



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: The Word of Comfort: An Easter Message From Pastor Ed Young

Guest(s): Pastor Ed Young

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Dr. James Dobson: Hello, everyone, this is Family Talk, which is a division of The James Dobson Family Institute, and I'm your host, Dr. James Dobson. Early one Sunday morning, my wife, Shirley, and I were listening to a televised message delivered by my good friend Dr. Ed Young of *Winning Walk*. I was so inspired by what he had to say that day that I wrote a note to our vice president of media the next day and I asked him to contact the *Winning Walk* team and ask for permission for us to air the recording of Dr. Young's message, and we wanted to do that on Good Friday. And guess what? That's today. Well, they generously granted us permission to do that and we're gonna let you hear that recording today. This message will help prepare you for Easter Sunday morning, two days from now, as we remember the death and Resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Here now is Dr. Ed Young.

Pastor Ed Young: I love to read biography. I've read a lot of biographies. Somehow when you walk inside the skin of men and women, significant, insignificant, historical, biblical, I just love biography. How many of you like biographies? Lift your hand. Yeah, yeah, a lot of us do. It's something about it; it keeps us awake a little better than other types of literature. But, if you've read a lot of biographies you'll notice something: the account of the central character's death is usually very brief, sometimes just a sentence, or a page; sometimes maybe a small chapter toward the end.

But, when you study the story of Jesus, do you realize that half, almost half, of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John take up the last few days of His life. Interesting. That's out of the ordinary. I doubt you'll find another biography ever written in which the preponderance of the story takes up the last days of his life, and a big hunk of that is his death and resurrection. Why do you think that is? It's because the death of Jesus, and the resurrection of Jesus, is central in understanding the good news of what God has done for man in Jesus Christ.

We always sing, "Jesus keep me near the cross," and we have in our Christian vocabulary, "stay near the cross; cling to the cross; kneel at the cross; run to the cross; don't ever get far away from the cross." Right? Isn't that a part of our vocabulary? All your sins are washed away at the cross, at the cross. What's that all about? Is that just some slick little Christian words that we throw out? "Boy, just stay near the cross; man, don't get far away from the cross; linger at the cross; follow at the cross; cry at the cross; go to the cross." What's that all about?

Now, another question. If you had been in Jerusalem on the day of the crucifixion; maybe Passover, happened to be there, how near to the cross would you have been? You reckon? I've thought about that. You know, reckon I'd been to the cross? Do you think I'd have gone there? Would you? "I went to the Passover..." but would I have been there? What's the importance of being near to the cross? I thought about that and I said, "You know, I want to learn what this really means and understand it," so I thought it'd be good if we interviewed some of those people who were near the cross, who were under the cross, who were standing at the cross. We could go and interview them and ask them, "Why are you here?" And, we would learn something from those who were at the cross.

That's our Scripture. Look at it. "Therefore," verse 25, "the soldiers did these things." We looked at that, the soldiers. "But standing by the cross of Jesus were His mother, His mother's sister, the wife of Cleophas, Mary Magdalene, and when Jesus then saw His mother, the disciple He loved was standing nearby." That's John. Five of them at the cross; four were women. Where are the big courageous men? Five were at the cross, standing near the cross, under the cross; four were women. Does that embarrass any of you guys? What about all of our courageous masculinity? Where were the men? Had one: John. But, let's interview those. It says, "Standing by the cross of Jesus was his Mother."

Mary was standing by the cross. Surprise anybody? You see Mary ... We go back to the Gospel of Luke, Mary was told she was pregnant, and look at her response in verse 29 when Gabriel came. Of Luke Chapter Number 1. One word I want you to see. "And coming in he said to her," Gabriel, "'Greetings, favored one. The Lord is with you', but she, Mary, was very perplexed." The Greek word there, I want you to see it, diatarasso, and it's translated troubled, perplexed, afflicted, greatly burdened, this word. Troubled, I think, is the best translation. We see ... As you look at the life of Mary you see trouble. Troubled by the fact she was a virgin, engaged to be married and now she was pregnant, trouble, trouble. We know an angel, Matthew tells us, appeared to Joseph explaining to him. She responded and said, "I will do the will of God. Not my will but thy will be done," almost presupposing the same battle that Jesus had in Gethsemane that we've looked at very closely. She was troubled.

To be sure, when Jesus, when He was 12 didn't leave with the rest of them; they had to go back and find Him. A mother, she'd be troubled wouldn't she? Absolutely she'd be troubled. She'd be troubled. Trouble. Trouble just covered the life of the virgin Mary, because of Jesus, Jesus her virgin-born son. She would be troubled. What about when the family went to Jesus while He was teaching in the middle of His ministry there in Galilee, and his family, his brothers, four brothers, at least two sisters; they said, "Man, He's out of His mind. Have Him come out here; we'll take Him home." He wouldn't even go out to greet His family. Mary was troubled, troubled right, right? Mothers, you understand that. She would have been troubled.

