

Women Who Showed the Way

A Real Look at Real Marriage

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Bible Verse: Ephesians 5:22-24

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I invite you to turn to Ephesians chapter 5. We've taken a brief pause in our regular studies to consider marriage on Sundays and Tuesdays for another couple of weeks maybe, and eventually what I plan to do is to just go through this entire section on marriage, Ephesians 5:22 through 33. For tonight I'm just going to read the first three verses and continue a little bit of background on godly women, you might say, that will inform our study when we get to it probably on Sunday. So Ephesians chapter 5 verse 22 says,

22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

Now, last time on Sunday, we considered the high dignity of true women, the high dignity of what God has created when he made a woman and when he created women as part of humanity, and even the dignity that he bestows on those of you here in this room that love Christ and want to honor and glorify him. Our church is filled with women like that and seemingly the Lord brings more with each passing month and we're grateful to that. A church cannot function and be all that it's meant to be without godly women and that's certainly true and I won't take the time to defend it.

What we saw last time is that Scripture teaches that women share equally with men in the image of God, the gift of salvation, the promise of eternal life, that God has established social structures in the family and in the relationship between husband and wife and parents and children for their position of dignity to be honored by those that are around them. We saw that Jesus extensively honored the dignity of women and the gospels are full of such indications from our Lord as he healed women, as he taught women, as he forgave repentant women. And you just, you see the broad biblical background and then you see how Jesus, God in human flesh, interacted with women and you don't see any of the coarseness that marks some in supposedly evangelical circles today as they talk about women, you don't see any of that coarse language coming from Jesus, just the love and the kindness and the compassion that he showed to them as he spoke with them and ministered to their hearts according to their need at the time. And our point last time, this

is just a little bit of review, is that Christ conferred dignity on women. He treated women with kindness and respect and as a result of that, we are to honor women as well. It would not make any sense for those of us that claim to be disciples of Christ to have a different attitude and approach and conduct toward women that Christ did. And so young men should learn and should learn from Christ that women are not, well, let me approach it this way, that means that as we consider women in our lives and women that we encounter, that we should never think about them apart from the dignity that Christ bestowed on women as a segment of humanity, the better half of humanity you might say. We should never think about women, we should never think about our wives or our daughters apart from Christ. We see how Christ treated women broadly, generally, consistently, and we say, okay, that carries over into my relationships with women today, and so that we don't view our wives as simply ours or to perform tasks for us, we view them to the extent that the Spirit enables us, we view them through the eyes of Christ.

Now, as you continue reading, we kind of looked at Christ toward women and what Christ did toward, acted toward women, tonight what I want to do is kind of take the reverse approach and just look at Scripture and see how women responded to Christ and let that be a model for us today that actually instructs us as men as well. And I want to set this up with a bit of a contrast, you might say, and just to remind you of why this is important for our study on marriage. As I said last time, wives come from the realm of women. I know how funny that sounds but wives come from the realm of women, and so if women have a high dignity conferred upon them by God and by Christ during his earthly ministry, then it is ours, both men and women, to keep that in mind as we interact with women. For men, we honor them, as I've been saying, and for women, watch this, for women to see in the pattern of women in the time of Christ, a pattern for their own spiritual lives and for the way that they should aspire to be in their character, in their heart. Scripture says that the heart of a godly woman, a gentle and quiet spirit in a woman, is precious in the sight of God; that's in 1 Peter chapter 3. And so as we see this illustrated in the women that were around Jesus, it's going to teach us some very valuable things that benefit us all.

