clearest, most easily understood demonstration of self-renunciation of genuine self-denial, to be found in the New Testament.

R. G. Lee wrote: ". . . Jesus cut Himself off from mother love. He forsook the best earth had to offer Him. He renounced every tie that might interfere with His Saviourhood. He removed even the obstruction of filial devotion. He gave up all for sinners. He gave up all for me. He gave up all for you . . . It was a greater renunciation when Christ gave up the glories of heaven to come to this earth and die for the sins of mankind. He renounced His mother in order that he could become her Savior."

Jesus forsook the best earth had to offer Him. He renounced every tie that might interfere with being the Savior of lost mankind. He chose to give it up. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9). Our riches are found in the imputed righteousness God bestows on believing sinners. He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (5:21).

Jesus drank to the dregs of sorrow, grief, and pain on our behalf. For three hours the sun refused to shine on the suffering deity. Isaiah had given a vivid portrait of the suffering servant of God when he said he was "wounded for our transgressions." John the Baptizer pointed to Jesus as the "lamb of God that takes away the collective sin of a world of sinners." Christ gave Himself a "ransom for many." He who knew no sin God made sin for us. On the Cross Christ became a curse for us and so redeemed us from the curse of the law. We are "redeemed by the precious blood of Christ" shed on Calvary. He gave Himself "a ransom for all." Jesus had to pay the price alone and tasted death –spiritual death –for every man. This was also true for Mary, as well as you and me. She was a sinner in the need of a Substitute.

Jesus is Mary's Substitute.

You do not find in the New Testament Jesus giving His mother any special assignment or special position. Clearly Jesus denied any special assignment or privilege to Mary. You have to go outside of the Word of God to men's teaching several hundred years later to find any special privileges awarded to her. It is simply not found in the Bible.

At the cross Mary discovered that she had a greater need to be in a mystical union *with Christ* than a natural union with her son. Russell Bradley Jones carefully observes, "She gladly took her place among His sincere worshipers. It was not a special place; it was not on the platform; it was with the one hundred twenty, as a simple believer! She found that the salvation relationship is higher than the family relationship. She learned that it was better to have Him as her Savior and Lord than to have His as her son" (Jones, *Gold from Golgotha*, p. 38).

MARY'S SUBSTITUTE SON (v. 27)

I think Jesus nodded to His mother as He said to the disciple whom He loved, "Behold your mother!"

It is as if Jesus said to His disciple, "John, take care of My mother. I go where none have ever gone. I do what none have ever done. I go from this cross to Joseph's tomb." "John take care of My mother. I have an engagement. John take care of My mother until I call for her. Mother, look to John. Call him your son. He will be with you. Again, mother, I must be about My Father's business."

Jesus terminated the earthly human mother-son relationship. Mary was no longer the mother of Jesus. He was no longer her son. He was now her divine Substitute who was dying as her Savior. He was the Savior dying for her sins. If she needed a son the apostle John must be that person. Jesus was placing Mary on the same human plane with the rest of those whom He loved. "Who is my mother? Who are my brothers and sisters?" No human being is closer to Jesus than the penitent thief or you or me. Jesus as saying Mary must not be His rival.

Why John?

The disciple John led Mary away from the cross to his own home so she would not see the terrible end. Then John came back and saw the piercing of the side of Jesus by the soldiers after He died (John 19:30-37). Simeon's sword had now indeed pierced Mary's heart. Her son died as a criminal condemned by the Jewish Sanhedrin and the Roman governor Pilate. It appears she was not at the simple, hurried burial of Jesus. Wonder what her thoughts were during that lonely Sabbath when He lay in the tomb? We aren't told.

Joseph is probably dead. There were other children by Joseph in the family: James, Joses, Judas, Simon and there were daughters. Matthew records an event in Jesus' hometown of Nazareth after He had been teaching

there were daughters. Matthew records an event in Jesus' hometown of Nazareth after He had been teaching in the synagogue. The people were astonished at His teaching and said, "Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary, and His brothers, James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? And His sisters are they not all with us? Where then *did* this man *get* all these things?" (Matthew 13:55-56). They knew the family quite well. Jesus had divided the household. None of His brothers and sisters believed on Him until after the resurrection. F. F. Bruce notes, "The brothers of Jesus were still too unsympathetic to him to be entrusted with her care in this sad hour: in any case, they may not have been in Jerusalem at this time" (*John*, p. 371).

Tradition says John took Mary into his home and she lived with him in Jerusalem for eleven years and died. Another says John took her with him to Ephesus and she lived there until she died.

Why you and me?

There is no more glorious mission on earth than to substitute for the Substitute. If the work of Jesus is going to be taken care of it must be by His substitutes.

Jesus is our substitute. Romans 5:6-8 as the apostle Paul writes, "For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Christ chose to take our place on the cross and die in our place. He paid our sin debt in full in order to save us."

Let it be noted carefully there is a world of difference between sanctification and justification. We are justified by grace through faith in Christ alone. Our good works have nothing to do with our justification. It is an act of God in His grace when He declares the believing sinner right with Him based upon the death of Christ for his sins. Our doing good works will not save us. It will not add to our salvation. It will not make us right with God. It is not Christ plus good deeds, even great sacrificial works in His name. We are saved by placing our trust in the work and obedience of Jesus Christ who died on our behalf. Yes, it is a holy privilege to substitute for the Substitute, but it can only be done after Christ has come into our lives and saved us by His grace. A clear line must be drawn between justification and sanctification.

"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them" (Ephesians 2:8-10).

Our job is to substitute for the Substitute. If His work is to be carried on it must be by His substitutes.

Annie Johnson Flint wrote:

Christ has no hands but our hands
To do His work today,
He has no feet but our feet
To lead men in His way,
He has no tongue but our tongues
To tell men how He died,
He has no help but our help
To bring them to His side.

SOME ABIDING PRINCIPLES

SOME ABIDING PRINCIPLES

When you are substituting for the Substitute you do not have anything to prove and nothing to lose.

When you are substituting for the Substitute you do not have to worry about who is #1, or #2, or who gets credit, or doesn't, or who makes the decisions. You just want to bring honor and glory to Him!

When you are substituting for the Substitute everything you do in His name counts. There is no insignificant ministry in God's Kingdom.

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