



Response to Jesus Death!

Matthew 27:54-56

Matthew 27:54-56, *So when the centurion and those with him, who were guarding Jesus, saw the earthquake and the things that had happened, they feared greatly, saying, "Truly this was the Son of God!"* ⁵⁵ *And many women who followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to Him, were there looking on from afar,* ⁵⁶ *among whom were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's sons.*

At first it doesn't seem like a whole lot. But the longer you look at it, the more it begins to yield its riches.

Four responses to the death of Christ that are here given to us. They demonstrate for us the kind of responses we can see even today.

- 1. Saving faith.**
- 2. Shallow conviction.**
- 3. Sympathetic loyalty**
- 4. Selfish fear.**

Two responses of believers.

Two responses of unbelievers.

Two of them responses of believers are parallel to responses today that men and women have to the cross of Christ.

It is not just an historical narrative, but with strong and practical application to our own time.

1. Saving Faith.

The best response that an unbeliever could ever have and that's the response of saving faith.

We find that illustrated to us by the centurion and certain of the soldiers.

V 54, *So when the centurion and those with him, who were guarding Jesus, saw the earthquake and the things that had happened, they feared greatly, saying, "Truly this was the Son of God!"*

The centurion is not just another Roman soldier. As a centurion, he is a commander over a hundred men.

He would be a man of some significance in the ranks of Roman soldiers.

But he is not even just another centurion, of which there were many. He is a centurion who has been given a unique responsibility to guard Jesus.

This is a very particular Roman centurion and a group of soldiers whose responsibility it was to guard Jesus. We assume that this responsibility began when the trial began before Pilate early that very morning on Wednesday.

They have overseen Jesus for quite a few hours by now. The centurion has become very much aware of the issues surrounding Jesus.

The centurion not only heard all the cries of the Jews and their accusations. He may as well have heard the conversation privately between Jesus and Pilate relative to Jesus' kingship. He has been a party to everything that's gone on because it's been his to care for the prisoner.

These then are the very men who have nailed Jesus to the cross.

They are the very men who have pressed a crown of thorns into His brow, hit Him in the head with reeds, slapped Him, spit on Him, punched Him, mocked Him, thrown a robe over His open wounds that had been opened by the scourging, which ripped and tore His flesh.

They are the very men who gambled for His garments in an amazing display of indifference.

- They are ignorant.
- They are uninformed.
- They are untaught.
- They are irreligious.
- They are pagans.

They are part of the scene, not because they have anything against Jesus, they don't even know Jesus.

They are part of the scene because as Roman soldiers have to do what their commander tells them and Pilate or somebody under him has put them in charge of the prisoner.

To them, Jesus is nothing but some bizarre character who claims to be king, for that is the accusation of the Romans.

Any of them looking at Him could tell that He was anything but a king.

Remember that by the time Jesus arrived at Pilate's doorstep early on Wednesday morning, He had already been through the whole night of mockery before the Jewish leaders in which He was given a mock trial and after which He was slapped in the face, punched in the face so that His face was disfigured, puffy, blue and black, bruised.

He was anything but carrying the appearance and attitude of a king. He was dressed as a very common man.

In fact, **Herod had put a robe on Him as king to mock His claim to kingship.**

Furthermore, Jesus was utterly silent, didn't sound like a king. He didn't pontificate, didn't pull rank, didn't advocate His role as king, didn't call for those to come and rescue Him who might have done that.

Where were His followers?

He was silent.

They may have concluded that He was mentally deranged because He took so much abuse and said absolutely nothing.

When He did speak to Pilate, He spoke of a kingdom that was not of this world, which sounds like someone who has some kind of delusions of grandeur and really doesn't know who or where he is.

Because of all this ridiculous claim to being a king, they decided to play a game with Him. They mocked Him as a would-be king. These uninformed ignorant pagans had no idea who they were dealing with.

Probably because of their specific assignment to Jesus under Pilate. They weren't even from Jerusalem, but rather from **Caesarea the seaport city** on the coast some **60 miles away**, which was the Roman garrison.

If that were the case and Jesus' ministry was dominantly in Galilee and around Jerusalem, they may never have seen Jesus and knew very little about Him.