And let me, and just kind of keeping in context with Matthew chapter 5, let me just give you a brief definition that you can, or a brief statement that you could write down and try to remember. The high dignity of women is manifested through humble, faithful devotion to Jesus Christ. The high dignity of women is manifested through humble, faithful devotion to Christ. Now that sounds, if we don't give a contrast to that, it won't come out in the clarity with which it should so let me give you a contrast here. The high dignity, the humble, faithful devotion to Christ manifested in a gentle and quiet spirit, well, we see this laid out for us in the Beatitudes in Matthew chapter 5, verses 3 through 12, which are for men and women both, but just focusing on women and knowing what lies ahead here, when we talk about humble, faithful devotion to Christ, when we talk about being a woman of dignity, as Scripture defines that, it's going to be manifested through the heart attitudes that you see expressed in the Beatitudes: poverty of spirit, confession, mourning over sin, hungering and thirsting for righteousness, a woman of mercy, a woman who is a peacemaker. Those are the kinds of things that Jesus said mark those who belong to the kingdom of heaven and he says that every person who is in the kingdom of heaven will

be manifested by growing expression of these spiritual characteristics, and we've studied those in the recent past and I won't go any further, I just allude to it sort of in passing.

Now, I want to make, I want to bring that out, this humble devotion, this high dignity of women, I want to bring it out through what one might prove to be a somewhat controversial contrast, but if any controversy comes from it, if it serves to clarify things in your mind, then it's well worth the effort that it takes to do so. Think back to this. We just recently completed a series titled, "Are You a Christian?" And I went through 14 different points to expose false faith, false hope. So the fact that you're a Christian is not proven merely by the fact that you go to church, that you said a prayer, that you had an experience or anything like that. And so we drew these contrasts to show what is not a true Christian in order to set it up with an understanding that to be a Christian means you believe the gospel and the power of God has come upon you and changed you and given you spiritual ability, a new spiritual relationship with God, spiritual life, spiritual power, and we set up that contrast so that you could see the deadness of the letter versus the life that is in the Spirit. It's in that kind of Spirit that I want to lay these things out to you that I'm about to say, remembering, just to keep things very fresh in everyone's mind, that we said that this high dignity is expressed through the godly character found in the Beatitudes. Okay, that's really, really important. Jesus is the one who said, "These traits mark the ones who belong to my kingdom."

Now, this is just a contrast, it's a bit of an illustration to help bring out the point to you, to see it in relief. Godly dignity in a woman is not the same thing as being a homeschool mom. Godly dignity is not the same thing, for example, as being a homeschool mom. Now, I'm married to a homeschool mom, at least she used to be before our kids all grew up. I have a place of affection in my heart for godly homeschool moms. You can be a homeschool mom and be very godly, but it's not the same thing and it's very important for us to recognize a distinction so that we don't equate the wrong thing with the real thing. Some homeschool moms are outwardly fine until you cross them, as a husband or in some other capacity, and then the real condition of their heart comes out. Far from being peacemakers, you find that they're itching for a fight, that there's a self-righteous spirit about them, there's a combativeness about them, and it turns out that there's venom beneath those soft-spoken lips, not interested in peace, but in making their point, in having their way, in asserting themselves. And I don't need to go into any more detail than that, I don't think, but I just use that as an illustration for this reason, you know, a church like ours attracts homeschool families, and that's great. I love having homeschool families. But homeschool families can come with their own set of presuppositions that they actually aren't looking to be taught as much as to find someone or to find a church that affirms them in what they already think and in what they're already doing, and when the accountability of Scripture is brought to bear or matters of godliness are questioned, then, you know, I could open up my coat jacket here and show you the scratch marks from years gone by. And so the tendency for some ladies, I fear, is to be satisfied with being a homeschool mom as if that proved their righteousness and it's not the case. That is not where you go to establish the high dignity and the godly character that marks a woman of high dignity.

What is the difference here? What is it that I'm driving at? Well, as we're going to see in Scripture here, the women that were around Christ during his earthly life, they manifest, first of all, they manifest humble faith in the promises of God. Humble faith in the promises of God, and we'll come back to this. The women around Christ, that were following him, they had a teachable spirit under the word of God. And thirdly, they gave careful attention to the gospel of Jesus Christ. You can be a homeschool mom without having humble faith in the promise of God. You can be a homeschool mom without having a teachable spirit under the word of God. You can be a homeschool mom without careful attention to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Listen, those things are so clear and obvious that I take it as a given. These things are axiomatic, if you want to look up a word later. These things are axiomatic to me. These are matters that are self-evident, that the two are not necessarily equated. When you've heard a homeschool mom yell angrily at her husband in front of others, when you've had homeschool moms act in other ways that had nothing to do with peacemaking and everything about exacerbating a conflict, then these things become very clear to you. And so, to the extent that there's a narrow band of homeschool moms that would ever hear this message, take these things to heart, these are all for your own well-being, and for the rest of us, just to see in an example that could be multiplied in other areas many times over, just to see that the high dignity of a true woman is manifested in humble faith in the promise of God, a teachable spirit under the word of God, careful attention to the gospel of Christ, and a woman like that is simultaneously going to be manifesting the fruit of the Spirit as Jesus taught it in the Beatitudes. These things are not the same. The mere fact that you hold and you do something in an outward position and you've stationed yourself in a particular manner of life is no proof one way or another about the godliness of your heart.

