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## **Into the Neighborhood**

### **5 – Jesus and Mary**

Pastor Ted Cunningham

We're in this series, *Into the Neighborhood*. Today, we are talking about *Jesus and Mary*. We're going to talk about the family, we're going to talk about the church as a family, and what it means that Jesus became flesh and blood and moved into the neighborhood.

Here's how the Lord works in this series with me. Last week, I was excited. I got Shay's notes about how Jesus was often interrupted, but not distracted. I really took that with me all week, allowing for the interruptions in my life and, hopefully, you did as well. I saw the notes and I was excited.

I had a flight at 9:00 am out of DFW on Sunday and I was going to land in Springfield at 10:00 and be able to turn on the service and watch with the Church at Home family, and then make it down here for the 11:30. I get to gate B7 at DFW and the whole... I don't know if you've been on a plane lately, but planes are packed. People are traveling. I could tell about half the plane was coming to Branson to which I walk up to the gate and always cheer saying, "Thank you, spend lots of money!"

Anyway, the gate agent gets on and he goes, "Hey, I hate to do this to you folks, but we have a gate change. We're going to B42. Ugh, B7 to B42, that's quite a jaunt. There were moans and frustration at the gate. There were a lot of senior adults, walkers, canes, and wheelchairs. So, we get to B42 and we're there 10 minutes and the guy goes, "We've got a gate change; we're sending you to B3. There was no laughter like I'm hearing right now. It was, "I ain't going to Branson.? That was I was feeling from a lot of people.

You've got golf carts and wheel chairs and the thing the guy rides and yells at you as you're walking down through the airport. We hauled down there and I'm like... I get to B3 and there's no plane. I've got time to eat. I find another place to eat where I can see B3. No plane and I'm waiting. Fifteen minutes goes by and I'm like, *Man, I should probably check on this*. I go to a customer service and the lady looks at it and goes, "Yeah, you're at B42." I explained that we were at B42 and they moved us to B3.

She called someone and they had moved the whole gate back to B42. This is like a lot of jogging. This is a lot of workout. I don't believe them because I'm that type of person. I go to B3 and it's empty except for two senior adult couples that I know are coming to Branson, Missouri. The ladies are sitting there next to their husbands. The first guy is sitting there with his hands on his cane like this. The other guy is sitting on the walker. You know, the walker that's a chair too. I see them and I see the gates is empty.

I take off toward B42. I'm getting out of breath just telling you the story about the terminal. I get three or four gates down and I realize those two couple don't have a clue what's going on. I go back to B3 and asked if they were all going to Springfield? They said yeah. I told them we were back at B42 and the guy goes, "No, we're not." I said, "They put us back to B42." The guy sitting on his walker is like, "We're dying right here at B3; I ain't going back to B42."

Then I had this moment like what do you think happened? There's no gate agent. There's nobody at the gate. Do you think you beat everybody down here from B42? Is that what you think happened here? I said, "We all came here. We were here 10 minutes and we're back. You then got here late. We've got to get you to B42. I'm going to run, and I'll yell at the first gate agent I see to send you a golf cart. And I'm going to hold the plane for you." I'm really convincing at this type of stuff.

The guy on the walker is like, "We don't want to go." That's what he's saying. I'm going to B42. My watch goes, "Do you want to record this workout?" Absolutely I'm recording this workout. I get back down to B42 and ask them to hold the plane because they have four very old people at B3 stranded, like in the wilderness, and we've got to get them on this plane. The agent thanked me for telling her. I go, "Get somebody down there to help them."

I sit down and it's 10:20 to 10:25 and Shay starts preaching about life as this great adventure. I thought to myself, *at this church, that's what we call the sacred echo*. I'm laughing because this is exactly what Shay... Everybody on the plane... Half of them are napping because they've been working out all morning, like an hour of workout. But they are all just mad and you can see it. The pilot is apologizing and everything.

I'm 15 minutes into the sermon about this adventure and I hear "Make sure you have enough time in your schedule to be interrupted." Not distracted but interrupted. I'm laughing because I'm just putting my life... This is what you're supposed to do when you listen to a sermon. I don't know if you know this. You're supposed to put your life out there and say, "Lord, use this. Teach me and grow me." I'm sitting there and we're waiting and waiting. I know they are waiting on these four old people and they finally come in hobbling onto the plane. They are sitting near me and I take my headphones out and I go, "What an adventure we have had this morning!" They look at me and I go, "Woodhills.org, I want you to check it out. It's a little sermon that will reframe this whole situation for you."