But they have been a part of what's been going on.

The centurion knows the Jews hate Him.

He has heard them scream, "*Crucify Him. Crucify Him. We will have not this man to reign over us.*"

They have seen Pilate try to do everything he could affirming the innocence of Jesus a half a dozen times to no avail.

They know the Jews have accused Jesus of claiming to be the Son of God, claiming to be a king, therefore being a threat to Rome, being a threat to Judaism.

But to them it seems ludicrous, ridiculous, stupid that a beaten, battered, pathetic, crucified mocked man hanging on a cross covered by flies and blood could be anything more than just a common criminal, a fake, an impostor, and nobody.

They just sit there and guard Jesus.

However, something begins to happen that changes what they think.

V 54, *“When the centurion and they that were with him watching Jesus or guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and those things that were done”*

When it went instantly dark like midnight at noon and the sun failed, and when the earthquake came. The earthquake shook the earth, split the ground, the rocks split open, the graves split open, and the veil in the temple was ripped from top to bottom, they knew something was happening that was out of the ordinary.

When they saw the earthquake and those things that are occurring.

When they were right in the storm of this phenomenon that was going on all around them, *“they feared greatly.”*

The word there is **phobeō** from which we get the word phobia which has to do with a terror. They entered into a sheer terror, a state of panic which causes the heart to beat rapidly and sweat to pour out and a terrible anxiety to come over the individual who is in the midst of that kind of terror.

They were very afraid.

The word is the same word used in **Matthew 14:27** for the fear experienced by **the disciples in the boat on the Sea of Galilee** during the storm when they saw Jesus’ walking on the water.

It is the same word used to speak of the sheer terror the disciples felt on **the Mount of Transfiguration in Matthew 17** where Jesus pulls back His human flesh and the glory of God is made visible to them and they fall on their faces on the ground and are in a state of absolute panic.

It is a strong word.

The context here and the circumstance here implies that this is not simply a human fear.

- It is not just being afraid of an earthquake or being afraid of a darkness.
- It is the idea that inherent within their fear is a spiritual awe, a reverential terror.

There is something more than just the physical, something more than just the human fear. Suddenly, they concluded that this is not just another criminal, not just a rebel, a deluded deranged man, a fake, and an impostor.

The phenomena are overwhelming to them.

The centurion has heard Jesus speak when He has heard His profound words which have penetrated his heart.

He has seen all these amazing miraculous phenomena taking place. He knows that something has gone very wrong and the whole of the universe is shaking in response to what is going on.

The fear indicates the sense of sin.

It is that reverential fear that comes to one who knows that he may be under the judgment of God.

Though they were pagans, that no doubt penetrated their hearts. It was more than a human fear.

The awareness of their sin in doing what they did to this man, the sense of guilt.

What have we done?

Something is very wrong.

Leads them to one other step.

Fearing greatly the centurion, the other gospel records tell us, and others articulated this.

But it wasn't just the Centurion.

It was other of the soldiers as well.

He said, *"Truly this was the Son of God!"*

- The fear indicates the sin.
- The confession indicates the salvation.

If their fear was only a human fear, they would have cried for help or they would have run. But it wasn't only a human fear.

It was awe in the sense that men reserve awe for God, for deity.

Mark 15:39, *So when the centurion, who stood opposite Him, saw that He cried out like this and breathed His last, he said, "Truly this Man was the Son of God!"*

Immediately after the centurion heard Jesus say, "It is finished. Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit."

It was immediately after that that he said, *"Truly, this was Son of God."*

It wasn't only the phenomena, but it was those final words of Jesus that just drove the truth into his heart.

He uses the word truly to make it very clear that he has no equivocation in his mind.

He isn't saying, "Maybe it is the Son of God. Possibly it is the Son of God."

He is saying without equivocation and without contradiction, "*Truly this was Son of God.*"

No doubt in his mind.

He is affirming the divine Sonship of Jesus.

Jesus had just said, "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit," and he says momentarily after that, "Truly, this was God's Son."

Jesus in His final words is claiming to be God's Son, and he affirms that it is so.

How does he know that?

The phenomena going on around him, the attitude of Jesus, the graciousness of His spirit on the cross, the silence when rebuked, the sense of being on a divine mission which He has finished.

