

A MOTHER'S REQUEST

Matthew 20:20-23

Mother's Day 2021

INTRO: Please open your Bibles to the first book of the New Testament, the book of Matthew. The Gospel according to Matthew, chapter 20.

ILLUS: **Someone wrote,** Mother's Day is traditionally the day when children give something back to their mothers for all the spit they produce to wash dirty faces, all the old gum they held in their hands, all the noses they wiped, and all the bloody knees they 'made well' with their kisses

This is the day mothers are rewarded for washing sheets in the middle of the night, driving kids to school when they missed the bus, and enduring all those football and soccer games in the rain. It's a day of appreciation for making your children finish something they said they couldn't do, not believing them when they said, 'I hate you,' and sharing their good times and their bad.

What are mothers? Well, mothers are teachers. Mothers are disciplinarians. Mothers are cleaning ladies. Some mothers are gardeners and mowers of lawns. Mothers are nurses and doctors and psychologists and counselors and chauffeurs and coaches.

Mothers are developers of personalities, molders of vocabularies, and shapers of attitudes. Mothers are soft voices saying, "I love you." And mothers are a link to God, a child's first impression of God's love. Mothers are all these things and much, much more.

ILLUS: The late columnist Erma Bombeck told of God in the act of creating mothers. She said... "After much time had passed with God working away, an angel said to Him, "Lord, you sure are spending a lot of time on this one." The Lord said, "Have you read the specs on this model? She's supposed to have 180 moving parts. She is to have a kiss that will heal everything from a broken leg to a broken heart. She is to have a lap that will disappear whenever she stands up. She is to be able to function on black coffee and leftovers. And she is supposed to have six pairs of hands."

"Six pairs of hands?!" said the angel, "that's impossible."

"It's not the six pairs of hands that bother me," said the Lord, "It's the three pairs of eyes. She's supposed to have one pair that sees through closed doors so that whenever she says, 'What are you kids doing in there?' She already knows what they're doing in there. She has another pair in the back of her head to see all the things she is not supposed to see but must see. And then she has one pair right in front that can look at a child that just goofed up and communicate love and understanding without saying a word."

"That's too much." said the angel, "You can't put that much in one model. Why don't you rest for a while and resume your creating tomorrow?" "I can't," said the Lord. "I'm close to creating someone very much like myself. I already have her able to serve when she's sick; she can feed a family of six with one pound of hamburger; and can persuade a nine-year-old to take a shower."

Then the angel looked at the model of motherhood a little more closely and said, "She's too soft."

“Oh, but she’s tough,” said the Lord. “You’d be surprised at how much she can do.”

“Can she think?” asked the angel. “Not only can she think,” said the Lord, “but she can reason and compromise and persuade.”

Then the angel reached over and touched her cheek. “This one has a leak,” he said. “I told you that you couldn’t put that much in one model.” “That’s not a leak,” said the Lord. “That’s a tear.” “What’s a tear for?” asked the angel. “Well it’s for joy, for sadness, for sorrow, for disappointment, for pride.”

“You’re a genius, she’s perfect” said the angel.

Well, the author took a few licenses there—but it gets the point across: God created something special when He created mothers.

Today, I would like for us to look at a very special mother in the Bible. We don’t know her name. She’s the wife of Zebedee. And the mother of James and John, two of the disciples of Christ. Please read with me from Matthew 20, beginning at verse 20...

Matthew 20:20-23 *“Then the mother of James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Jesus with her sons. She knelt respectfully to ask a favor. 21 “What is your request?” he asked. She replied, “In your Kingdom, please let my two sons sit in places of honor next to you, one on your right and the other on your left.” 22 But Jesus answered by saying to them, “You don’t know what you are asking! Are you able to drink from the bitter cup of suffering I am about to drink?” “Oh yes,” they replied, “we are able!” 23 Jesus told them, “You will indeed drink from my bitter cup. But I have no right to say who will sit on my right or my left. My Father has prepared those places for the ones he has chosen.”*

Today I want to preach on the subject, A MOTHER’S REQUEST.

Mrs. Zebedee was aware of the teachings of Jesus about His kingdom. She was also very aware of the fact that her sons, James and John, were close to Him. They were two thirds of Jesus’ inner circle of Peter, James and John. So she was certain that when the Lord formed His kingdom, they would have positions of responsibility and authority.

But in the first part of this same chapter, Jesus told a parable that must have disturbed her. It was a story about a landowner who went out to find laborers early in the morning. They agreed upon a fair day’s wage and started working. Then at noon he went out and found some more, and they started working. Then towards evening he went out and found some more and they started working. Yet, when the Lord paid them at the end of the day, they all received the same wage.

Mrs. Zebedee may have wondered, “Will my sons really have positions of authority in the Lord’s new kingdom? What if someone new comes in at the last minute and steals the limelight” So when she had an opportunity, she came to Jesus and asked, “When you establish your kingdom, would you let my sons sit in places of authority and honor, one on your right hand and the other on the left.”