I know you have stories like that. Today, as we look at this interaction at the cross between Jesus and Mary. Here's the lesson we want to get today. The church is a family, and we are called to care for one another. If you're waiting to care for other people, if you're waiting for circumstances, situations, seasons, and stages of life to be perfect, you're never going to care for anyone. We're called to care for each other in the family of God., Brothers and sisters in Christ, we're called to care for each other even when we're tired.

That's why I think this is a perfect message for Mother's Day because that's Mom. Let's start with Jason Brawner's illustration; I think it's perfect. The perfect mix between Mother Theresa and Hulk Hogan. Have you ever looked at a mom and said to yourself, "Why do I admire that woman? Why is that woman such a good mom?"

It's because she's not one or the other. She's both. Do you hear what I'm saying? Are you the perfect mix between Mother Theresa and Hulk Hogan? Where does she lean? More Hulk Hogan? Well good for you.

That was my mom. My mom leaned toward Hulk Hogan. She believed in public spankings. How many of you were spanked in public? Look around the room! Who thinks we should go back to public spankings? Yes! That would solve.... We would never be a socialist nation if we went back to public spankings. How many remember when your mom spanked you in public and people gathered around to cheer her on? Does anybody remember that? I can remember people saying to my mom, "Why did you wait until aisle 8; he needed it on aisle 2?"

The Mother Theresa mom is the permissive mom. She just loving caring and kind, but there are no boundaries, no consequences for breaking those boundaries. Rhonda, where do you lean. Hulk Hogan! Her whole family is pointing toward Hulk Hogan. Do we have any Mother Therasas in here?

Where Mother Theresa would be the permissive parent, Hulk Hogan would be the dominant parent. But this is why we need moms. If only dads were raising kids, all children would starve. Have you ever been at home... No, this is true. This happened I don't know how many times during the pandemic. The kids come into the family room, "Dad, are we eating something for lunch?"

"I don't know."

"I'm' hungry."

"You're hungry? I'm starving. Where's Mom?"

"She's out running errands."

"Well, call her and see when she's coming back. We gotta eat at some point."

How many dads know what I'm talking about and that's you? "You expect me to make something?"

Here's the lesson that we get. It's for all of us, not just moms today. A mom cares for her children when she's in pain, when she's tired, when she's exhausted. Moms just never stop caring, but a dad... Like when I'm sick, don't expect anything out of me. I can't help you.

I asked Katie, "How good is Matt at caring for Nash and Nora when he's sick." Katie just gave me a look. That's dads though. We need moms.

Today, we're going to see that Jesus did not come to be served but to serve. And in his hour of humiliation, suffering, and pain, he was still meeting the needs of people. And in the case we see today at the cross, the needs of his mom... He's still caring for her. That's what we need to get good at.

In this series, we've looked at just being aware of the people around us. Up until last week and then with Shay... And not only being aware of the people that are around you but being willing to interrupt your life and your schedule and your errands to notice people and spend time with people. Today, we are taking it another step. Can you do that when you are hurting and in pain?

Before we get there, let's start with Matthew. The Book of Matthew talks about our priority relationship with Jesus. This needs to be the priority of your home. And when Jesus is the priority of your life and your home, it's going to create enemies in your family. This is what Jesus teaches.

Matthew 10, <sup>34</sup> ***"Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword."*** What he's going to teach us today is when you choose to follow Jesus, he demands undivided allegiance. We looked at it in the first week of this series. There is no fence sitting with Jesus. You follow Jesus, and when you follow Jesus, people will come against you. The world will hate you when you stand up for Christ. When you stand on his word, they are going to come against you.

He says, <sup>35</sup> ***"For I have come to turn a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law..."*** You look at this and this is really harsh teaching. Here, Jesus is not teaching us to dishonor our parents. That's not at all what he is saying. What he is sharing with us is that by following him, it's going to bring a sword to relationships.

It goes on, <sup>36</sup> ***"a man's enemies will be the members of his own household."*** And some of you have experienced this. Some of you have experienced that when you place faith in Jesus and your parents hear about your new found faith in Jesus... I was just with a guy last week that came to know the Lord in his early 40s. He was saved in his early 40s and his parents have never accepted it. We hear this a lot when we have baptisms at our church. People are like, "I'm not going to be baptized; I'm not ready to be baptized because it would just crush my mom and dad if I were to be baptized after placing faith in Jesus." I just want to encourage you. Get baptized.

