

“GETTIN’ YOUR HOUSE IN ORDER” (Take Care of Those Near To You)

by Rom A. Pegram (10/23/16)

Let’s begin today with our scripture lesson from John 19:25-27 (TEV): “Standing close to Jesus’ cross were his mother, his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶ Jesus saw his mother and the disciple he loved standing there; so he said to his mother, ‘He is your son.’ ²⁷ Then he said to the disciple, ‘She is your mother.’ From that time the disciple took her to live in his home.”

We’re told in Hebrews 12:2 (TEV), “Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, on whom our faith depends from beginning to end. He did not give up because of the cross! On the contrary, because of the joy that was waiting for him, he thought nothing of the disgrace of dying on the cross, and he is now seated at the right side of God’s throne.” And, folks, that’s exactly what I want to do today ... as we continue in the series about ‘getting through our bad days.’ I want us to look to Jesus—to really see, maybe for the first time, what all took place on that first Good Friday ... on the cross. Let’s take just a moment to look at the reality of the circumstances of that day...

Here is Jesus hanging on the cross, spikes driven through his hands and his feet, hung up like a common criminal. And it all happened because of false accusations pressed by the Jewish elite and by the actions of a very weak Roman procurator ... who knew that he was wrong in doing what he did. Crucifixion is one of the cruelest means of death; that’s why it was the killing method of choice by the Roman Empire. Death is never pretty, folks. This kind of death—in particular—is as ugly as they come! Yet, in the midst of this very torturous death, Jesus was still conscious. Even though it was probably very difficult for him to speak by this time (with his lungs and vocal chords being pulled on), he finds it within him to speak up...

Is Jesus hanging there feeling sorry for himself ... like many others would be doing? No! What’s on his mind are those who are nearest to him—those he loved the most and those who were present with him during this very horrible time of his life. What was on Jesus’ mind was ‘getting his house in order,’ so to speak...

Jesus was thinking about his *mother* and about her needs, in light of his upcoming death. Who was going to be her *social security* in her old age? Who was going to comfort her, as a mother, in the death of her oldest son? Who was going to help her to get through the pain of the day that she felt as Jesus’ biological mom? Who was going to help her get through the pain of the day that she felt as one of Jesus’ most faithful disciples? He told her, “(Dear) woman, ... here is your son.” ‘Woman,’ in this instance, was the equivalent of ‘Ma’am’ and was a sign of respect in Jesus’ day. He cared what happened to this ‘dear woman’ in his life...

Jesus was also thinking of his *best friend*, the disciple whom he loved the most—John. (Understand, here, that Jesus didn’t play favorites ... as some leaders do. Sometimes, it seems that way with John. But, remember that ‘love responds in kind.’ We’re to love everyone ... but we end up being the closest to those who love *us* the most. That’s what

was going on here...) This, folks, was Jesus' best friend ... and the only disciple who had been with him for the past three years that even showed up by the cross on this day. What was John going to do after Jesus' death? Maybe he had some family needs on this day, too. Maybe John needed a mother, as much as Mary needed a son...

So, what is Jesus' word to us today on 'how to get through our bad days?' It's simply this: *take care of those near to you* ... or 'Get Your House In Order' ... so that you will know the 'peace' of being prepared for whatever comes. We can get through any 'bad day' when we have a peace about us that will carry us through the day! So, how do we get that kind of 'peace?' We get ready for our end! Why? Because—even as Jesus tells us (Mark 13:32ff) that 'no one knows' when the last day is coming ... not even the Son—himself! So, we need to get ready and be ready. We shouldn't have to be hanging on a cross to realize that there will be an end to this physical life...

I remember one day several years ago when I was talking with my father and he told me some very disturbing news—especially for the people of their community. The 14-year-old daughter of Greensboro, North Carolina's mayor died suddenly of a brain aneurysm. She had a slight headache the night before, took some Tylenol and went to bed, and the next morning they found her—14 YEARS OLD, HEALTHY, INTO SPORTS OF ALL KINDS, GOOD STUDENT, HAD HER WHOLE LIFE AHEAD OF HER, then...