But more than that.

Do you know why the centurion knew this was Son of God?

The only way anybody can ever know that, by the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 16:16-17, *Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."
17 Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.*

Peter knew Jesus to be the Son of the living God because the Holy Spirit told him that. That is a sovereignly revealed truth.

1 Corinthians 12:3, *Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.*

You don't conclude in your own mind as a human being. Here is the work of the Spirit of God.

The Spirit of God had taken this open-hearted centurion and a few of the other soldiers who were there in that scene and began through the work of Christ on the cross and through His attitude and His words and the phenomena all around to bring them to an affirmation of faith that only comes from the mind of God to the mind of man.

Luke 23:47, *So when the centurion saw what had happened, he glorified God, saying, "Certainly this was a righteous Man!"*

Certainly, this was a righteous man.

Why does he say certainly?

Because again he is affirming the truthfulness of it.

He is saying it without contradiction.

Pilate said Jesus is a righteous man.

Matthew 27:24, *When Pilate saw that he could not prevail at all, but rather that a tumult was rising, he took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this just Person. You see to it."*

Pilate's wife said that Jesus is a righteous man.

Matthew 27:19, *While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent to him, saying, "Have nothing to do with that just Man, for I have suffered many things today in a dream because of Him."*

Here comes the centurion whose heard all that and says, *"Certainly this is a righteous man."*

Then goes one step further, *"Yes, truly, this was Son of God."*

Luke 23:47 says he also glorified God.

There is no question about what God he is referring to. Scripture would not leave that open to be guessing.

He glorified the one true God, affirmed the absolute righteousness of Jesus Christ and then declared Him to be Son of God.

Now that kind of faith is saving faith.

If the thief on the cross by simply saying, *"Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom,"* can receive a guarantee of eternal salvation, certainly this man could with this kind of faith.

The centurion was redeemed. He was saved at the foot of the cross.

Do you understand the grace of God?

Do you understand the mercy of God?

Do you understand the love of God?

If you want to understand it, then understand this:

Jesus Christ, in the process of being crucified, redeemed His crucifiers.

Jesus in grace and love redeemed the men who put Him on the cross.

When Jesus said, *“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do”*

What did the Father do?

He forgave them.

That prayer was answered.

It was answered in the very moment of His death. It’s nice to know Jesus gets His prayers answered because I know He prays for us.

We see in their fear a recognition of sin, but we see in their confession a recognition of salvation.

God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit come together to demonstrate grace in a way that is absolutely beyond understanding, to redeem the crucifiers of the Son of God themselves.

When somebody comes along and says, “I am too evil. The Lord will never forgive me,” think again.

John 12:32, *And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.”*

In the cross Jesus was lifted up and indeed He drew a thief from one side and a group of soldiers from His feet to Himself.

Great love of God, unspeakable grace of God that He won the very soldiers that killed Him on that cross.

The first and the best response that a pagan could ever have would be the response of saving faith.

The centurion sets the standard for that.

2. Shallow conviction.

Matthew doesn’t comment on it, but Luke does.

Luke, looking at the very same scene, reporting the very same attitude of the centurion saw what was done, glorified God, said certainly this was a righteous man.

Luke 23:47-49, *So when the centurion saw what had happened, he glorified God, saying, “Certainly this was a righteous Man!”*

⁴⁸*And the whole crowd who came together to that sight, seeing what had been done, beat their breasts and returned. ⁴⁹But all His acquaintances, and the women who followed Him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.*

All the mob and the crowd that were there and they saw the same things.

- The darkness,
- The earthquake,
- The rocks splitting,
- The graves opening,
- The veil of the temple ripped.

They knew things were happening there that couldn't be explained humanly. They knew something very wrong was going on and they knew it was them.

- They would see that phenomena and they would hear **the words of Christ** and see the marvel of His personhood as He is on the cross.
- They would begin to remember that **He raised Lazarus** from the dead.
- They would remember that **He banished disease** from Palestine during His ministry.
- They would remember **His powerful cleansing of the temple** and His profound teaching while He was there.
- They would remember all there was about **Jesus that led them to hail Him as Messiah.**
- They would see all of this going around, and their understanding of **the Old Testament** would tell them that **God was judging.**
- They would feel guilt and they would feel sin, and they know something is wrong.