What Jesus is teaching us today is make Jesus the priority relationship of your life and then the overflow is all your other relationships. But Jesus is the priority. Some of you... Children have experienced this, parent have experienced this where parents have stood true to their faith and the Word of God and their child decides to go a different direction. The child chooses a different lifestyle and Mom and Dad continue to stay strong in their faith yet even while... This is the "enemies will be members of his household" even while that child is frustrated with them. Mom and Dad, who are still in the midst of that, care for and love that child.

***37 "Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. 38 Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. 39 Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it."***

Do you know what Jesus is teaching us? He is the source of your life and every other relationship is the overflow. In other words, prioritize your relationship with Jesus over your relationship with your children because that's the overflow. Let Jesus be the source.

After I do a funeral, I always carry the order of service, the obituary of the person that we celebrated in that service in my Bible for a few weeks after the funeral. This is Dorothy Gabriel's celebration of life service. I do that to pray for the family and I do that to continue to mourn with the family and to mourn with hope.

I was so encouraged at Dorothy Gabriel's funeral to see her three children, Debbie, Donnie, and Doug get up here. I'm telling you it ministered to me because here were three children... Yes, they had a lot of great family stories and they have so many sweet memories as a family, but those were all the overflow. Everything was about Dorothy's relationship with the Lord, her priority in her relationship with the Lord. And she had three kids up here expressing that priority and it was the overflow.

Prioritize your relationship with Jesus over your relationship with your parents as well. Let your undivided allegiance with Christ guide you, and when you do that, guess what? By the way, when Jesus says there will be enemies in your own household, I have to say... It's the same thing we've said at this church time and time again. When Jesus says, "If the world hates you, don't be surprised because it hated me first," he's not giving Christians a challenge to live up to. He's not saying go be a jerk and try to get people to hate you. Jesus isn't teaching us in Matthew that you should try to make enemies with your mom and dad and your children. No, he's saying, "By following me, this could happen. A sword could come to your family."

Now I want to take you to the sword that comes to Mary and the pain that she's going to go through, the agony that she is going to go through. As we look at Mary today on Mother's Day, I just want to be really clear. Mary is someone we can honor, someone we can admire, someone we can learn from, but we do not worship her.

In Luke 2, we hear the story of Joseph and Mary and Jesus going to the temple courts. Jesus is going to be blessed, and there is this man named Simeon. All that we know about Simeon is what Luke tells us in Chapter 2. Luke 2 is often where we go at Christmas time. What we know about Simeon is what Luke tells us. We know that he is a devout man, he's a righteous man, he is led by the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit is moving in him, moving him. And this is so important – the Holy Spirit tells him because he's anticipating the consolation of Israel. He's excited for the Messiah. The Holy Spirit tells him the Messiah will come before he dies. And then the Holy Spirit moves him to the Temple courts where he holds Jesus, blesses him, and praises God.

But then he says something to Mary that we need to see today. Luke 2 – **34 Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, 35 so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed.** Jesus will cause people to make a decision. You will have to make a decision of where you are with him. And then watch what he says. Sometimes we can read over this. This is to Mary. **"And a sword will pierce your own soul too."**

Every mom in here can understand this. What he is saying to Mary is, “You are going to experience so much agony when you see your son rejected. You’re going to experience pain and suffering as you see Jesus go through this.”

That’s when we go to the Cross, and we read in John 19, **25 Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. 26 When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved (John) standing nearby, he said to her...** Look at this. He is on the cross. This is one of his statements from the cross, his third statement from the cross. In the middle of all of this, he is going to take time to care for his mom and to bless his mom. **“Woman, here is your son,” 27 and to the disciple, “Here is your mother.” From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.**

This is the lesson for us today as a church family, as the family of God. **Jesus, in his hour of humiliation, excruciating suffering and pain, was eager to care for his mother in her hour of need.** Would that be true with every follower of Jesus in here when we’re going through difficult, challenging, painful seasons.

I’ve been so grateful all week when I’ve thought about last year and the suffering, the difficulty, the difficult time that our nation and the world has been in, this church family was a family. You were caring for the needs of one another, you were caring for the needs of your community. I think this is what happens too often when we go through difficult times, “Well, I just need to close in and take care of myself. I won’t be good to anybody else if I don’t take care of myself.”