And so what I want to do tonight then, with all of those things said, is to set your aspirations in the right direction, to help you see what it is that a godly heart, a peaceable and quiet spirit, what that is like, and we see it illustrated in the women that surrounded Jesus in his ministry. Let me state it one other way and, you know, it's, look, I'm not preaching against motherhood here, okay? That should be obvious to everyone. But we need to have it clear in our minds that devotion to your family is not the same thing as devotion to Christ. A woman who is devoted to Christ will be devoted to her family but the mere fact that a woman is devoted to her family is not sure and positive and irrefutable evidence that she's actually devoted to Christ in the way that we see in Scripture. That's my point. I don't want anyone to fall short of true devotion to Christ and so that's what we're going to look at here.

So we're going to look at three different things here this evening. The points are simple. We're going to look, first of all, at women and the birth of Jesus; and then secondly, we're going to look at women and the earthly ministry of Jesus; and then thirdly, we're going to look at women and the events of the gospel. The birth of Jesus, his earthly ministry, and then the culminating events of his life, his death, his resurrection, those things that are the historical basis of the gospel that we preach. So that's what we're going to look at here this evening, and I consider it a high privilege to be able to do this with you here this evening, and may the Spirit of God open our minds, open our ears, soften our hearts, and lead us in the right direction. And just one last statement here. All of this provides

background for our more direct study of Ephesians 5, which I expect to start on Sunday, and what follows is somewhat selective. It's not at all comprehensive of all that we could say. I cut a lot of things out of my notes for the sake of time.

Let's just look briefly at number one, women and the birth of Jesus. Now, as students of Scripture, we are more accustomed to, when we come to Scripture, we're more accustomed to thinking about the male disciples of Christ. After all, the twelve apostles were men. Paul was a man. Scripture says that, you know, church leadership is for men. A woman is not to teach or exercise authority over a man and in the realm of the church and spiritual teachings. So we're accustomed to thinking about things as they relate to men, but tonight what I want to do, I don't want us to lose sight of, I want to maybe for some of you introduce you to the women who are woven into the fabric of the gospel accounts about Jesus. And let's remember, let's remember, first of all, that it was through a woman that God sent his Son to us. Apart from normal human conception, in a miraculous way, God used Mary and formed Christ in her womb apart from the contribution of a human male. That immediately gives us a sense that there's something special here when we talk about women.

And if you'll turn with me to the gospel of Luke, much of what we have to say will come from the gospel of Luke here this evening. Just turn to Luke chapter 1 and what we find is that in the women that we're going to look at, they showed humble faith in the promise of God. They submitted themselves and trusted the promise of God so that, you remember the angel came to Mary, said, verse 31, "You'll conceive in your womb and bear a son and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David," and on it goes, this is Luke chapter 1, And in verse 38, Mary said, "'Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.' And the angel departed from her." And then in verse 45, we read Elizabeth saying to Mary, "blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord." And then the prayer of Mary is given in the verses that follow there. The angel came in a supernatural way, giving a supernatural announcement to Mary, and this dear young woman believed what was said, received it, accepted it, submitted to it.