Luke 23:48, *And the whole crowd who came together to that sight, seeing what had been done, beat their breasts and returned.*

What is the meaning of beating their chest?

This is a sign combining terror, remorse, and guilt.

They begin to pound on their chests uncontrollably.

They are overwhelmed with a sense of guilt and responsibility.

The conduct of Jesus, His obvious innocence, the fact that they could never pin anything on Him, that He did claim to be the Son of God.

But after all, He raised the dead and healed the sick, His cries on the cross, all of it along with the phenomena drew them to a place of overwhelming guilt.

They pounded on their breasts.

That was a sign of their grief, guilt, remorse, and despair.

There are people who see the cross and they understand that Jesus is there because of their sins, He is bearing their sins.

They feel bad about that. They feel sad about that. The cross can be overwhelmingly penetrating, even to an unbelieving heart.

There is an overwhelming terror that grips your heart and says you maybe have violated holy God. Fear reigns supreme and overpowers every other thought in your mind.

But what is so shocking about verse 48, it says they smote their chests and returned. The word return tells volumes.

- They went home.
- There is no salvation.
- There is just conviction.

But they went home and it passed.

Like the people who come and hear the message today, and they feel conviction and maybe they shed tears, and anxiety in their heart. Their heart begins to beat, and the sweat comes out on their head.

They know that they are sinners and they are rejecting Jesus Christ. They are on their way to hell.

But they go home and it passes.

They turn on the television. They eat and watch a game. It is gone. Back to life as usual.

That is what these people did.

Shallow conviction.

- They felt sad.
- They felt sorry.
- They even felt guilty.
- They knew God was expressing disfavour.
- They knew they were the object of His disfavour.

But it passed. After all, at **3:00 the light came back** and there weren't any more aftershocks. Everything went back to normal. It passed.

On the day of Pentecost, a few weeks later, the same crowd is in Jerusalem, and the crowd is all gathered to hear Peter. No doubt there were many in that crowd who were there at the foot of the cross, who beat all over their breasts on their way back home.

Things had sort of cooled all down. But now Peter stands up to preaches. Peter indicts them for killing Christ. He tells about the resurrection, how God raised Christ from the dead.

Acts 2:36, *“Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”*

Peter says you have crucified the Messiah. You are at odds with God. Terrorizing thought.

Acts 2:37, *Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?”*

Being pricked in the heart is like beating on the chest, they were stabbed. As if a great blade just went right into their hearts. They were pained deeply because of the recognition that they had killed their own Messiah.

What do we do?

Acts 2:38, *Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

Acts 2:41, *Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.*

Some of those three thousand were that beat their chests on the cross scene.

Thank God that some of them came back here, and when they were confronted again and felt conviction, they came all the way to salvation.

But that certainly didn’t happen to all of them.

They beat their chests and went home. Shallow conviction.

So many people like that today. People like that here this morning.

- You will hear the message.
- You will listen to the story of the cross.
- You will hear about the centurion, the proper response.
- You will feel conviction, but you will go away.

It will pass.

Sad!

I hope and pray to God that someday there is a Peter in your life that comes along and preaches a message of conviction that you don’t let pass.

Paul wrote 1 Corinthians and just blasted the Corinthians because of their sin. The word came back to Paul that they were very sorry about their sin. They had a right response to his letter. They wanted to clean up their life and their church.

2 Corinthians 7:8-10, *For even if I made you sorry with my letter, I do not regret it; though I did regret it. For I perceive that the same epistle made you sorry, though only for a while. ⁹ Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing. ¹⁰ For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.*

What happens to people in the world who are just sorrowful all the time?

It will kill them.

- Maybe they will take their life.
- Maybe they will get an illness and die.
- Maybe they will become an alcoholic or a drug addict or try to lose themselves in something.

But the sorrow of the world is just a despair without relief.

- Ungodly sorrow leads to nowhere but to death.
- Godly sorrow leads to repentance which leads to salvation.

This is the difference between the soldiers and the crowd.

