

### **John 2:1-11**

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, 'They have no wine.' And Jesus said to her, 'Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.' His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you.' Now standing there were six stone water-jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, 'Fill the jars with water.' And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, 'Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward.' So they took it. When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom and said to him, 'Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now.' Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

### **John 19:23-27**

When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four parts, one for each soldier. They also took his tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from the top. So they said to one another, 'Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see who will get it.' This was to fulfil what the scripture says, 'They divided my clothes among themselves, and for my clothing they cast lots.' And that is what the soldiers did. Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, 'Woman, here is your son.' Then he said to the disciple, 'Here is your mother.' And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.

**“Jesus Marison”**

**Rev. Charles Schuster**

**March 9, 2008**

We live in a very tight neighborhood. Two weeks ago on a Sunday night a group of teenagers came to the house next to ours and decorated the trees with rolls of toilet paper, and one of our trees seemed to be close enough to that house that they thought it belonged to the neighbor's house, and so they festooned that tree as well. There's a teenager in that house. And I asked the kid next door if he knew who did it, and he said he did. And I said, "If you want to go get even with them, count on me. I'll join you." There's a lot of sharing on Pepperwood Lane where we live. This past Friday about 6:00 in the afternoon, two people knocked on the door of our home and they wanted to talk about the Bible. Two people stood at the door of our house and both of them had Bibles in their hands, and they wanted to talk about the Bible. The street where we live is lined up and down it with United Methodists, many of whom are members of this church. Before I could get to the library of commentaries in the office I have in the basement, before I could whip out my pocket New Testament with notes that I keep to harass door-to-door evangelists, before I could begin to line up my weapons to punctuate their points

and puncture their assumptions, these two Bible-thumpers said to me, “We understand that you’re a Methodist minister.” And I said, “Who told you that?” They said, “Your neighbors. They said to come down here and talk to you. And so we did.”

There’s a lot of sharing that goes on, on Pepperwood Lane, where we live, and here’s the problem. I believe in the Bible. It is a primary source for my faith, but not every word of it is right. I’ll say that again. I believe in it, but not every word of it. It was written by human beings, translated over several languages, complex. I believe in the Bible, but not every word of it. Some of it is wrong. Some of what they said Jesus said, I don’t think he said. For example, I don’t think he ever said, “If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off.” I don’t believe that. I don’t think he would say that. Or “If your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out.” I don’t think he said that. And I don’t think he said “Let the dead bury the dead,” or there had to be some really interesting context that we don’t know about. And I don’t think he said, “I’ve come to bring the sword, to turn brother and sister against mother and father.” I don’t think he said that.

And this word on the cross, I think they got it wrong. Jesus on the cross looked at Mary and John Mark, according to the text, “Behold your mother,” he was supposed to have said to John. “Behold your son,” he was supposed to have said to Mary. I don’t think he said that. He may have said something like that. Maybe it sounded a little like that, but I think they got it wrong. Here’s what I think happened. I believe he looked at Mary. I believe as he did on the cross, looked at Mary, I believe that made him think about his mother. Jesus was the son of Mary, on the cross, before his death. Did he think, I think he did, of the stories, the Madonna, the Messiah, the Madonna that she was, the Messiah. Bound together by birth, the Madonna who kept many things in her heart. She didn’t tell everything she knew, all that stuff about dreams and the angel of God and the dark night and the conversation with Joseph and the future of the child to be born to her, the Magnificat. She kept all those things in her heart. She kept all those things to herself. There was a time when she was quiet, when she knew more than she could say, when she could anticipate more than she could validate.

How many mothers have kept things in their heart, things they know they cannot say to anyone else? How many mothers keep silent? They keep silent because if they tell everything they know, it will ruin their children? It could distort their sense of the future, it could be dangerous to tell everything you know. Janet Meyer held things in her heart. “When Marissa was six months old, she was always looking up, and I gazed upward with her and learned the magic of leaves dancing in the trees, and the length of the tail on a jet when it flew. When Marissa was eight months old, she was forever looking down, and I learned that each stone is different, and the patterns in the cement on the sidewalk make intricate, beautiful designs. And I also learned that there are different colors of green in the grass. When Marissa turned eleven, she began saying, “Wow, wow.” Every time she spoke that marvelous word, for anything new or wonderful to her, such as the gathering clouds before a storm or a brisk breeze that hit her face, or a flock of geese honking overhead, or a sunset on a lake after a magnificent day, or fireworks on a summer’s night. When Marissa was fourteen months, she pointed to a beautiful model on the cover of a magazine and said, “Is that you, Mommy?” When Marissa was three years old, she

walked into the kitchen while I was cleaning up after supper, and she said, “Mom, if you were a kid, we’d be friends.” And all I could say was, “Wow.”” She kept these things in her heart.

Several years ago I was called to the hospital to see a baby boy that had been born. One of the privileges you get as pastor is, you get calls like that and you get to march right past the doctors and the nurses, and the in-laws. And the mom is holding the baby there. Dad walks over and hands me a cigar and says, “Look at the fingers on that kid. Gonna be a baseball pitcher, major league, maybe power forward for the NBA, make lots of money, I can retire early.” The mother said softly, she said, “My son will do great things. He will be the answer to some important questions. He will be the solution to some of the world’s problems.” The Madonna and the Messiah. Some of what Jesus knew, he learned from Mary, like “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.” Like, “Blessed are the pure of heart, for they are going to see God.” Like, “Let the children come to me, and forbid them not. They belong to God’s kingdom.” Like, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”

From the cross, he saw Mary, his mother. He thought about the Madonna and the Messiah. On the cross before his death, there were so many things on his mind, I’m sure. He reviewed his life and all that had happened, and his past seemed to scan before him like a video movie. I imagine he thought about the other times when his boyhood turned to manhood, when his days of drifting turned to mission, when the child at him gave way to the adult. It happened at a wedding, it happened at a party, when his mother was pushy. He thought about that day in Cana of Galilee when he was the master and she was the mother. It was a midlife stage in his life. You think your parenting will some time, some day be over, but any of us who have grown adult children know that’s never true. At age 30 – she was the mother, he was the son at age 30, and she told him to do something. She was pushy, she was assertive, she was a mother to the master, she told him to get up and get going. At the wedding, they ran out of wine. This pushy mother said to the master, “You’ve got to do something. Enough living home with me, enough following in your father’s footsteps, you’ve got bigger shoes to fill, son. Turn that water into wine.” This pushy mother began issuing orders. “Get the water, bring it in here, do what I tell you,” this pushy mother ordered. The master.

Three mothers were bragging about their children. One of them said, “My son’s a wealthy lawyer, and for my birthday he gave me a new car.” The other one said, “Well, my daughter is a medical doctor, and for my birthday she’s giving me a trip to Hawaii.” The third one was silent for a long time, and finally said, “My son sees a fancy psychiatrist every week, he pays about three hundred dollars an hour, and guess who he spends time talking about? Me.” Did you have a pushy mother like that, someone who is annoying sometimes, someone who has the idea that there were things that needed to be done and the time has come to get them done? She may have pushed us to the edge of our tolerance, she may have spoken up and dressed us down, she may have had expectations we thought we couldn’t fill, she may have driven us up the wall or close to crazy. A pushy mother. Oh, mother. Stop it, Mom.

Leo Buscaglia had a pushy mother. Leo Buscaglia, the writer and professor. He had gone to France. It was in the Fifties, he went to study abroad. Something his mother did, however, while he was there changed his life. He tells the story. "I remember getting to the point where I had very little money. I thought I could just wire home, and so I went to the telegraph office in Paris and to save money, I just sent a two word message. It said, 'Starving. Leo.' Twenty-four hours later I got a telegram from my mother and it said, 'Starve. Mother.' It was a moment of truth. I became adult. It taught me a lesson I would never have learned if Mama had relented and wired me the cash. When I went home several months later, one evening as we were visiting, Mama looked at me and said, 'Son, that's the hardest thing I've ever done in my life. But if I hadn't done it, you would never have grown up to be Leo.'"

Do you have a pushy mother who took a stand, to have you take off in your life? Maybe she said too much, maybe she did too much, or maybe she was too hard sometimes, but where do you think Jesus got the idea that if you bury your talent in the ground, you wasted your life? And where do you think he learned all that stuff about old wine and new wineskins? And where do you think he got the idea that at age 30 might be a good time for you to be reborn, as you change from your childhood adolescence to your adulthood in the lottery of life and the search for truth, but from Mary, his pushy mother, the mother of the master. The Madonna and the Messiah. I think he saw his mother. She was at the foot of the cross. But I think they got it wrong, in the Bible. He didn't say to John Mark, "Behold your mother." Or to Mary, looking at John Mark, "Mother, behold your son." He didn't say that. I think this is what he said. I think he said, "Behold, my mother," he said. "That's my mother there."

The martyr and the mourner. He had picked up his cross and carried it. He did what he thought he had to do. The martyr made his witness. His mother, the mourner, was silent. Notice, she was silent. She said nothing. She did nothing to stop him. Others tried to stop him, but she didn't. She let it go, she turned it loose. When things turned from bad to worse, when things turned from worse to terrible, she was there as a mourner. With Kahlil Gibran, she knew our children are not our children, they are life's longing for itself. And when it comes to our children, with Gibran, she understood we may give them our lives, but we cannot give them our thoughts. We may house their bodies, but not their souls. We may strive to be like them, but they will not become like us, because life does not go backwards and does not yearn for yesterday.

The mourner. The martyr. He said, "That's my mother there. She once was the Madonna, and she kept things in her heart, and she once was the mother, and she pushed me into my life's mission." And we hear the pride and the admiration in his voice as she stood at the foot of the cross, and we see the love and respect on his face as she put herself in danger to be present at his darkest hour. "That's my mother there," he said. "Behold my mother." And there was something that I think he knew. He knew it because Mary the mourner had been his mother all his life. She knew him better than anyone else. She taught him his lessons, and carried him through the darkest days. She was Mary, who understood justice has to be tinged with mercy. And she got the idea that she understood and conveyed to him, about the truth that passes our understanding. And Mary was the one who know how

rich you can be in spirit, because where your heart is, there your treasure is as well. She knew that. And he knew she knew that.

Ron Rolheiser reflects upon Mary at the foot of the cross as he wondered what Mary was doing there that day. He said, "In essence what she was doing at the foot of the cross was very clear to me." He said, "She couldn't stop the crucifixion, but she could stop some of the hatred and bitterness and jealousy and heartlessness and anger that carried it and surrounded it. And she helped stop it by refusing to give back into it in kind, by transforming rather than transmitting it, by not giving in to it as everyone else seemed to be doing." The martyr looked at the mourner and he knew that she would spend the rest of her life trying to be sure that her son would be the last son any mother or father would see crucified. And Jesus said to John Mark, and he said to anyone else who would listen, he said, "Behold my mother. I'm her son. She's my hero. You want to know what Christian looks like? You want to see a disciple? You want to find a follower of the gospel? Behold, my mother." And those who came after, those who listened to her, those who watched her very closely as her life lived out to its end, a Madonna, a mother, a mourner. They made her a saint. I doubt if Jesus cared much about that, to be honest with you. He just wanted us to know he was the son of Mary, and proud of it.