

## **MOTHERHOOD, THE CROWN JEWEL OF HUMANITY**

Text: Matthew 20:20, 21

On this Mother's Day, I would like to focus our attention to a wonderful mother in the Bible. A lady referred to as, "...the mother of Zebedee's children...." Church history says her name was Salome or Mary Salome. She is believed to be the sister or half-sister of Mary, the mother of our Lord.

Perhaps the most outstanding fact about this mother is that two (not just one) of her children, James and John, became two of the most prominent and outstanding disciples of Jesus. We see in Mark 3:17 that Jesus had a nick-name for these two disciples: "And James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James; and he surnamed them Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder." And to this day the thunder of these dedicated servants of the Lord is still being heard and felt. And I believe we can say, these two proverbial apples did not fall far from their maternal tree.

Listen to some things that history makers have said about the influence of their mother: "All I am I owe to my mother. I attribute all my success in life to the moral, intellectual and physical education I received from her" (George Washington). "All that I am or ever hope to be, I owe to my angel Mother" (Abraham Lincoln). "I cannot tell you how much I owe to the solemn word of my good mother" (Charles Haddon Spurgeon). "The last thing that you can rob from a boy is that which he learned from his mother's knee. The hand that rocks the cradle will rule the world. There is more power in a mother's hand than in a king's scepter" (Billy Sunday). "What a mother sings to the cradle goes all the way down to the coffin" (Henry Ward Beecher).

As we celebrate Mother's Day, so much comes to mind. My mind goes back to Dr. Robert G. Lee's famous sermon entitled Payday Someday. In Dr. Lee's message, he pointed out the wicked influence of Jezebel in the life of the king of Israel. He said, "Search the pages of the Bible all you will; study history all you please. And you will find one truth that stands out above some other truths. What is that truth? The truth that the spiritual life of a nation, city, town, school, church, or home never rises any higher than the spiritual life of women. When women sag morally and spiritually, men sag morally and spiritually. When women slump morally and spiritually, men slip morally and spiritually. When women take the downward road, men

travel with them. When women are lame morally and spiritually, men limp morally and spiritually. The degeneracy of womanhood helps the decay of manhood.” Then he said, “If women have mastered men for evil, they have also mastered them for good--and we gladly make declaration that some of the fairest and most fragrant flowers that grow in the garden of God and some of the sweetest and most luscious fruit that ripens in God's spiritual orchards are there because of woman's faith, woman's love, woman's prayer, woman's virtue, woman's tears, woman's devotion to Christ.”

Today I wish to speak about the righteous influence of women, and in particular, the righteous influence of a devoted mother. “Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies” (Proverbs 31:10). The largest double-star ruby in the world is the Neelanjali Ruby, which weighs 1,370 carats (274 g). It was unveiled to the world at the end of 1988, and immediately entered the Guinness Book of World Records as the largest double-star ruby. Going on the rareness of double- star rubies, its estimated price has been put around \$100 million.

It is difficult to estimate the value of the combined crown jewels of Great Britain. But the most valuable one in this austere collection would have to be the Imperial State Crown which was worn by King Charles III as he rode in the Gold State Coach for the procession back to Buckingham Palace after his coronation. This crown had been placed on the coffin of Queen Elizabeth II in tribute. It is also used for state occasions, including the annual opening of Parliament. According to the Historic Royal Palaces charity, the Imperial State Crown is made of gold and set with 2,868 diamonds, 17 sapphires, 11 emeralds, 269 pearls and four rubies. It contains some of the most famous gems in the world, including the Black Prince’s ruby, the 104-carat Stuart sapphire and the 105.6-carat Cullinan II diamond. Its estimated value is approximately \$3.4 billion to \$5.7 billion. When it comes to the office of motherhood, I believe the Christian mother exceeds the value of the combined crown jewels of all earthly countries. The mother of Zebedee’s children personifies this extraordinary value.

## 1. THIS IS A MOTHER WHO WORSHIPPED JESUS WITH HER CHILDREN

Matthew 20:20a: “Then came to Him the mother of Zebedee’s children with her sons, worshipping him...” This is not a parent who sent her kids to church; she came to worship with her kids.

Paul said to Timothy, “...I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also” (II Timothy 1:5). The word “unfeigned” means genuine and sincere. Even as mothers naturally see to their child’s physical needs, the Christian mother gives her children the sincere milk of the Word. “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby” (I Peter 2:2). Solomon admonishes, “My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother” (Proverbs 1:8). “My son, keep thy father’s commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother” (Proverbs 6:20). Dad lays down the law and Mom enforces the law. And what is the ultimate goal of the law? “Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith” (Galatians 3:24). As a mother understands her assignment from God, she likewise conducts herself in a most holy manner of life.

## 2. THIS IS A MOTHER WHO WANTED THE BEST FOR HER CHILDREN

Matthew 20:21: “And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom.” Some have ridiculed this mother for being selfish or seeking special favors for her children. But I ask you, what good and gracious mother doesn’t want the very best for her children?

George was dyslexic and could not read or write until he was twelve years old. His grandfather was a famous military man during the Civil War and his father was a brilliant lawyer. As far as role models, George had a lot to live up to. George’s mother did not want him to give up on life or sense the strikes against him meant that he was destined to “strike-out.” His mom read to this young man the stories of heroes. She read to him of Alexander the Great, Scipio, Cromwell, Jackson and Lee. At twelve he began to read and then write. He mastered these skills fairly well, and he went on to become an outstanding student at the United States Military Academy at West Point. George S. Patton went down in history as one of the greatest field commanders in the entire history of the United States. Old

“Blood and Guts,” as he was called, became a great man because he had a mother who wanted nothing less than the very best for her son.

Alva overheard his teacher refer to him as addled and that there was no point in keeping him in school. The boy Alva later said, “I was so hurt by this...that I burst out crying and went home and told my mother about it.” Thomas Alva Edison’s mother never gave up on him. Although Edison claimed to have had only three months of formal schooling, it is most clearly understood that his mother, who became his prime early educator, gave him everything and more that was required for honing this American genius. Edison said, “My mother was the making of me. She was so true, so sure of me; and I felt that I had someone to live for, someone I must not disappoint.” In Edmund Morris’ biography, *Edison*, he recorded, “It is also clear, in view of his learning difficulties in class, that the only teacher who understood him and fertilized his brain until then (at age 12) was Nancy Edison (his mother).”

### 3. THIS IS A MOTHER WHO WAS FAITHFUL TO THE END

Matthew 27:56: “Among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee’s children.” The Scriptures here tell us those of whom followed Jesus all the way to the cross. This is a mother who worshiped Jesus before her children. This is a mother who wanted the best for her children. This is a mother who was faithful in following Jesus all the way to the cross.

What does the Bible have to say about Zebedee, the boys’ dad? There are only two mentions of him in the Bible: “...James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father...” (Matthew 4:21b). Then in Mark 1:20, we read, “And straightway He called them: and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after Him.” The only mention of Zebedee is that he is in a fishing boat. Now we don’t want to make more of this than what we observe, but I would much rather it be said that I, like the mother of our text, took my kids to worship Jesus rather than my only mention of me with my kids was in a boat fishing. There’s nothing wrong with fishing, but it does bring to our attention the words of Jesus who said, “...these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone” (Luke 11:42b). What we teach our children in our occupation and even in fun activities is important, but

what we teach them about Jesus is worth more than the Neelanjali Ruby or the Imperial State Crown of Great Britain.

-Pastor Pope-