

# A Word of Affection

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Preacher: Rev. Murdo M Campbell

[ 0 : 0 0 ] Well, if we could, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling this morning, if we could turn to the second portion of Scripture, the Scripture that we read, John chapter 19.

John chapter 19, page 1092 in the Pew Bible. John chapter 19, and if we read again at verse 25.

John 19 and verse 25.

You know, when Jesus spoke about his death on the cross at Calvary, he said this.

He said, Undoubtedly, the cruel cross of Calvary, it was the most unlikely and the most unlovely place in all the world. And yet Jesus described it as a place of love and a proclamation of love.

[ 1 : 4 7 ] Calvary was a place of love and a proclamation of love because it's there that we see Jesus. He demonstrated and he declared his love for lost sinners. It's there that Jesus showed us.

He shows his love and he also speaks in love. And that's what I want us to see this morning as we come around the cross of Calvary again. I want us to see that Jesus speaks here in love.

Because as we continue this seven-part series on the seven sayings or the seven words of Jesus from the cross at Calvary, we've called these seven words, we've called them cross words, the seven cross words from Calvary. But these seven cross words from Calvary, they're not a puzzle that you'd find on a page, but they're a picture. They're a picture which presents and portrays to us the glory of the gospel, the beauty of Jesus in this gospel message.

The first cross word from Calvary was a word of forgiveness, where Jesus said, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. The second cross word from Calvary, which we saw last Lord's Day, was a word of salvation, where Jesus said to the thief on the cross, today you will be with me in paradise. And this morning we see the third cross word from Calvary, which is a word of affection. It's a word of affection directed towards Jesus' mother.

But I'd like us to consider this word of affection under three headings or using three headings. And we're using three headings because in verse 25 we see love looking up. In verse 25 we see love looking up. In verse 26 we see love looking down. And then in verse 27 we see love looking within.

[ 3 : 4 3 ] So love looking up, love looking down, and love looking within. Love looking up, love looking down, and love looking within. So if we look first of all at love looking up. Love looking up. We read there in verse 25, but standing by the cross of Jesus, where his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas and Mary Magdalene. And you know, even from that verse we see that not everyone, not everyone gathered in the crowd at Calvary. Not everyone rejected and ridiculed Jesus. Not everyone hated Jesus.

Not everyone hurled insults at Jesus. Not everyone chanted and not everyone cheered, crucify him. Crucify him. Because gathered in amongst this crowd at Calvary were some who loved the Lord.

They loved Jesus. They listened to Jesus. They leaned upon Jesus for their salvation. And as they stood within this crowd around the cross of Calvary, they looked up at Jesus in love. They were looking up in love.

They were looking up in love. But of course, they were in the minority. Because the majority weren't looking up with loving hearts towards Jesus. The majority were looking up with loathing hearts towards Jesus. They despised and they detested Jesus. But for this minority group gathered within the crowd at Calvary, they were looking up in love. They were love looking up. And you know, you might feel that when it comes to loving Jesus, you're in the minority. You're in the minority in your home.

You're in the minority in your family. You're in the minority in your workplace. You're in the minority in your nation. You're in the minority. But you know, the thing is, that's the way it has always been throughout history. Those who love Jesus, and those who look to Jesus, and those who listen to Jesus, and those who live for Jesus, and those who lean upon Jesus, they have always been in the minority.

[ 5 : 59 ] They've always been in the minority. The history of the church has always been a history of the minority. It's been a history of the faithful few. That's why when Jesus preached in his Sermon on the Mount, you remember Jesus said to the crowds that were listening, he said, enter by the narrow gate.

Enter by the narrow gate, for wide is the great gate, and broad is the way that leads to destruction. And there are many there be which go in by it. But straight is the gate, said Jesus, and narrow is the way which leads to life, and few there be that find it.

And I don't know about you, my friend, but I would far rather fall in with the minority and stand with the faithful few than follow the majority towards destruction in hell.

But you know, for this minority group here at Calvary, gathered around the cross of Calvary, they were love looking up. They were love looking up at Jesus, because they were devoted, and they were dedicated to Jesus. They were committed, and they were consecrated to Jesus.

They were attentive, and they were adoring of this wonderful Savior, Jesus Christ. They were loyal, and they were loving towards Jesus. They were love looking up. They were love looking up.