The soldiers were sorry. By the power of the Spirit of God and in answer to the prayer of Jesus, *"Father, forgive them,"* a sovereign prayer on behalf of those soldiers, they were saved.

The crowd were sorry but theirs was not a godly sorrow to repentance to salvation. Theirs was an ungodly worldly sorrow to despair.

Ungodly sorrow hasn't got repentance.

All it's got is resentment.

- It doesn't repent but just resents.
- It resents being caught.
- It is sorry for itself, not for God.
- It is sorry for the consequences to itself.

True godly sorrow hates the sin more than it hates the result of it.

Where true godly sorrow is, when someone hates the sin because it is a defiance of holy God. Not because they feel that it's created some problems in their life. Godly sorrow leads to repentance which leads to salvation.

Now that was the centurion not the crowd.

- The first two responses were true of unbelievers,
- The second two are characteristics of believers.
- The centurion and the soldiers were unbelievers when they came to saving faith.
- The crowd were unbelievers when they came to shallow conviction.
- The centurion and the soldiers were changed to believers.
- The crowd was not.

3. Sympathetic loyalty.

It is characteristic of these women.

V 55, *And many women who followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to Him, were there looking on from afar, ⁵⁶among whom were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's sons.*

Apparently at the beginning of the crucifixion they were afar off. There would be some space so the people would be kept back from the cross. There would be the soldiers, then the mass crowd of the Jews passing by along the road. Then somewhere in the distance, these women. They are not way far but not really part of the scene.

They are far off and yet they are definitely a part of the recognizable scene of the cross.

According to **Gospel of John**, they approach the cross and it is then that Jesus speaks to them and says, "Mary, here is John. John, here is Mary," and commits the two to each other for care.

They start off in a distance and they move closer.

They become more and more bold and courageous and finally, no doubt, are collected around the foot of the cross itself.

Now here are these women, loving, sympathetic, though their hopes are crushed and their dreams are dead, and they can't see beyond tomorrow and Jesus is gone.

They have been watching their Master die.

Their loyalties are so deep.

Their hearts are so filled with love and sympathy that they are not all led to leave, to flee, to run.

- They have no fear of the Jews.
- They have no fear of the Romans.

Nothing can overpower their love and their sympathy for Christ.

This is one of the most beautiful characteristics of a godly women, sympathetic loyalty.

You show me a virtuous godly woman, and I will show you in that woman's life a sympathy and loyalty that extends beyond that which can be produced in the life of a man, in most cases.

Women have a capacity for incredible loyalty and sympathy that men don't have.

We see this in the beauty of these women. They are fearless. They don't even mind the identification with the crucified Christ who has been mocked, scorned, and ridiculed.

This by their own people in the society in which they must exist. They are lovely. Their sympathy is magnificent. Their courage is beautiful.

Where are the disciples?

John 19:26-27, *When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold your son!"²⁷ Then He said to the disciple, "Behold your mother!" And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home.*

Only John was there.

The other ten are long gone. They are the big macho guys.

None of them are around. Just the women and John who seemed to have almost the kind of sympathetic heart that you see usually in a woman. John although he was anything but feminine since his nickname was "son of thunder."

The Gospel of Mark links the centurion with the women.

Mark 15:40, *"And there were also women"*

As if to include the centurion with the women. He would include the centurion with the women as over against the unbelieving crowd.

Many women, we don't know how many women.

Jesus' ministry included many women. No one has ever said that women are not a part of the ministry of Christ.

We don't know all of them.

Luke 8:1-3, *Now it came to pass, afterward, that He went through every city and village, preaching and bringing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with Him,² and certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities—Mary called Magdalene, out of whom*

had come seven demons,³ and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others who provided for Him from their substance.

They were women who were healed of demons, women who were healed of illnesses.

- They provided meals.
- They gave money.
- They gave garments.
- They gave out of their possessions, many women – provisions, resources, finances, hospitality.
- They attended the disciples and the Saviour as they went about in their Galilean ministry.

V 55, *they followed Jesus from Galilee.*

Luke 8 says they worked with Him in Galilee and when He came to Jerusalem for Passover and all the families would come.