And as you go on to the birth of Jesus in chapter 2, you will remember that there was a prophetess named Anna who welcomed him in the temple, and look at verse 36 of Luke chapter 2 with me. We read that, "there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem." The promise of a coming Messiah to the city of Jerusalem, a coming Messiah to the people of Jews, she knew that promise. She believed that promise. She affirmed it and reinforced it as she looked upon the Christ, serving in the temple night and day for decades upon decades. Here's a woman of dignity around the time of Christ, and the simple point that we're making here as we look

at these women and the birth of Jesus is this, is that they showed a humble faith in the promise of God.

This is part of godliness, a humble faith in the promise of God. This immediately opens up worlds of growth perhaps, I should say, in our hearts as we reflect on the anxious way that we live our lives, some of us, the uncertainty and the fear, perhaps, that grips the hearts of others. Look, the women around Jesus show us and manifest for us what godliness looks like, what the true dignity of women looks like. A godly woman can be identified by her humble, quiet trust in Christ. That's the heart of godliness. Not how you educate your kids, not what you do necessarily with your husband, those things are secondary, they are peripheral to the core issue of being a godly woman is going to be God-centered in her life. A Christ-centered woman is going to be Christ-centered in her heart, and that starts with humble faith in the promises and in the word of God that he's revealed. And so when we speak of the dignity of women, we're laying forth, we're holding up the prospect of a woman that believes the word of God and trusts in it. That's the starting point.

Now, secondly, let's look at women and the earthly ministry of Jesus. We kind of flash forward 30 years in the life of Jesus, and we find Jesus doing something that is really remarkable. We're all familiar, or most of us are familiar with the fact that Peter made a great confession of Christ. He said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." But Peter wasn't the only one who made that. There were women to whom Christ revealed that, there were women who made that confession themselves and showed that they had embraced Christ and the identity of Christ themselves quite apart from being under the influence of another human man. So for example, turn to John chapter 4 with me. It would be very profitable to spend a few weeks teaching on the Samaritan woman at the well, but we're just going to touch on it briefly here. In John chapter 4, verse 21, let's say, Jesus said to this woman, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him." Now pause there for just a moment and just realize that in the context, Jesus is inviting her to himself. Jesus says, "The Father's seeking people just like you to become his worshipers." To this woman with a very sordid and sinful past, Jesus extends the promise of the gospel to her and he says in verse 24, "God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." And look at what transpires as Jesus reveals himself to her and develops her budding faith. "The woman said to him, 'I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things.'" She said, "I've heard of this promise of God. I've heard of this coming Messiah," and in a landmark moment, in a colossal moment of biblical history and biblical narrative, Jesus speaks to her plainly and simply and said to her, "I who speak to you am he. This Messiah that you're anticipating, this Messiah that you have been told about, that you know is coming, it's me."

This is a remarkable revelation given to her in a private conversation, and the dignity that Christ defers on this woman and upon women in general by manifesting himself in that

way, is of the highest order. He honored this woman by disclosing his messianic identity to her and she believed in the wonderful story. She goes down in verse 39 we read that, "Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, 'He told me all that I ever did.'" She went out and she proclaimed, she manifested her faith and confidence in the word by telling others of what had been shown to her and many more believed as Christ stayed with them. Verse 42, "They said to the woman, 'It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world.'" She had said to them earlier in verse 29, "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?" The original language is really expressed in a slightly different way than it's translated there. She's saying, "This can't be the Christ, can it?" And she's setting it forth but in a deferential way that allows them to contradict her in case she's wrong. Then they went and investigated on her testimony, they went and investigated for themselves and said, "Yeah, this is the one." And that brief encounter led to a burgeoning testimony among the Samaritans based on this woman's teachable spirit under the word of God.