Now, when I was trying to think of a mother to use as my text today, at first I ruled out Mrs. Zebedee, because at first glance, it looks like she’s being selfish and presumptuous. But as I thought about it, it occurred to me that maybe I was looking at her all wrong. Maybe I had never given her a fair shake.

So, I re-read these verses, and I realized that although Jesus did not grant her request, neither did He deny it. He simply reminded her of the cost of being seated on the right and left hand of Him. And then He told her that it is the Father who determines who will be seated where.

As I took a fresh look at this passage, I observed 2 things about this mother that was commendable. Notice...

I) She Desired the BEST for Her Children: **vv 20** *“Then the mother of James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Jesus with her sons. She knelt respectfully to ask a favor.”*

Say what you will about Mrs. Zebedee, but one thing is certain, she knew the best thing she could do for her sons, was to bring them to Jesus! In her mind, and she was right, Jesus was as high as her two sons could go. **SHE WANTED THE BEST FOR THEM!**

ILLUS: James Dobson tells of a time when he came home, when his son, Ryan, was a baby. It had been a terrible day for his wife, Shirley. Ryan had been sick and had cried all day. Once, as she was changing his diaper, the telephone rang and Shirley reached over to answer it before fastening up his diaper. Just then Ryan had another attack of diarrhea! She cleaned up what turned out to be, practically the whole room, and finally got him in clean, sweet-smelling clothes once again. Then she took him into the living room and fed him. As she was burping him he threw up all over himself, her...and the couch too. Dobson writes, “When I came home I could smell the aroma of motherhood everywhere.”

Sometimes mothers pray out of stress, and sometimes out of frustration, we get that. But some mothers pray out of a longing for their children to know the **BEST HOPE** they can wish for, that is a relationship with Jesus!

You can't do better for your child than to have them in church every week learning from the Word of God, and hearing about Jesus, the Savior of the world! **NOTHING IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN THAT!** What does it matter if your children grow up and become successful, and make tons of money, IF they miss Heaven? What does it matter if you spend “quality” time every weekend with them, if they never turn to Jesus, because church isn't a priority in your home?

Oh, you may be saying, “Well, we pray over our food. My kids see me reading my Bible. They know we believe in God.” **THE WORD OF GOD SAYS...Romans 10:14** *“How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?”* **And again in 1 Corinthians 1:21** *“Since God in his wisdom saw to it that the world would never know him through human wisdom, he has used our foolish preaching to save those who believe.”*

What the world calls foolish, God calls the only hope you have! Whatever you have to do, whatever you have to change, get and keep your children under the preached Word of God! Hearing the Gospel and the Word of Truth is their **BEST chance!**

If I had kids today being influenced by this godless culture that's sliding backwards into Hell, I would make sure they were in church every week. I would be praying with them, reading the Word to them, and **PLEADING FOR JESUS TO ACCEPT THEM IN HIS KINGDOM!** That's what Mrs Zebedee did.

I) She Desired the BEST for Her Children: vv 20-21

Notice the second thing...

II) She Requested a BLESSING for Her Children: v 20b-21 "... She knelt respectfully to ask a favor. 21 "What is your request?" he asked. She replied, "In your Kingdom, please let my two sons sit in places of honor next to you, one on your right and the other on your left." **SHE PRAYED FOR THEM!**

Mrs Z knelt before Jesus, and she prayed. And she didn't ask for a small thing, she asked for the most she could think of!

In Biblical times when a King held a banquet or an assembly, everyone jockeyed for position. The most honored seats were closest to the King. And the highest place of honor was to his immediate right and left. To be near the King meant to have his trust and approval. IT WAS THE HIGHEST BLESSING ONE COULD HOPE FOR. Here the mother of James and John respectfully ask Jesus for this blessing for her children. WOW!

When you pray to God on behalf of your children, what do you ask for? Do you ever say, "Lord, make my son a preacher. Make him a man of God that will lead thousands of people to you. Let him be near you and know you." Do you ever pray, "Dear God, call my daughter to be just a servant of yours. If you can use her on the mission field, then so be it. As long as she lives her life near you, I'll be satisfied."

YOU SHOULD ALWAYS WANT FOR YOUR CHILDREN WHAT GOD WANTS FOR THEM! Do you pray for your children? What do you pray for?

CONCLUSION: Now it's true that Mrs Z didn't exactly know what she was asking for, but I can appreciate her heart. She loved her boys! And she wanted the best for them.

If I had to guess, I would say that these two boys, James and John, were a hand full growing up. Do you know what Jesus called them? SONS OF THUNDER! Okay, so maybe Mrs Z was bringing these boys to Jesus out of self-defense, but nevertheless, she demonstrated a heart for her kids that is admirable. She wanted the BEST for them. And she wanted them to live BLESSED! And she knew the one that could do that for them, and she called on Him. What do you want for your children?