But we interview Mary, the mother of our Messiah, and we ask her, "Why are you near the cross?" We're gonna learn. "It's because," she would tell us "I believe. I believe; I don't understand all these side streets; I don't understand the persecution; I don't understand the religious leaders condemning Him; I don't understand the brutality of Rome. I didn't expect this, but I'm here because in all the mystery of the cross, and the unjust trial and death of my Son, I stand here because I believe." At the foot of the cross you discover belief, belief.

Then, let's interview the next one at the cross. It says, "Mary's sister." It would be Salome. Name ring a bell? Salome was the wife of who? Do you remember who? The wife of the man who gave birth to two of the apostles, James and John; the wife of Zebedee, right. Remember what Salome had did, had gone to Jesus just a few days before and said, "Jesus, I see you're coming, your kingdom I want my boys to be Vice President and Secretary of State." Hello. She was at the foot of the cross. What do we see; why was she there? She says, "I'm here in light of the cross; I'm experiencing humility." At the foot of the cross you find humility, ladies and gentlemen. That's what Salome found, humility. All the pride to push in first place; now she wasn't saying, "You know I don't know, where are my boys?" Remember Caiaphas when he was examining Jesus, He said, "Where are your disciples? Where are your followers? You're here by yourself." Jesus didn't answer, remember. They were A-W-O-L, absent without leave. They'd run away.

But here Mary was there. She's saying, "I believe." Salome was there. She's saying, "I'm humbled, I'm humbled. I pushed my boys in. I'm humbled." Then we have another Mary. Three Marys were there. Mary the wife of Cleophas. Remember him? I had to look up Cleophas. Cleophas was one of the disciples Jesus met in the road to Emmaus. Evidently she was there because she had been a follower of Jesus and she didn't understand His death. She was there because she was simply faithful, because we see from the account there on the road that her husband was evidently a faithful disciple and, therefore, Jesus, remember, revealed Himself to him in that resurrected appearance. So, she was there simply, "I'm faithful." So, you find faithfulness at the cross; you find belief at the cross; you find humility at the cross, if you interview those who were standing near the cross, staying near to the cross.

Then, Mary Magdalene was there. Why was she there? What would you learn from Mary Magdalene? You would learn, I think, one word: redeemed. She had seven devils; she lived a viscous, immoral life. Salvation means that you have been released, and it means you have been healed.

But, there's one man there. There's John, the beloved disciple John. John, you're here. Now, you ran away like the rest of them; you were not even as bold as Peter to warm around the fire there, but you are now back here at the strategic time at the cross. John, why are you here? He says, "I'm here to be forgiven." You find forgiveness at the cross.

What these five individuals found, it's available for all of us. That's the reason we're to stay near the cross; we're to go to the cross; we're to kneel before the cross. He said, "I'm forgiven." What a story John would tell. Not only the gospel of John did he write, but he wrote the book of Revelation. He was the one who lived longer than the other apostles and God, in his divine economy, just lifted a little bit the lid from Heaven and let John see all the way into eternity. Man, what a privilege that he had.

"At the cross, at the cross where I first saw the light, and the burden of my soul rolled away. It was there by faith. I received my sight, and now I'm happy all the day!" At the cross. Will we interview those people we picked? I'd say, "By the way, there was somebody else there; He was hanging on the cross." What was that? Salvation. We've already looked at it, rescue and healing. Rescued by the cross, by Calvary, by the shed blood of Jesus, and healing by the resurrection in and out of us forever. "At the cross, at the cross where I first saw the light, and the burden of my soul rolled away. It was there by faith I received my sight, and now I'm happy all the day!" At the cross. That's why we say, "Come to the cross, kneel at the cross." Salvation was there, too, summarizing all the rest of it, at the cross as we look at this experience.

Now, we have those final words, phrases in this third word of Jesus. He looks at Mary and says, "Woman, behold your Son," and pointed to John. Looked at John, his closest, best, most intimate friend and said, "John, from now on this is your mother." All this from the cross, from the cross. The two people in the flesh Jesus most loved, his mother and John, his mother and John. He provided for them. Now, just get this in your mind. I had a tough time getting ahold of this. Here is Jesus in a cosmic transaction, get that, a cosmic transaction. He is the propitiation; He is the substitute for all of mankind leaving a way for human beings to find a way all the way to God and all the way to Heaven. That is taking place there on the cross. But, what does He do? He remembers His family responsibilities.