Turn over to John chapter 11 with me, in a similar way, similar theme, I guess would be the better way to say it. In John chapter 11, Jesus is on the verge of raising Lazarus, but he wants to prepare Martha for the moment and you know the story, they asked Jesus to come, he delayed a couple of days, Lazarus died, now he shows up, and they're distraught over the fact that Lazarus had died, and if only Jesus had come earlier, then he could have healed Lazarus, not quite having worked faith all the way through. If he could have healed him, then he can raise him from the dead, which they'll see in a moment. But in John chapter 11 verse 21, Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." Do you see the faith that she has in Christ, not fully formed yet, but she had such a confidence in him, there was such a genuineness to her open-ended trust in Christ that she could say, "If you had been here, death would have been averted." And she goes on, verse 22, "'But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you.' Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.'" Martha still not quite all the way there about what's about to happen, "Martha said to him, 'I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.'" There's all kinds of vibrant faith being expressed here. She's confident in Christ, confident in his power, confidence in a future resurrection. "Jesus said to her," verse 25, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" And look at what Martha says. "She said to him, 'Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world.'" She affirms this faith that Christ is the Son of God by very nature, God himself. "Lord, I believe in you. I trust you. I affirm you. I look forward to all that you would do." Here, in another interaction with another woman of high dignity, we see the reality of Christ coming forth, being brought to light through his interactions with this woman, just as he did with the Samaritan woman and we can see other things with less explicit conversations.

Turn back to Luke chapter 8, so easy to overlook these things and miss what it tells us about the high dignity of women. In Luke chapter 8, we read this, kind of a general statement about the earthly ministry of Christ. Luke chapter 8 verse 1, "Soon afterward

he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with him, and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's household manager, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means." Do you see it, beloved, the dignity of women shown in the fact that they were following Christ with the circle of the apostles; as Christ taught the men, the women were beside them receiving his ministry and apparently playing an important role, humanly speaking, of the advance of the ministry because they were supporting them out of their own private means. This is a place of dignity as these women followed and supported him and the Holy Spirit saw fit to inspire Luke as he wrote his gospel to include this for our instruction and our benefit. Jesus extended the kingdom, extended the gospel, extended eternal life, extended his healing and his teaching freely and abundantly upon women just as he did upon men. Women are on an equal plane with men as it comes to their position in Christ. That will become important as we go into Ephesians chapter 5 down the road to keep in mind.

One other passage here as we consider women and the earthly ministry of Jesus, just turn over a couple of pages to Luke chapter 10. Luke chapter 10, and seeing here this heart of godliness, this desire for Christ, this hungering and longing for the word of Christ and not simply an outward station with a family. Verse 38, "Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching." Do you see it again? She was listening to his teaching. This is exactly what I was saying to you earlier about the heart of godliness, the heart of the true dignity and the high dignity of true women is that they hunger and thirst for righteousness. They hunger and thirst for the true word of God. Not simply going through the motions of a religious affiliation to maintain an outward appearance before men, their heart was captivated by a desire to hear what Christ said, to understand the truth, and to respond accordingly.

She "sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, 'Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me.' But the Lord answered her, 'Martha, Martha,'" you can see the affection and the correction mingled in his voice, "'you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her.'" Mary has chosen to sit at my feet and to hear me teach. She longs for the word of God. If you think about it in terms of 1 Peter chapter 2 that says that like newborn babes long for the pure milk of the word, which is told to men and women alike, here before Peter wrote, we see Mary manifesting this characteristic that is central to godliness. "I want to hear the word of God. I want to know what it says. I want to understand."

And, you know, just looking out on some of your dear sweet faces, you know, in this room we're surrounded with women just like that. That's why you're here. You want the word of God. This theme from Scripture is affirming the central core of godliness in your own character. Praise the Lord for that. Just understand that the teaching of Christ is central to the aspirations of the godly woman. It is not peripheral. You must not become a

woman where the preoccupations with mere earthly passing things becomes the central preoccupation of your heart and put the teaching of Christ on the periphery. That's flipping it exactly upside down. I understand that young moms have a lot of difficulty to find even a sliver of time for Scripture reading and these other things, we're not talking about that today. The question is what's at the core of your heart? What is it that you most long for? What is it that you want? What is it that you want to lead your children into? Do you lead your children into the word of God or something else? So much I could say about that, but I will hold my tongue for now.