[ 7 : 28 ] And you know, John, the author of this gospel, he tells us who was gathered there in this minority group around the cross of Calvary. He tells us who was looking up in love at Jesus Christ. He tells us who had this loving heart drawn towards Jesus. He gives us a list there in verse 25.

But of course, the first in this list of love looking up was Mary, Mary the mother of Jesus. And needless to say, when Mary looked up at her son, Jesus, crucified at Calvary, she looked up in love. She was love looking up. She loved him as her son, and she loved him as her Savior. She loved him as her firstborn son. But as you know, her firstborn son, he was, as we confess in the Apostles' Creed, he was conceived by the Holy Ghost. He was born of the Virgin Mary. That's the supreme mystery, said J.I. Packer, the supreme mystery with which the gospel confronts us. It lies not in the Good Friday message of the atonement, nor in the Easter message of the resurrection, but in the Christmas message of the incarnation. That Jesus Christ, the one who was crucified at Calvary, Jesus Christ was conceived of the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary. And as you know, Mary, she gave birth to her firstborn son in a stable.

We sing about it in all the carols at Christmas, that he was born in Bethlehem, where she laid him in a manger. She laid him in a feeding trough. But it was in Bethlehem, if you read in Luke chapter 2, it was in Bethlehem that the shepherds appeared at the stable in Bethlehem, and they appeared with a message for Mary. And that message, whatever message it was, we're not told what message it was, but that message was a message that Mary treasured all her life. And she pondered that message in her heart. I don't want to speculate as to what the message was, but I do wonder if the shepherds pointed to Mary's son and said, this is a greater shepherd. Not only a shepherd, but a lamb, the lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world. But now, all these years later, Mary is looking up in love. And she's looking at her son. She's looking at her shepherd. She's looking at her savior. And she knew, she knew even back then in Bethlehem, around the manger, she knew that that was his time to be born. But now, all these years later, she's looking up in love. And she's seeing the cruel cross of Calvary, and seeing that this is her son's time to die.

And as you know, as you know, there's nothing like a mother's love for their child. There's nothing like a mother's love for their child, because they never stop, and they never cease from loving. Even when their child has grown up, and the child has gone away from home, even when the child is hurt, or there's heartache, even when there's sorrow, and when there's separation.

A mother's love is continuous. A mother's love is constant. A mother's love is indescribable. It's inexpressible. A mother's love is unconditional. A mother's love is unchanging.

[ 11 : 14 ] A mother's love is unchanging. A mother's love is unchanging. A mother's love is unchanging. A mother's love. That's what Mary had as she was looking up in love. And, you know, it was reflecting upon the sorrow that Mary must have felt looking up in love at the cross of Calvary. The 19th century theologian A.W. Pink, he said, if Christ was the man of sorrows, was she not the woman of sorrows?

But what's remarkable is that even in her sorrow, as a mother looking up at her son, looking up in love, she's looking up at her son, and her shepherd, and her Savior, Jesus Christ, even though there was sorrow in her heart, she didn't look to herself in her sorrow. She was looking up in love.

And, you know, I was thinking to myself, you know, that's where the Roman Catholic Church often go wrong, because they always tell us to look to Mary. The Roman Catholic Church will tell you to look to the Virgin Mary for your comfort and your consolation, to look to Mary in your sorrow.

But we read here that even in her sorrow, even in Mary's sorrow and her brokenness, she looks up. She looks up to Jesus. She looks up to her son and her shepherd and her Savior, because she knew that he was the only one in all the world who could bear her grief.

And carry her sorrow. Did you find that remarkable? She's looking up in love, looking to the one that he would bear her grief and carry her sorrow. She's looking up in love.

[ 13 : 10 ] My friend, is that what you're looking today? Are you looking up in love at this wonderful Savior who promises to bear your griefs and carry your sorrows? Are you looking up in love?

But then we see, secondly, another direction, love looking down. So, there's love looking up, and then there's love looking down. Love looking down, verse 26. We read that, when Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, Woman, behold your son. Now, when we consider the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, whenever we read it in the Bible, whenever we think about it, we do so often from the perspective of the crowd. The crowd that were gathered there at Calvary looking up at the cross of Jesus.

