



— **Week 3** —
“Behold your family!”
John 19:23-27

I want us to notice *two* things about this passage:

i. The Selfish Soldiers

If gambling over Jesus’ clothes seems strange, it’s probably because we fail to grasp Jesus’ celebrity like status at this time. Even by today’s standards, this practice isn’t very strange.¹ *Everyone* had heard about Jesus. Especially now after he had gone through a very public trial and was now being executed. These soldiers, wanted a piece of history...literally.

But, there’s a more important reason that John, and the other gospel accounts, recorded that Jesus’ clothes were gambled away. John mentions this fact because this was a fulfillment of prophecy. In fact, this is the first of *four* instances where prophecy was fulfilled during the passion narrative. This particular event was the fulfillment of Ps. 22:16-18.

Meaning, even the tragedy of the cross falls under the sovereignty of God. “John wanted to show that the death of God’s Son was in fact the will of God the Father.”² He wanted to show that in moments of great human failure, God can use *all* things to accomplish his will (cf. Rom. 8:28). In theological circles, this is what is known as God’s ‘providence’. What is providence? Dr. J. Vernon McGee explained it best when he said,

“Providence is the means by which God directs all things — both animate and inanimate, seen and unseen, good and evil — toward a worthy purpose... Providence means that the hand of God is in the glove of human events. When God is not at the steering wheel, He is the backseat driver. He is the coach who calls the signals from the bench. Providence is the unseen rudder on the ship of state. God is the pilot at the wheel during the night watch. [God] makes great doors swing on little hinges.”³

There are many in life who do not act according the will of God; but, ultimately, their poor decisions do not inhibit the eternal plans of God. If God could use the events of the cross for the good of all, he can use anything.

This is why we must take note of the *hidden* hand of God in our own story. He has directed our steps both by his word but also through his accomplished will in the life. However, it is still our *choice* on how we respond to this. A *bad situation* does not excuse us from making *good decisions*.

For instance, the book of Ruth chronicles the story of a bad set of circumstances and how God used it to bring about his good. The whole point of that book is to illustrate for us how that when we align our will with God’s

¹ Pearl, Diana, “10 Touched-by-a-Celeb Items That Went for Big Bucks at Auction,” *People Magazine*, April 7, 2016, <https://people.com/celebrity/expensive-celebrity-items-at-auction/?slide=2405226#2405226>, [accessed, March 27, 2020].

² Whitacre Rodney A., “The Soldiers Divide Jesus’ Clothes (19:23–24),” in *John*, The IVP New Testament Commentary, ed. Grant R. Osborne (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), <https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/ivp-nt/Soldiers-Divide-Jesus-Clothes>, [accessed, March 27, 2020].

³ McGee, J. Vernon, *Thru the Bible with J. Vernon McGee*, (Nashville; Thomas Nelson, 1998), E-book.

providence, the faithfulness of ordinary people accomplishes great things. Ruth enters the story a widowed foreigner, but leaves a forebear of kings. Imagine what God could do with your life.

ii. The Selfless Savior

The soldiers were focused on themselves and taking what they wanted. But Jesus was only concerned with taking care of others. And, not just anyone, his own mother.

Now, surprisingly, during a crucifixion it was common for family members to gather around their condemned loved ones. Since it would last for hours, there'd be a constant procession of family and friends conversing with those on the cross. In fact, Jewish writings recorded how that rabbis were known to stand under the gallows weeping as their disciples were hung.⁴

So, the crowd gathered around Jesus was made up of *women*, save one. Women play a significant role in all of the Gospels (cf. Mark 15:40-41; Jn. 4:37-39; 12:3-7).⁵ Often, they *outshine* their male-counterparts. This is best seen here at the crucifixion. With the only exception being that of John, the rest of the disciples have scattered like startled birds (cf. Mr. 14:50). One has openly betrayed him for thirty pieces of silver (cf. Mat. 26:15; 27:1-10); and another cursed his name around a fire (cf. Mat. 26:74). But, here—at the worst *time* and in the worst *place*—stands a group of women trying their best to not only support Jesus and to comfort his mother, but to collectively mourn for their beloved Lord.

Though we're not told of Joseph's death, Mary was almost certainly widowed by this time. Thus, her livelihood was dependent upon Jesus, her eldest Son (cf. Ex. 20:12; Deut. 5:16). Even in the non-Jewish world, it was common for individuals to specify in their wills who it was that was supposed to take care of their mothers.⁶ In fact, Jesus' phrasing 'here is your son...here is your mother' is also similar to formal language when adopting a child.⁷ Church history tells us that John did as Jesus asked. Mary even moved with him when John journeyed to Ephesus.⁸

But, why John? Jesus had multiple brothers who could've been trusted to care for their own mother right? Because John was a believer; and his brothers were not (cf. Jn. 7:5).

Stop for a moment. Let that sink in.

Belief, that crucial aspect of a true disciple of Jesus, was lacking even amongst his own family. One commentator points out that this scene illustrates for us the, "...difficulties under which Jesus labored. Many a man faced with cruel opposition in public life has been sustained by the faith and the faithfulness of his kith and kin. Jesus was denied this solace."⁹

⁴ Köstenberger, Andres J., *John*, The Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids; Baker Publishing, 2004), p. 547.

⁵ Keener, Craig S., *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, Vol.2, (Grand Rapids; Baker Publishing, 2003), 2:1140-1141.

⁶ Köstenberger (2004), p. 549.

⁷ Carson, D.A., *The Gospel According to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary, (Grand Rapids; Eerdmans, 1991), p. 616.

⁸ Kruse, Colin G., *John*, Revised Edition, Tyndale New Testament Commentary, Vol. 4, (Downers Grove, IL; InterVarsity Press, 2017), p. 430.

⁹ Morris, Leon, *The Gospel According to John*, Revised Edition, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids; Eerdmans Publishing, 1995), p. 351.

Thankfully, the did eventually come around. But it wasn't until after the resurrection that they would finally see him for something so much more than simply a big brother (cf. Ac. 1:14; 1 Cor. 15:7). Until then though, Jesus would ensure his own mother was well-taken care of by someone who not only *believed rightly* but *cared deeply*.

But John could only do so much. He would indeed care for Mary's *physical* needs; whereas Jesus would care for her *spiritual* needs. She was just as much in need of a Savior as us all. Mary was not perfect. Thus, Jesus would provide the eternal care of her and all humanity through the purchase of his own shed blood.

SO, WHAT'S THE TAKEAWAY?

When we trust God to sovereignly provide for us, we become free from selfish preoccupation and we are then free to serve others. But do not think that service begins out there in the world, or at church on Sunday.

No.

Service begins at *home*.

Our first mission has and always will be to our families. If we are serving God and other people but neglecting our own families, we need to reevaluate our priorities (cf. 1 Tim. 5:8). If you serve your families as you should, you will serve your God as you should. Do not allow prideful self-interests to blind you to the needs within the walls of your own home.