I know a lot of people in my profession and they say, "Well, you know, the preacher's kids are always bad kids; they're always rebellious; they always go astray. Ah, ah, ah, ah, ah. "Boy the preacher is doing all this godly work; he doesn't have any time for his family." Or, "You're so active in the church and always teaching, and I didn't have ..." Let me tell you something. Whatever your calling, your highest responsibility under God, first of all is to make sure that you are there as a spiritual leader, as a mom, or a mother, in your family. Here is Jesus, let me say it again, with a cosmic transaction and He thought of His mom, and He thought of His best buddy, and there was a Jewish adoption that took place. It reaffirmed John. He didn't say, "John, I know you ran. I know you weren't there when I needed you." He just reaffirmed him and it gave security for His mother, because evidently the rest of the kids had all disappeared.

Two little quick things that I'll bump into. First is the resurrection experience. There's one resurrection account which talks about, remember Peter and John ran to the tomb there on Easter morning? Do you remember that one? They got

there ... It's in the gospel of John, by the way. They ran there and John says that he outran Peter. Read it, it says John outran Peter; "Beloved disciple outran Peter." He got there first. Peter got there second, little overweight. John didn't go in; Peter went in and saw all the clothes there and he said, "Man, man, He's gone." He believed, and they began to believe He was resurrected. Then it says they went to their own house. They left there, John went back home following this view of an empty tomb. Why do you think he went back home? I think he went back home to tell Mary, the mother of Jesus; that's why he went back home. "Mary, we don't know what's going on; we didn't understand the cross, but I'll tell you the tomb is empty and everything is laid in place." He went home to tell Mary, the adopted son.

Show you something else that I think is so interesting. In Acts chapter number 1, I think it's verse 14, we have ... This is the crucifixion; now we have resurrection; now they're going to the upper room to pray for Pentecost. It names all the apostles that are there, and he says, "Mary went there with her four sons," the A-W-O-L brothers of Jesus. Mary went there with James, and Joseph, and Simon, and Jude, her other four sons. Evidently now, following the resurrection, healing had taken place in the family. Jesus said, "I came like a sword to divide," but also He came like one who healed. At the cross, at the cross, do we learn anything from these four ladies? Do we learn anything from him who was dying on the cross? Absolutely. We find belief; we find humility; we find redemption; we find salvation. All at the cross, at the cross, at the cross where we first saw the light.

Do you know how Memorial Day began? To remember those who died in our nation's service? Anybody know? Better not guess; I know. Memorial Day didn't begin after the Revolutionary War. Well, there was some Memorial Day celebration. Memorial Day really began, and the pressure to make it official on our calendar, following the Confederate War. Surprise? Following the Confederate War in 1866, in the Confederate cemetery outside of Columbus, Mississippi. There is a Confederate cemetery, and the mothers owned this particular weekend. The mothers of Confederate sons who had died, went out there with just carloads of flowers and covered all the graves of their sons, and their husbands, who died in the Confederate war. I mean, the whole ... It was a sea of flowers in this Confederate cemetery.

When they got back they looked around and they saw just grassy spots in this Confederate cemetery. They were not covered with flowers. They went out there and discovered that Union soldiers were also buried all through this Confederate cemetery. Those mothers said, "You know, there are mothers there up North who they don't know where their sons are buried, and they're not here," and they went and took flowers and put them on all the Union soldier graves who gave their life. Now the whole cemetery was covered with flowers. That was where Memorial Day began, right there in that cemetery.

There's something about a mother, isn't it? Something about a mom. Memorial Day is a reflection of Mother's Day, and we see how important it is to see Mary the mother of Jesus standing by the cross of her only begotten son. Ladies and

gentleman, that is where you and I need to abide, to stand, to kneel, because it is there we discover belief; it is there we find humility; it is there we find steadfastness; it is there we find salvation; it's all there at the foot of the cross so we can pray, "Jesus, keep me near the cross, bring me to the cross, because there is a point of new life."

Dr. James Dobson: Well, this is James Dobson again. Were you moved by this message as much as I was? The sorrow and the sadness of four women watching a man that they dearly loved dying in agony on the cross. That must have been profound. The disciples had run away, all but one, but here were these five people who wept there as Jesus uttered the final words, "It is finished." What grief Mary must have experienced on that occasion while her first-born son left this life. I doubt if she fully understood the meaning of the crucifixion. I'm not even sure theologians fully understood it for some time, but Mary believed anyway. Take those images with you as you celebrate the resurrection of Christ on Sunday morning. Don't let Easter dinner or your new clothes, or the coming of Spring distract you. Come there meaningfully to celebrate the resurrected Christ.

Announcer: This has been a presentation of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute.