

John 19:23-27 – Lent 2 Wednesday – Behold, Your Mother – March 4, 2026

+In Nomine Iesu+

A recent study shows that people spend an estimated 95% of their awake time thinking about themselves and their own lives, interests, desires, problems, and obsessions. One author put it this way, “I may not be much, but I’m all I think about.”

With thousands of daily thoughts, the majority are self-focused. I am not sure how they did the math, but they suggest that humans have 6,000 to 80,000 thoughts per day, with almost all of them being repetitive and heavily focused on personal situations, roles, desires, and interests. We have a real problem with vanity, ego, and the tendency to obsess over ourselves.

The good news is that most people are not thinking about you very much. They don’t care about what kind of car you drive. They aren’t analyzing your clothing choices, your hairstyle, or even if you came to church late. They can’t. They are too busy thinking about themselves.

And often, even when we are thinking about others—it is limited to how they have offended us—what they have done to us—or what they have not done for us. We focus on their faults and failures as they impact us. But this is just another form of thinking about ourselves—as we expect others to conform to our expectations.

I hope you can see that such self-obsession isn’t healthy. We were not created to think about ourselves so much. This is even one definition of sin—to be turned in on ourselves. We are created to be thinking about God—and the things of God—and we are created to be thinking about the good of our neighbors.

The commandments send our focus away from the self. It is as Jesus says in Matthew 22, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”

And it is as Paul says in Colossians 3, “If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.”

C.S. Lewis in *Mere Christianity* said, “Look for yourself, and you will find in the long run only hatred, loneliness, despair, rage, ruin, and decay. But look for Christ and you will find Him, and with Him everything else thrown in.” There is real *freedom* when we turn away from self-obsession. The more we are absorbed in something other than ourselves, the more human we actually become.

Even in moments of grief, if we are focused on ourselves and our loss—the closer we get to despair. But if we focus on the needs of others—and on the promises of Christ—we find relief. In moments of anger—if we are focused on our problems, our hurts, our conflicts—we just make things worse. But if we remember the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, we can pass that same grace to others.

Jesus is helpful for us here. I guess He is always helpful. But His words from the cross really assist us in reorienting our thoughts. And we find that even in the midst of this most difficult moment—His thoughts are fixed on doing God’s will and serving our needs.

Each of the Gospels records words from Jesus on the cross. None of them contain them all. Matthew and Mark each contain one—and it is the same one—and we will deal with it next week. Luke and John each contain three—even though their lists are quite different.

Jesus’ statements are some of the most sacred and treasured utterances we know. And Lent is a good time to slow down and deal with them intentionally. These words show that Jesus knew what He was doing. He understood the meaning of His death. And Jesus is full of compassion and grace, even while being crucified.

And it is as He said back in John 10. Talking about His life, He says, “No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.”

We are a few weeks into these sayings now. We have heard Jesus pray to the Father, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” And we have heard Jesus address the thief on the cross who looks to Him in faith, “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.”

In our reading today, we hear Jesus speak to John the Disciple and Mary, the Mother of Our Lord. Now, John, as he writes, calls himself the Beloved Disciple. Context makes his identity clear. And his authorship is affirmed by the Church Fathers. This doesn’t mean that John was more loved than the others. He doesn’t think himself better than the others—at least not anymore.

At one point he and his brother James asked for seats of honor in the kingdom of God—at Jesus’ right and left. But Jesus responds, “To sit at my right hand and at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father.” Our thieves from last week hold these positions as Jesus comes into His kingdom. And this too tells us something of what Jesus is doing on the cross.

But now, for John it is simple humility. The cross will give him some perspective on exaltation and humiliation. As he writes, he doesn’t think he has the right to name himself as he tells the story of Jesus. Even so, of all of the Twelve, he alone is at the cross.

But there are other followers of Jesus present beyond John and Mary. These include Mary the wife Clopas, and Mary from Magdala—Mary is a popular name—and finally Jesus’ aunt, Mary’s sister, likely Salome—John’s mother. If this is so, Jesus and John are first cousins through their mothers. And it might even explain why Jesus will entrust Mary to his care. That’s what this conversation is all about.

Jesus speaks when He sees His Mother and the Beloved Disciple standing before Him. There are just two lines here. “Woman, behold, your son!” “Behold, your mother!” His form of address is respectful—even warm—in Greek. He calls her the same at the beginning of the Gospel when He turns water into wine at Cana of Galilee. And with these pronouncements, He places Mary under John’s protective care.

This should not surprise us. In Jesus' culture, extended family was extremely important. And John was clearly a man of faith and courage. Church tradition tells us that John took Mary with him all the way to Ephesus—where he served as bishop—and that she ultimately died there.

We know that Jesus had brothers and sisters. In Mark 6, James, Joses, Judas, and Simon are mentioned. Although Jesus' brothers had abandoned Him. They took offense at Him. They accused Him of being insane. All the way back in John 7, John tells us that Jesus' brothers did not believe in Him. It is as Jesus says, "A prophet is not without honor, except in his hometown and among his relatives and in his own household."

Although, there is still hope for them. They are not present with Jesus now. But the resurrection will make all the difference. Paul records the visit of the resurrected Jesus to His brother James. And he believes. James would become the leader of the Church in Jerusalem. He will even write an Epistle, alongside his brother Jude—Judas.

Now, as a quick aside—some have taken Jesus' statements here to suggest that Mary is Mother—not just for Jesus—and now for John—but for the whole Church. And that she has something to offer us in the economy of God.

Now, she is an excellent example of faith. In her Magnificat, she confesses, "For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed." And she is entirely right. Her presence at the cross is especially admirable. What a horrible thing for her to have to witness—even as she rests in the promises of God that she received through Gabriel and Simeon.

And we do like the title that the Church has long held for her as the Mother of God. But this is primarily a statement about Jesus. It is simply an affirmation of the Virgin Birth and the Incarnation of Jesus—who is truly God of God, Light of Light.

Doubtless, she does pray for us. This is what the saints who go before us into eternity do—they pray—they worship. It is what we will do when we join the thief on the cross in paradise. But we are not to call on Mary in prayer or to ask Mary for help. She too needs this Savior—who is also her Son.

In Scripture, it isn't Mary who functions as our Mother—it is the Church. Paul tells us in Galatians 4, "The Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother." And as you dig into his ideas there—alongside this same John in Revelation—as he talks about the New Jerusalem as the people of God—we see that the Church is our Mother—rather than Mary.

But in our reading, we see what value Jesus places upon her. And it is a beautiful picture of what God does for His people. I hinted at my main point in last week's introduction. Jesus—this Man of Sorrows—one acquainted with grief—as He bears the sins of many—thinks of the good of Mary—at this very moment—even her temporal good. Mary is a widow at this point in the story. Jesus is dying. Her other children are yet to trust in Jesus. And even in His resurrection, Jesus temporal life with her would be radically changed. He must ascend to the Father.

And so, Jesus cares for her needs. He provides her with John—this man of faith—this faithful Disciple—to watch over her wellbeing. Doubtless these three days would be

especially difficult. God has never promised us freedom from sorrow in this life—only that in Him it is redemptive.

And only someone like John—who shares her loss—and her faith—would truly understand. While suffering under the weight of God’s wrath—Jesus takes a moment just for her. He is selfless. And He puts His own house in order.

Jesus displays His care for His mother as both she and the beloved disciple are passing through their darkest hour—on their way to the full Christian life. He even orients their lives to one another. This is a thoughtful provision for their needs at a moment of supreme devastation.

Jesus is also conscious and aware of the plan of redemption at this moment. He is fixated on obedience to the Father. He is even thinking about our needs for forgiveness, life and salvation—that’s what the cross is all about. His life is rightly ordered, even as He suffers. It’s quite remarkable. There is much here to admire. And this moment—above all—reorients our thinking too.

So, what are you thinking about today? Who are you thinking about? Let’s make the conscious effort to think about others—their needs—their eternal good. And even more, let’s fix our thoughts on our Lord Jesus Christ, crucified—the power of God—and the wisdom of God. Such thoughts will serve us well.

Next week we turn to what may be the most difficult word of Jesus from the cross. I mentioned earlier that both Matthew and Mark include this statement from Jesus. It is called the cry of dereliction, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

This is not some statement of frustration with God the Father. Even this word is for us—rather than for Him. Here, Jesus quotes from Psalm 22. And knowing this helps us to understand Him rightly. Read that Psalm this week. And it will help us come to grips with what Jesus is saying—and the meaning of the cross. Until then, **may the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.**

+Soli Deo Gloria+