My simple point. It's such a simple point. As we look at the Samaritan woman, as she interacted with Christ, as we look at Martha making her affirmation about the person of Christ, we see the women following Jesus and his teaching in Luke chapter 8, we see Mary sitting at his feet, over and over and over again Scripture holds up these women, shows clearly their desire for Christ and for the teaching of Christ, and shows us that the fulfillment of womanhood, the fulfillment of the dignity of women is found in their teachable spirit under the word of God. A woman finds her highest dignity when she has a teachable spirit under the word of God. Not all women are like that in the church. Scripture comes to you, dear ladies, holds it up, affirms you to the extent that this is what motivates your heart and calls you to excel even more, to desire these things, to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ, as it says in 2 Peter 3, verse 18, "to grow in the grace and the knowledge of Jesus Christ. To him be the glory forever and ever, amen," it says, 2 Peter 3:18. The godly woman has an unquenchable desire, has an unquenchable flame that lightens her heart, that by its light leads her to, I'm speaking in metaphors here, leads her to the word of God, to want to understand the meaning of the word of God, what the word of God means by what it says.

A godly woman has a teachable spirit under the word of God. We said women in the birth of Jesus, godly women, women of dignity, they show humble faith in the promise of God. Women in the earthly ministry of Jesus, they had a teachable spirit under the word of God. They wanted to follow him and they did. "Though none go with me, still I will follow." Now thirdly, women and the events of the gospel. Women and the events of the gospel. That's our third point here and this, to see this is just remarkable. It's wonderful. It's invigorating. Let me remind you of a famous text, we looked at it not long ago, that summarizes the gospel, the gospel itself. What is the gospel? 1 Corinthians 15, Paul says, "I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received." Earlier he'd said, "I want to remind you about the gospel that I delivered to you." What is the gospel? Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scripture. Christ died on the cross for our sins, he was buried, he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and those are the historical events that are the basis of all redemption. This happened in real time and space. It was a literal wooden cross upon which Christ was crucified. He was literally placed into a stone cold grave. The grave was sealed. He literally came out of that. The tomb is empty. His body is nowhere and his bones are nowhere to be found on earth because these things literally happened. And just think about the historical events surrounding that; the crucifixion, the burial, the resurrection, that is the basis of all our redemption.

Now think about this, think about this and what happened around the time of the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. The men around Christ, let's just say they did not distinguish themselves at the time. Peter denied Christ three times with curses. Scripture says that all the other disciples fled. After the resurrection, Thomas said, "I will not believe unless my conditions are met." The men didn't distinguish themselves at the time, but the women, different story. Different story. This is just the written account of the word of God. As a man, I'd like for it to be reversed. I'd like it that it was the men showing loyalty, the men showing courage, the men being there. It was the women. It was the women that followed Jesus to the cross.

Turn to the gospel of Mark, chapter 15. Mark, chapter 15 and we'll stay in Mark for this section, although the other gospels confirm and reinforce these things as well. Look at Mark chapter 15, verses 39 to 41, showing that the women were at the cross. Jesus had breathed his last. Verse 39, "the centurion, who stood facing him," saw it face-to-face, "saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, 'Truly this man was the Son of God!'" That's the centurion's testimony immediately upon the death of Christ. Verse 40, "There were also women looking on from a distance, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. When he was in Galilee, they followed him and ministered to him, and there were also many other women who came up with him to Jerusalem." The men scattered like cats. The women stayed close, manifesting their careful attention to Christ, their careful attention to the central event in redemption, even if they didn't understand that that's what they were witnessing at the time. Just out of love for the person of Christ, they said, "I'm going to be with him till the very end."

Women were maintaining vigil as Jesus was laid to rest in the tomb. Here you see a man introduced, Joseph of Arimathea, went to Pilate, received custody of the body. He was granted the corpse we see in verse 45. What I want you to see in verse 46 is this, "And Joseph," of course, not one of the twelve, "Joseph bought a linen shroud, and taking him down, wrapped him in the linen shroud and laid him in a tomb that had been cut out of the rock. And he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb." The period at the end of the sentence, so it seemed. The final act of honoring Christ, so it seemed. The tomb had now been sealed. And look at verse 47, "Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw where he was laid."

There were women at the cross. There were women at the burial. So unlimited was their devotion, their love for him, that they followed him all the way to the grave. Women then were the first witnesses to the resurrection. Read on in chapter 16, "When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. And they were saying to one another, 'Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?'" Look at it, look at it, beloved, very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they couldn't wait to get there. The Sabbath was over and their first duty on their heart, their first desire was to tend to

the body of Christ and as a result of that, they became the first witnesses to the resurrection.

Verse 4, "looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back--it was very large. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed. And he said to them, 'Do not be alarmed. You,'" you women, "'seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter,'" since they're not here, you're here, they're not here, you go and tell them "that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you." And for a time the women were seized. They didn't say anything until they got to the disciples. Verse 8, "they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid." Obviously they told the disciples later, so it's just talking about on their way to see them they said nothing to anyone else along the way.

But beloved, park it right here in your mind. The gospel declares that Christ died for our sins according to the Scripture. He was buried and he was raised on the third day. And who are the witnesses to that, who bequeathed this initial testimony to the world? It was women. Women were there at the cross. Women were there at the grave. Women were there and got the first announcement of the resurrection. Yes, subsequently verified by the disciples, but it was women that were there. Charles Spurgeon said this, and just think about this, beloved. Let me just step back for just a moment to set the stage for what the dear brother Baptist pastor has to say to us. You read the gospel accounts of those sham trials that were conducted of Jesus. Pilate, the high priest, Herod was involved. The Jews stirring people up. It was all men that were stirring up and that laid their hands and certified the execution warrant, as it were. It was all men that were doing that. Spurgeon, picking up on that fact, says this, "In all the gospels, there is no instance of a woman that had any hand in the death of Christ. As far as they are connected with the matter, they are guiltless. They rather oppose his death than promote it. Woman was last at the cross and first at the grave."

The women at the time gave careful attention to the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. In our day now, a godly woman is marked by her careful attention to the gospel, which is premised on the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. This means that the godly woman is going to have an interest, is going to have a pursuit of the atonement, the doctrines of the atonement, of redemption, of forgiveness of sin and eternal life. Everything that the death and resurrection of Christ produced, the godly woman is going to be interested in that, pursuing it within the opportunity and the time that the Lord allots her according to her position in life. Careful attention to the gospel today, careful attention to the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ today is marked by an interest in the things of the gospel message. We can't go back to the cross literally but we go back to the meaning of the cross and find that these are the things and these things alone that ultimately satisfy our hearts.

And so, beloved, what have we seen from this brief survey of the women around the time of Christ, they manifested a humble faith in the promise of God, a teachable spirit under

the word of God, careful attention to the gospel of Christ. This is the manifestation of the high dignity of true women. And so, all of that informs the way that we will receive Ephesians chapter 5, but for all of us today, men and women alike, having seen this faith in the word of God, this trust in what God says, this teachable spirit that says, "Speak, Lord, your servant listens. Here am I, send me." Total resignation to the will of God and careful attention when the word of God is proclaimed and taking opportunity of it. Beloved, it's so much higher, so much loftier, there's so much more to it than these other things that we've mentioned here this evening. Not to the neglect of those things, but just that those things are not the heart of it all. Devotion to family is not the same thing as devotion to Christ. And that's what we want to see, ladies. Christ confers nobility on you, dignity on you. Christ is the source of your identity and your purpose, not your most imperfect husband. You are to desire Christ even above a happy family life. I fear lest ladies stop short, say, "Right now my family's happy and that's all I need," that's not a good place to be.

For us men, let me just say it this way, the dignity of women informs your eyes and what you do with your eyes. It informs your mouth and what you say and how you say it to your wife and to women in general. It affects your heart desires. Because men, godly women are noble and they are precious in the sight of God and the humble man of God will recognize that and conform his life and heart accordingly so that even if the ladies in your life fall short of the ideal of high dignity, you still embrace and obey the call of God on you to love and honor them, and you love and honor them not as, watch this, you love and honor them not as unworthy inferiors to your high throne as the head of the household. No. No, not as unworthy inferiors, but as fellow heirs of the grace of life, and you honor them with the dignity that God has conferred upon them as much as it is in your power to do so. May God conform each one of us to the image of his dear Son. Amen.

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