These women who had attended to Jesus, along with their own families, came with Jesus. All the way through Peraea to the south across the Jordan, into Jericho and up to Bethany and they finally arrived. A long journey.

All during that time they were there to provide meals, to provide hospitality, to give financial help, to provide provision in any way they could.

Their service began in Galilee and ended up at the foot of the cross – loyal, sympathetic, unwavering, and faithful.

Jesus was the magnet of their souls. He just drew them and they stuck. He held them to Himself like the sun holds the planets in their orbit. They just never got away.

They ministered, *Diakoneō*, you get the word deacon from it. But originally in the gospels the word had to do with waiting on tables.

They served those unique needs of food and sustenance, that is not the perimeter of a woman's service, but that's the heart of it.

Paul in his letters urges them that the widow who is to be cared by the church is the one who has made provision for people in need and washed people's feet, shown hospitality, and served people.

The woman's role, its heart is in the home and in the caring to meet physical needs, as well of course, as spiritual ministry.

We are not limiting that, but that's the heart of it.

Luke 4:39 and Luke 10:40 we see the same word *diakoneō*, it has to do with serving tables with providing for physical needs.

Is it a demeaning thing?

Not hardly.

Do you realize that these women while all the disciples are hiding among the olive trees somewhere or in a cave, these women are the original eyewitnesses to the death of Jesus Christ? Do you realize before any man ever saw the risen Christ, a woman did?

Not just any woman, but one of these women.

Therefore, in the early church the primary sources for the reality of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ would be these loyally sympathetic women.

Do you think they would have a special place of love and recognition in the early church?

When the Apostles stood up to preach about their great courage, there might be some silent women smiling.

Don't ever underestimate how the Lord Jesus Christ looks upon the role of a woman.

The Lord Jesus gave these dear women the privilege of being the original eyewitnesses of the death and resurrection. Because they proved to be so faithful to Him.

In what looks to us so often as a small thing, but in His mind was a great thing because it marked out genuine faithfulness.

The Holy Spirit allows us the privilege to meet a few of them in **V 56**.

Mary Magdalene.

Not only does Matthew tell us about them, but the other writers tell us about them, particularly John does. But every time you read about Mary, and she hasn't appeared since **Luke 8** she was with Jesus in Galilee and had cast out of her seven demons.

She is not to be at all connected with that woman of sin in Luke 7. She was a woman demon possessed. The Lord sovereignly delivered her and redeemed her.

She was always called Mary of Magdalene means **Mary from Magdala**. Magdala was a little town on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee south of Capernaum.

Now the reason she is called that is because she has no husband and no children. If she had a husband or children, she would be Mary the wife of or Mary the mother of as the other two.

Mary the mother of Zebedee's children which is another way of saying she is Zebedee's wife.

One of these women is noted for her children.

Mary the mother of James, that's James the Less or James the little was an Apostle. She is known as the mother of an Apostle.

The other one isn't even given a name. She is just the mother of the children of Zebedee.

- She is a woman known by her husband,
- the other is a woman known by her children,
- the other is a woman known by her town which is because she has no husband or children.

The Lord gives all the categories to women. A woman's dignity can be as a single woman. There is a marvellous and blessed role for a single woman to play in the provision of God. **Mary Magdalene was the first one to see the risen Christ.**

There is also the great commendation of a woman who is a mother and an equally great commendation of a woman who is a wife. That is the singular greatest commendation of woman. She is the mother of or the wife if she indeed is married.

So that we wouldn't slur single ones, Mary Magdalene heads the list. But when it comes to a woman's unique role, it is a role of loyal sympathetic service to Christ as wife and mother, unless specially called to the role of singleness.

Mary, the mother of James and Joses is the mother of James the Less. Don't get him mixed up with big James, James the brother of John, the sons of Alphaeus or the sons of Zebedee.

We find here that this woman is identified as Mary the mother of James the Less and Joses.

Now in the other texts, she is called **the wife of Cleophas**, which means she is the mother of James and Joses and the wife of Cleophas. Always this is how the Bible identifies women, as the mother of and the wife of.

James the little is also called James the son of Alphaeus.

Cleophas and Alphaeus may be variations on the same name.

Those names indicating they are the same individual.