But in this verse, verse 26, John, the gospel writer, he invites us to consider the crucifixion not from the perspective of the crowd looking up, but to consider the crucifixion from the perspective of the Christ looking down. Because in this verse, we have love looking down. And love looking down, what does he see? He sees love looking up. Love looking down sees love looking up. Because love looking down, he knows that this minority group gathered within the crowd at Calvary, he knows that they're devoted. He knows that they're dedicated to him. He knows that they're committed. He knows that they're consecrated to him as the Savior. He knows that in their heart they adore him. They're attentive to him. They're loyal. They're loving towards him. But love looking down knows that he is much, much more. He is more devoted. He is more dedicated. He is more committed. He is more consecrated.

He is more attentive. He is more adoring. He is more loyal. He is more loving towards them than they are towards him. Because as Jesus said, greater love. Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. But of course, you know, as a son, as a son, that's how we see Jesus here.

As a son, love is looking down. And love only has eyes for his mother. He has eyes for his mother. Jesus is looking down from the cross at Calvary, and he sees his mother. And then he speaks to his mother. He says, woman, behold your son. Woman, behold your son. And you know, Jesus, he said this to his mother because he knew what she was going through. He knew exactly how she felt. In fact, Jesus was the only one in all the world who knew what his mother was going through. She couldn't explain it to anybody else. She couldn't describe it to anyone else. But Jesus was the only one in all the world who knew his mother better than she knew herself. Because Jesus knows everyone better than they know themselves. Jesus knows you better than you know yourself. You ever thought about that?

[ 16 : 56 ] Jesus knows you better than you know yourself. He's known you, as we were singing in Psalm 139, he has known you before you were even born. He knows you better than you know yourself. And Jesus knew his mother better than she knew herself. Because Jesus, Jesus knew what she had been through.

Jesus knew what she was going through. Jesus knew what she had heard and what she had experienced. Jesus knew all about Simeon's prophecy way back when he was born.

This man who was gracious and godly, he prophesied in the temple not long after Jesus was born. And Simeon, he made this prophecy to Mary. And he said to Mary, in his old age, he said, Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel. And this child, said, Simeon, this child will cause a sword to pierce through your own soul. This child will cause a sword to pierce through your own soul. Simeon described to Mary right at the beginning of the birth of Jesus what she was going to experience, what she was going to feel in seeing her son crucified for sinners.

And you know, my friend, love looking down. Jesus looking down knew what love looking up was going through. He knew what she was going through. Jesus knew what his mother was thinking and his mother was feeling. Jesus knew what a struggle it was for her to stand there and see her son being ridiculed and rejected. Jesus knew what a strain it was on her own soul to see someone suffering for her sin. Jesus knew what it was, what he was putting his mother through in standing around the cross of Calvary, because he knew his mother.

He knew his mother better than she knew herself. Which is why as Jesus looked down from the cross of Calvary, he saw his mother. And he said to his mother, he spoke to his mother saying, Woman, woman, behold your son.

[ 19 : 25 ] Now, we might be tempted to think that Jesus' words are a bit cold there, a bit callous, because he addresses his mother saying, Woman. I don't know about you, but I wouldn't dare address my mother and say Woman. Which is why we might think, well, why doesn't Jesus say Mum or Mary?

Because that's who she was. She was his mother. She was Mum. She was the one who loved him and looked after him. She was the one who provided for him right from the very beginning. She was the one who protected him. She cared for him. She had compassion towards him. But you know, the thing is, when Jesus saw his mother, when Jesus spoke to his mother from the cross of Calvary, that term, woman, it's not cold and callous, as we might think it is. No, the word woman, in the original language, it expresses and it even explains to us that there's this care from Jesus. There's compassion. There's concern.

in his tone. Literally, he's saying to his mother, Dear woman, what am I putting you through?

Dear woman. And for Jesus, there's care. There's compassion. There's concern in his tone. Just as there was care and compassion and concern in his tone when he said it the first time to his mother.

Because he had said this before. We read earlier in John chapter 2. We read of the wedding in Cana of Galilee. When Jesus performs his first miracle, he turns water into wine. A great occasion, great wedding.

[ 21 : 11 ] And the occasion of that wedding was actually the first time that we meet Mary, the mother of Jesus, in John's gospel. And Mary's first words in John's gospel are words to Jesus. And what are the first words? They have no wine, Jesus. And Jesus' first words to his mother in John's gospel are, Woman. Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come.

What does this have to do with me, woman? My hour has not yet come. And now you come all the way through John's gospel. And all these years have passed. And Jesus is now addressing his mother.