We call that self-care. Self-care has the purpose of making sure you are as full of the love of God as possible, you are as full as possible so you can care for the needs of other people.

But how do you know the difference between self-care and selfishness? Selfishness is when you’re only meeting your needs and only caring about you and what you want and what you desire, and you never think about the needs of other people. That’s how you know self-care is moving to selfishness, when it’s only about what you’re going through.

What we learn today, as Jesus moves into the neighborhood, is that Jesus is the head of the church and calls us to care for one another even in difficult seasons and suffering.

We read in Galatians 6:2 that we’re called to carry each other’s burdens. That’s what the church is supposed to do. When you’re suffering, we’re supposed to come alongside you. When I’m suffering, you’re supposed to come alongside me. When you have a friend or family member in here who is hurting, in pain, humiliated, going through a difficult time maybe in town, going through a difficult time in their business, you come alongside and you care, you reach out.

And by the way, when someone comes alongside you to help you carry your burden and care for you during this time, it doesn’t mean you just drop your load on them and move on. No, you continue to carry. That’s why when you read the letters the Paul writes to the church family in the New Testament, you’ll see this all throughout the New Testament – “Brothers and sisters.”

Baptists love this term. They label their bathrooms with this. We still go with Men and Women. That's a whole message for another day. Anyway, brothers and sisters. Do you know what he's saying? We're family. And what does family do? Raise your hand if your family exhausts you. They frustrate you. You're worn out. With long periods of time with family, you are just going to be worn out. No mom in here has ever said this. When your little kids are wearing you out, you don't say, "Well, guess what? This is so exhausting that I'm not feeding you for three days." No. You still care for the people who exhaust you. You still care for the people who are the biggest pain in the butt you'll ever meet sometimes.

Here's what we read about brothers and sisters. We bear with each other. We don't just put up with each other, even though we do put up with each other, we bear with each other and we continue to strive. We don't hop from church to church. No, it's like, "You're driving me crazy and I'm in it with you." "I will bear with it and you just offended me and I'm going to forgive you."

I give you plenty of opportunities to practice forgiveness in this church family. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. He is the head, and he calls us to care for one another, to bear with one another. What does that mean? We care for one another through difficult seasons like pandemics. I have to be honest. When I saw churches just kind of back away and just post a few things online, I was thinking this is when the church should be stepping up the most during a difficult season, through clashing opinions called political election cycles.

We have differences of opinion. Listen, Amy and I don't agree on everything, but we're still married. We disagree on a lot, but we bear with each other, we forgive. That's the church. Even when you're hurting, even when your feelings are hurt, you bear with others. When you have limited funds, when you feel like quitting, this is when we lean in. Why? Because we are a church family. The church is not a building, the church is not a day of the week, the church is not an event, it's a family where we bear with one another.

**We struggle together.** We figure things out.

**We suffer together.** We should.

**We endure together.** We don't quit on each other. Why? Because we know who the true and only source of life is and as we're full, we give to one another. We're bearing and forgiving and caring for one another.

**We mourn together.** As for the case just last week and all throughout the seasons of life, and as Katie shared so beautifully this morning, we mourn together. You're not supposed to do that alone. You have a family that comes alongside you that encourages you and helps you.

I can't encourage you enough that if today is the day you're just popping in and you pop in every now and then and you pop in on special holidays or occasions, give Jesus your whole heart, undivided allegiance. Prioritize him in all of your relationship and allow your other relationships – family, friends, co-workers – to be the overflow. Join this church family where we're together through it all no matter what's coming at us. We don't back away when things get hard even during difficult seasons, stages of life, pain. We still lean in, we press in and we care for one another.

Father, what a morning it has been to be encouraged by the moms and their stories. I thank you for Katie and Kari and Suzette and Denise and Bonnie sharing today, encouraging this church family. And the moms that are here today, the moms who are hurting, the children who have lost moms... We know many have lost moms in the last year. As Katie said, we hear them, we see them, we mourn with them. So, we know today is a day, as a church family, that we really get to practice all of this family life together.

For the one who has never placed faith in Jesus, that today would be the day of their salvation. That they would confess with their mouth Jesus is Lord, confess their sin, believe in the heart that he has been raised from the dead that they would be saved.

We pray all of this in the name of Jesus, and everyone agreed and said... Amen.