The mother of Zebedee's children, John tells us her name was Salome she also is the sister of the mother of Jesus, Mary.

The James and John are His cousins.

Mary of Magdala, Mary the wife of Cleophas also known as Alphaeus who's **the mother of James and John**. Then **Salome who is the sister of Mary**, the mother of Jesus and **the wife of Zebedee and the mother of James and John**. Also, John tells us **Mary the mother of Jesus** was there.

Know that they are always identified if they are married and if they have children as the wife of and the mother of because that is the distinct and wonderful and beautiful role of a woman.

In that role that she provides out of her provision substance for those who labour in the cause of Christ. God so highly honours that, that God has set these women in a unique place as special witnesses of His death and resurrection.

God wants to extol the highest virtue of woman.

Psalm 113:1-9, *Praise the Lord! Praise, O servants of the Lord, Praise the name of the Lord! ² Blessed be the name of the Lord From this time forth and forevermore! ³ From the rising of the sun to its going down The Lord's name is to be praised. ⁴ The Lord is high above all nations, His glory above the heavens. ⁵ Who is like the Lord our God, Who dwells on high, ⁶ Who humbles Himself to behold The things that are in the heavens and in the earth? ⁷ He raises the poor out of the dust, And lifts the needy out of the ash heap, ⁸ That He may seat him with princes— With the princes of His people. ⁹ He grants the barren woman a home, Like a joyful mother of children. Praise the Lord!*

God's highest calling for a woman and that's supported in the way they are identified even in the narrative in the gospel record and through that faithfulness at that level, God has exalted them to be eyewitnesses of His Son's death and resurrection.

How about you?

When the world is hostile toward Christ and they are jeering Christ and mocking Christ and laughing at Christ and scorning Christ, do you just fade away or are you there?

Are you there and the whole world around can know that you belong to Jesus Christ?

Is your love for Christ and loyalty to Christ so magnetic that you are attached to Jesus Christ no matter what it costs, no matter what anybody says, no matter what hostilities you have to endure, you are unwavering in your commitment?

4. Selfish fear.

We have exhausted all the verses.

What verse is this in?

It isn't in any verse.

Who is the illustration for selfish fear?

The disciples.

But it doesn't say anything about them.

It doesn't say anything about them there because they weren't there.

But that says a lot.

I really would have thought Peter would be there.

Why Peter?

He had gone out and denied Christ three times, heard the cock crow. The Bible says when he heard the cock crow, he went out and did weep bitterly. Poured out his heart.

Poured out his heart in weeping. He went through all the cleansing of his soul because of his denial.

When he gets that deal over surely, he will be there.

He went out and wept bitterly then went back in hiding.

Where are they?

Matthew 26:56, *“Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled.”*

When they should have been courageous, they were cowards.

Luke 22:31-34, *And the Lord said, “Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. ³² But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.” ³³ But he said to Him, “Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death.” ³⁴ Then He said, “I tell you, Peter, the rooster shall not crow this day before you will deny three times that you know Me.”*

Jesus said to Peter, but all the others Satan is going to shake you. But I have prayed for you that your faith fails not.

No matter how violently Satan may shake the believer, and he may come to times of doubt and fear, he will never lose his faith because his faith isn't in his own hands, it's in the hands of Jesus Christ.

Great hope, but how sad.

Isn't it sad that they weren't there?

Isn't it sad that He died alone with only the women and John?

Isn't it pathetic after all He had done they weren't there?

It still goes on.

There are still those of us and times for all of us when we should be standing for Christ in a situation and we aren't. We are gone somewhere.

We hide.

We fade.

The sifting is more than we want to endure.

We want to save our reputation or our name or our prestige or our career. We don't want to be named with Jesus Christ.

Conclusion:

You need to ask yourself where you are.

If you are an unbeliever,

Saving faith?

Have you seen the cross and said I want like that centurion to say, truly this is God's Son? Or
Are you like the crowd? You feel the conviction, but you are going to go home and it will pass.

If you are a believer, are you like the women?

Are you there with sympathetic loyalty standing for Jesus Christ, whatever the cost, no matter goes on around you? Or

Are you like the disciples in selfish fear, hiding somewhere so nobody finds out who you really belong to?