Love is looking down to love looking up. And love looking down says to his mother, Woman, behold your son. Woman, behold your son. And you know, Jesus, he's showing his mother.

That his time had now come. The years have passed. Times have changed. The time has now come. And his time has now come to be poured out. That's a beautiful picture that John is trying to portray to us with these two uses of the word woman. Just like the wine at the wedding of Cana in Galilee was poured out for the blessing and the benefit of all these wedding guests that were gathered there. Jesus now knows at Calvary that his time had now come to be poured out. Poured out as a drink offering for the blessing and the benefit of his people, even his mother.

And you know, that's what we're reading here. We're reading this great moment where Jesus is revealing that the time has come where he has been poured out for the blessing and benefit of his people. That's why we read in verse 26, When Jesus 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. And from that hour, the disciple took her to his own home.

[ 23 : 30 ] You know, Jesus' tone, as we said, it's full of love. There's care and compassion. There's this concern that Jesus has for his own mother. But there's more. Because the language that Jesus uses here, when he speaks here, it's the language of adoption. He says, Woman, behold your son. Then he says to John, Behold your mother. Behold your son. Behold your mother. It's the language of adoption.

Jesus is, by this point in time, he is the eldest in the family. He's the head of the home. Joseph, we presume, had died. And he had left Jesus as the eldest son, the head of the home. So, people question, well, why didn't he leave the role and responsibility of his mother to his other brothers? But they weren't there. They weren't at the cross. Everybody had deserted Jesus. All his family, all his friends, even the disciples, they'd all deserted Jesus except for John. And so, he hands the role and responsibility of the head of the home to this disciple, to the apostle John.

He says, Woman, behold your son. Then behold your mother. It's the language of adoption. But even using that language, what Jesus was actually doing, he was severing and separating ties with his earthly mother. He was severing and separating his earthly ties with his mother. And, you know, it reminded me of what a wise man once recently said to me.

A son is a son until he marries a wife. A daughter is a daughter and you have her for life. And although it didn't look like it from the perspective of love looking up towards the cross, but from the perspective of love looking down, from the perspective of Jesus, Jesus knew that his death on the cross was a display. It was a demonstration of this marriage, this love, this marriage commitment towards his beloved bride, the church. That's why Jesus described the cruel cross of Calvary as a place of love and as a proclamation of love. Because our Bible describes it. The Bible reminds us that it was on the cross that Jesus Christ loved the church and gave himself for her. He loved the church and he gave himself for her. And so we see love looking up and love looking down. But then lastly and briefly, we see love looking within. Love looking within. We read there again in verse 25, but standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary, the wife of Clopas and

Mary Magdalene. And when Jesus 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. And from that hour, the disciple took her to his own home. So as love was looking up, love was looking down. And love looking down was also love looking within. Because Jesus knows people better than they know themselves.

[ 27 : 17 ] And what love looking down could see within, what could he see within? He could see love. This minority group gathered around the cross of Calvary. They were the love looking up.

And they loved the one on the cross because he first loved them. And looking at Jesus, the thing is, they knew. They knew that greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. But you know, we're told us, we read there in verse 25, we're told who was in this minority group.

We're told who was there. There were three Marys, Salome and John. Three Marys, Salome and John. There was Mary, the mother of Jesus. She loved Jesus as her son and her saviour.

There was Mary, the wife of Clopas or Cleophas, as he's also pronounced. She loved him as her friend and the saviour. There was also Mary Magdalene, we're told.

Mary Magdalene was the one who had seven demons cast out of her. She loved Jesus also as her friend and her saviour. There was then Salome. She was the sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus. She was Jesus' auntie. She loved Jesus as her nephew and her saviour. And this, you know, this minority group, they're gathered within the crowd at Calvary and they are love looking up. They're love looking up at Jesus. They love the one on the cross because he first loved them. But you know what I think is so beautiful? Is that we're told that love looking down and love looking within. What did he see? He saw the disciple. The disciple whom Jesus loved. The disciple whom Jesus loved. That's what we're told there. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, woman, behold your son. Now, John didn't describe himself as the disciple whom Jesus loved because he thought that Jesus loved him more than any of the other disciples or more than anyone else in all the world. No, John described himself as the disciple whom Jesus loved because John was aware of Jesus' love.

