

Happy Mother's Day to all the mothers here today, and I especially want to wish my own mother a Happy Mother's Day. My mom is pretty amazing – never underestimate her quiet nature – she is a force to be reckoned with. She is a pillar of strength with deep, deep roots below the surface, which ultimately find their source in Jesus. She is the rock for our family – because, well, you've met my dad, and we definitely needed a stable parent! She is strong – emotionally and physically – the woman has been known to move all the furniture including the piano in our home all on her own, she is wise, and she is loved. And cards are expensive so I'll make a copy of this later and sign it.

I'll let you in on how our mother daughter dynamic worked while I was growing up. I have the mic so I'll make myself come out a bit better than I actually was! My mom and I didn't always see eye to eye on basically any topic. I could find a way to argue the opposite of whatever she said. We also had a misunderstanding of the meaning of some basic words. Take the word "now" for instance. When my mom would say it was time now to turn off the tv and clean my room I understood that to be a time in the near-ish future. Now was a relative term meaning when I got around to it. But, and I did not realize this at the time – but for her "now" meant immediately, without delay, with haste. I had no idea.

We also had a misunderstanding about when I should talk and when I should not. I was destined to hold a microphone as I've always had plenty of words that I wanted to say. My mom on the other hand was not always interested in hearing all of my words as not everything she said was meant to be a discussion. So, she would say things like – that's it, Sarah, not another word. I misunderstood this to mean not

another word on that specific topic and she meant not another sound was to come from my mouth. So, you can see why it would upset her when my response would be – ok, fine, I won't say another word.

It was simply a misunderstanding. Also, my mom will be holding a group therapy session after church for all you moms raising strong willed children who are on the brink of despair. They'll grow up to be fine. I will point out that when it comes to "I hope you have a child who is just like you" – I've clearly had the last word!

This morning I want to look at a mother in the Bible who had a misunderstanding about her children and their future. But, lest you think this sermon is only for moms you would be totally wrong. I think there's something we can all learn from this woman who was a mother, but first and foremost she was a disciple of Jesus. In that way we can all relate.

Early in Jesus ministry he began to call disciples – people who would become followers or students of His life and teachings. Some of the first men he called to follow Him are 2 sets of brothers – Peter and Andrew and James and John. The story of Jesus calling them is found in Matthew 4. Come, follow me, Jesus has said to Peter and Andrew and at once they left their fishing nets and boat and followed Him.

“Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.” Matthew 4:21-22

Now, here's what's interesting – there's a Biblical example of what we see happening here at Carbondale in which Pastor Brittany has just invited us to

participate. Three years after Jesus calls James and John we read that standing at the foot of the cross as Jesus died is their mother. **“Many women were there, watching from a distance. They had followed Jesus from Galilee to care for his needs. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee’s sons.” Matthew 27:55-56** Sometimes Jesus calls the children first and through their example they bring their mother and father to Jesus. James and John were called by Jesus himself to become disciples, and they then introduced their mother to Jesus and she became a lifelong follower of the Lord through the influence of her sons. This is why we reach out to children. This is why we stand up here and share the need for workers. This is why we work in the schools on a weekly basis to teach children about Jesus and teach them to hide God’s word in their hearts. We’re sending them home from here to be the example to their parents just like James and John. Hey mom, I found Jesus and He has changed my life. Teenagers – be the James and John of your family. You can set the example. Much later on from this story a man named Paul wrote, **“Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity.” 1 Timothy 4:12** Just because you’re young doesn’t mean you can’t influence and lead your family to Jesus. Some of you just made the connection that what Pastor Brittany was asking was for people to volunteer to make disciples who will in turn bring their moms and dads to the foot of the cross. Jesus himself called James and John and disciplined them, but Jesus might be personally calling you this morning to make disciples of a young person who has no other example of Jesus. There are lots of ways in which you can

be involved to do this – you can fill out the card that was in your bulletin and volunteer in the Ark Park or upstairs in our kids ministry or with the youth department on Wednesday nights or Sunday mornings. You can contact one of the pastors about volunteering for an hour in the afternoon to work with Boys and Girls Clubs we run. There's information in the bulletin this morning about workers for our Talking is Teaching program. It's one hour on the 3rd Tuesday of the month. And who knows but as a result a whole family will be brought to Jesus.

And, grown up's sitting here this morning who are still praying for parents to come into a relationship with Jesus – be encouraged – technically, James and John were adults when they brought their mom to Jesus – it's not too late for your mom or your dad or your spouse or the person you're praying for. Keep setting the example, keep showing Jesus in all you do, keep praying for your parents to come to faith in Christ. It's not too late for you to bring them to the foot of the cross and encounter Jesus.

Okay, that was sermon #1. Turn to Matthew 20 where we'll see James and John's mother, whose name by the way is Salome, once again – this time she's having a misunderstanding with Jesus.

Read Matthew 20:20-28

Misunderstanding #1 – Now, when you say Kingdom....

It's important to point out that at this time Israel has no king – in fact they haven't had a king for 500 or so years. The Old Testament is full of stories of the Kings of Israel – think King David or King Solomon who was the wisest king. So many kings that in fact there are 2 books in the Old Testament named for them – 1 Kings and 2 Kings. But, the people of Israel did evil in the eyes of the Lord, and as a result they

were carried off into exile in a strange land for 70 years. When they began to return to Israel a king was not put back in charge. During the years in between the Old Testament and the New Testament in your Bible there is a 400-year gap. In the gap years the people of Israel were ruled by the Greeks followed for a short stint by Egypt and then by Syria. The people finally led a revolt, which led to them being able to govern themselves for 80ish years until Rome came and conquered the entire globe. If you remember world history Rome is sort of a big deal. The Romans put people like Herod (who killed all the babies in the Christmas story) in power and he was Jewish like the Olive Garden is Italian – that is to say – not so much. My apologies to my grandma – that’s her favorite restaurant. Israel is desperate for another revolt and a king of their own to be in power once again. They’ve had it with Rome and all these foreign powers. Into this politically charged environment comes Jesus talking about His kingdom. By the time of our story He has been going around Israel for nearly 3 years teaching about the Kingdom, telling stories about the kingdom, preaching that the kingdom of heaven is near. You can understand how Salome would misunderstand.

She comes to Jesus and bows before him – paying honor to the king. A king in her mind has a kingdom and if there’s a kingdom she’d really like to make sure her sons have a place of importance. She misunderstood God’s kingdom as greatness and not as service.

Misunderstanding #2 – Now, when you say drink

The word “cup” in scripture sometimes means a dish or a cup like we think of it, but often it’s used in a figurative sense to refer to a person’s destiny. Jesus himself refers

to this cup of destiny when he prayed in the garden right before his arrest, **“Jesus prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.” Matthew 26:39** Again **“He prayed, “My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done.” Matthew 26:42** and then He prayed it a third time. Jesus wasn’t thirsty or looking for a cup of coffee to get through the next 3 days. He’s talking about something bigger. It was a sense of this is my destiny – and this cup was full of suffering. Jesus is seeing this closely approaching destiny – His tortuous death on the cross in His mind as He asks this question, “Can you drink the cup that I am going to drink?” This suffering though would not come in a battle to overthrow the current government as Salome most likely thought. Oh, yes, they can drink this cup – they’ll fight for you. You’ve never seen such great fighters, my boys are literally the best swordsmen ever born. Don’t let the whole fishing pole thing throw you – the sword is where they really excel. You know how mom’s go on! She misunderstood the cup they would have to drink. She thought he meant in battle to establish His kingdom – but Jesus meant suffering that would come by willingly laying down His life so that His kingdom could be established in the hearts of all those who would bow to His lordship and offer Him the throne of their hearts. Jesus also knew that James and John would drink a cup of suffering – they would suffer for Jesus sake – just not in the way their Mother thought.

Misunderstanding #3 – Now, when you say last

Jesus kingdom is in some ways upside down to our way of thinking. It’s a place where He says the last will be first and the first will be last. A place where if you

want to be great you must first become a servant. It's a place where humility is valued over selfish ambition and where the meek inherit instead of the mighty. The other disciples have overheard Salome's request and now they're annoyed. That's not fair! Wait a minute! What about me? What title and position will I get in the kingdom?

Jesus pulls them all aside and tries once more to explain what His kingdom will look like – a place where if you want to be great you'll need to become a servant and if you want to be first you'll need to become as a slave – meaning you'll have no say in the matter but fully submit yourself to the Lord. Jesus personifies the indignity of this with His death on the cross. Paul speaks of it in Philippians 2: **“Jesus, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross. Therefore God exalted him to the highest place.”**

Philippians 2:6-9 Jesus understood that humbling oneself – to the point of death – and then allowing God to exalt when He decides was what the kingdom would truly look like.

This was upside down thinking in 33 AD, it still feels upside down in 2018, so you can appreciate how Salome might misunderstand. She wanted her boys to be great and rise to prominence; Jesus wants them to be servants. She sees her babies as first and Jesus wants them to be last.

So now let me ask you 3 questions. I'm phrasing them as questions to mothers this morning, but they are questions that we can all ask in regards to ourselves as well.

1. Can I trust Jesus to know better than me in regards to the plans for my children?

(or can I trust Jesus to know better than me in regards to the plan for my own future?)

Moms and dads have all sorts of plans for their kids – they'll be the next Greatest Of All Time at basketball or singing or they'll be the smartest or most talented or best looking. Parents tend to see that in their children. During my years working with teams and kids in Europe one of the trips I did quite a few times involved a program for ages 4-7 year old kids. The amount of parents – now she's only 3, but she's really smart for her age or he's really advanced so the 3 year old program is a little beneath him. I stood up in the main service to say that we'd loved working with your amazing 4-7's and your highly intelligent 3 year olds – there were some laughs to which I responded – That's what you told me, right?!

Parents see the best and envision a rosy future, but sometimes what Jesus has for our kids just might involve more serving, more suffering than we might think best. But, can we still trust God to do what's best for our kids even when it doesn't look like what we'd pictured? Can we still trust that Jesus has good things in store?

Some of us feel like we've misunderstood God in regards to these plans for ourselves. We thought for sure it would work out differently. Truthfully, this day stinks for a lot of people because we've had some misunderstandings along the way

– but I thought..... But I was hoping I don't understand...and we want to know why

But, we find ways to trust that Jesus is still good, even on Mother's Day. Jesus still came to give His life as a ransom for many. Ransom means "the price of release." He's paid the price for the release of your pain, your anger, your despair. Can you trust Him?

2. Do I tell Jesus what I want Him to do for my children or do I ask Jesus what He wants for my children?

(or do I tell Jesus what I want him to do for my life or do I ask Jesus what He wants to do in my life?)

Salome had a plan and she went all momma bear on Jesus. Listen here, Jesus, I don't know what you've been told but these boys are the best. Sometimes we like to dictate to Jesus how He should handle things – and especially our kid's lives. All the teachers in here said Amen. You've heard from some parents that were gonna tell you how it was gonna be with their kids. No asking what you've seen or experienced or how as a parent they could assist you. Teachers feel encouraged – Jesus feels that too! I'm gonna need you to do Or ok, Jesus, you better. Jesus won't be coerced or manipulated, but He does invite us to bring our children to Him. Mark chapter 10 tells us that Jesus blesses them and receives them into His arms. Jesus loves your child – you can be sure of that. He has a plan for them. But, don't confuse it with your plan.

Submit yourself to the Lord and allow Him to speak to your heart this morning about His plan for you – as a person, as a parent, as a spouse, as a volunteer, as a

church member. The same is true for you this morning – Jesus loves you! He is for you! But, don't confuse your great ideas for your life with the Lord's plan. Don't tell the Lord what to do! Ask the Lord!

3. Can I truly surrender my children to Jesus?

(or can I truly surrender my heart to Jesus?)

I think ultimately Salome did just that. She was standing at the cross and would have heard Jesus say to her son, John, look after my own mother, Mary. Salome witnessed what it looked like to trust her children to Jesus – there was a place for John to serve in the kingdom. She recognized that God's ways really were higher than hers. Her other son, James, was the first disciple to be killed for his faith so it's not outside the realm of possibility that James died before his mother. But, she had surrendered him to Jesus. Your hopes and dreams for your kids may not come to fruition, but can you still trust Jesus to care for them? Can you surrender them to His plan and purpose for their lives?

Can we truly surrender ourselves anew to Jesus this morning? Even with the misunderstandings that life brings. I misunderstood that giving my heart to you would keep me from heartache and suffering. But I've found you to be a constant companion even in the hurt. I misunderstood that living for you would bring success and position and easy days. But it's brought opportunities for service, and an expectation that I would take up my cross daily and deny myself. That in its own way has brought success.

Jesus came to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many. He also paid the price of release for your sins. This morning you can make Jesus the king of your life. You

can begin today to trust that Jesus knows best for your future – that He has a future for you – that He wants to share the amazing things He has planned to work in and through your life – and you can begin this journey by surrendering your heart to Him.

We can ask Him today to be Lord of our lives. We can ask Him today to work in us to make us the moms and dads, grandmas and grandpas, friends, and church members He's called us to be. Ask Him to teach us how to serve in His kingdom. I believe He'll answer those who ask with a sincere heart. On this Mother's Day will you trust Jesus? For salvation, for peace, that He cares for you, that He loves your children, that He loves you.

Let's pray.