[ 29 : 44 ] John was amazed that Jesus would love him. John was in awe of the fact that Jesus would love him as a hell-deserving sinner. And he was so in awe, so aware, so amazed that when he wrote about himself in his own gospel, all he could say, all he could say, all John could write about himself, I am the disciple whom Jesus loved. I am a disciple whom Jesus loved. I wonder if you can say that this morning.

I am a disciple whom Jesus loves. Can you say, just as probably been taught as children, Jesus loves me. This I know, for the Bible tells me so. I'm the disciple whom Jesus loved.

And you know, that's what amazed John. That's what John was aware of. That's what John was in awe of. He was absolutely amazed that Jesus would love him. I'm the disciple whom Jesus loved. And John was so amazed about this that he wrote about it all the time. In fact, the apostle John wrote so much about the love of God in Jesus Christ that he was nicknamed in the early church as the apostle of love.

John was the apostle of love. He always spoke about the love of Jesus. John always referred to himself as the beloved disciple, the disciple whom Jesus loved. And John always wrote about the love of God in Jesus Christ. It was John who wrote that most well-known verse in the Bible. A verse you probably learned as a child. John 3.16, For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. It was John who wrote that we love him because he first loved us. We love him because he first loved us. John, John wrote God is love. John wrote that God has demonstrated his love. God has declared his love.

God has lavished his love on us. And John points us in his letters to the cross and he says, Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we, we, that we should be called the children of God. John points us to Calvary and he says, Here in his love. Not that we loved God.

[ 32 : 21 ] No, no, no. He loved us. And he sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice, the propitiation for our sin. And why has he done it? John tells us, Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Do you know, my friend, when John looked to the cross of Calvary, do you know what John saw as love looking up? He saw that he was more sinful than he could ever realize, and yet he was more loved than he could ever dream. John saw that he was more sinful than he could ever realize, and yet more loved than he could ever dream. And that's what you need to do today. You need to look up to the cross of Calvary. You need to come to this cross and see that you are more sinful than you could ever realize. And yet you are more loved than you could ever dream.

You are more loved than you could ever dream. My friend, this is what we see. The third crossword from Calvary is a word of affection. It's a word of affection where we see love looking up, love looking down, and love looking within. But you know, as we conclude, we have to ask the question, what does Jesus see today? As love looking down and love looking within. He knows you better than you know yourself. So what does Jesus see as love looking down and love looking within? Does he see love looking up? Does he see love looking up to Calvary, realizing that you are more sinful than you could ever realize, and yet more loved than you could ever dream? Are you love looking up? Are you love looking up?

Well, may the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray. O Lord, O gracious God, we give thanks for the wonder of the gospel, that God so loved this world, that he gave his only begotten Son. And we marvel that that Son so loved us, that he gave himself for us, that he was poured out as an offering for sin, that he was poured out that we might have the promise of eternal life.

Lord, help us, we pray, to see that we are more sinful than we could ever realize. And yet by coming to this cross, we are more loved than we could ever dream.

O Lord, help us to come to the foot of the cross, and to look up, to look to Jesus, and to set our affection upon him and him alone. Go before us, we pray. Bless thy truth to us, that it would find lodgment in our heart, that it would bear fruit to thine own glory.

[ 35 : 42 ] Keep us, we pray, for we ask it in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen. Amen. We're going to bring our service to a conclusion this morning.

We're going to sing the words of Psalm 116. Psalm 116. We've talked this morning about what love looking up sees.

In Psalm 116, we have what love looking up says. Because love looking up says, Psalm 116, page 395, I love the Lord, because my voice and prayers heeded here.

I, while I live, will call on him who bowed to me his ear. That's what love looking up says. It says, I love the Lord. I love the Lord.

So we're singing Psalm 116, in the Scottish Psalter, page 395, from the beginning down to the verse marked 6. And we'll stand to sing, if you're able, to God's praise.

[ 36 : 56 ] I love the Lord, because my voice and prayers heeded here.

I, while I live, will call on him who bowed to me his ear.

Of death, the courts and sorrows, it above be compassed round.

The place of hell took hold on me, I, grief and trouble found.

Upon the name of God, the Lord, then did I call and say, Delivered thou my soul, O Lord, I do thee humbly praise.

[ 38 : 32 ] God merciful and righteous is, yea, gracious is our Lord.

God save the meek I was brought low. He did me help afford.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and forevermore. Amen.