We never know. That's what Jesus was trying to tell us; only God knows! So, it pays to be ready—and to have others ready—for whatever days are coming our way. That's where the peace is. Folks, the first thing we need to do is...

GET YOUR PHYSICAL HOUSE IN ORDER. Jesus concerns, even from the cross and within a short time of his death, were the very practical concerns of those he loved! If we are following in Jesus' example—in how he got through this very bad day, then we need to realize what our responsibilities are, too! We have a *responsibility* to care for those who God has entrusted to our care, here on this earth—even after we're gone...

I loved my grandfather to death; I mean that! He was the one that I was always compared to while growing up. He was the one who sang tenor in gospel quartets all of this life. He was the banjo picker. He was the bass fisherman. He was the one whom I looked up to in *many* ways while growing up. I loved him so much that I went to North Carolina to sing at *his* funeral!

But, one way that I *don't* want to take after him is this: after his death at 76 years old, it was discovered that he had no life insurance. He had had it. The paperwork was in his lock box. But I'm sure, unbeknownst to him, it had lapsed about five years prior to his death. And, my grandmother was left high and dry...

He died at 76 years old. My grandmother lived until 99 ½. My mother's family ended up not only paying for the funeral, but also paying for my grandmothers living expenses for years and years to come. I know for a fact that my father paid my mother's share of grandmother's living expenses even after my mom's death...

Why? Because someone didn't take Jesus' lead, did they? And, it's not just my grandfather! I hear about this happening all too often! People don't have their houses in order! They don't, like Jesus did, take responsibility like they should for those that God has entrusted to them!

When is it time to go to a local funeral home and plan for the needs of your death? That's the question that my father-in-law asked me, when we had some time alone, a few years back. My answer was, "*RIGHT NOW!*" And, as much as he dreaded it, he and my mother-in-law went to the funeral home and made their plans—an incredible gift to the rest of the family, as we found out just a short time ago...

I had a funeral of a woman from the Marquette area, a few years back, who had her entire funeral planned out prior to her death at 92 years old. I'm pretty sure she had it planned for quite some time. She had every single detail planned ... who to call ... and even who *not* to call! But, she knew what she wanted and no one had to guess. That's the way that funeral directors and pastors like it! We like being able to know and to honor the wishes of those who have gone on before us...

It's never too early to begin to plan for the end, so we can care for those whom God has entrusted to us! Young people, it's never too early to begin to think about retirement ... and in your life's planning, don't forget to plan for the end of this physical life! It's all a part of the reality of life, isn't it? And, we're all going to be there! After you get your physical house in order, you need to make sure to (and even more importantly so)...

GET YOUR SPIRITUAL HOUSE IN ORDER. John 3:16 says (*The Message*), "This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life."

You can get your physical house in order all that you want to, but if you don't have your spiritual house in order, it's not going to make much difference to *you* in the end. So, we need to have *this* house in order to—to make sure that we're where we need to be in our relationship to God through a faith in Christ Jesus...

When my mother realized that something was wrong with her—physically—on Mother's Day several years ago, she—even as a Christian of over 50 years and pastor's wife of well over 40 years—did not know the *peace* that I'm talking about today. She did not know the *peace* that Jesus knew from the cross...

I believe my mother was given her last 2 ½ months to deal with some emotional baggage she'd been carrying for years—baggage that was a barrier to her relationship with God, to knowing the 'full and complete(d)' life that Jesus knew. And, by God's grace, she dealt with that baggage and was able to 'put her house in order' spiritually...

During one of her last days of consciousness, my sister Joy, who lives in Florida and is a nurse, was in to take care of her and remembers asking Mom a question. “Do you feel any fear?” is what she asked her. The answer came back, “No. Everything’s in order.”

On the last day of her conscious life, the last words that my father remembers my mom saying were, “I’m happy (content, at peace, not afraid).” She was given the time ... and took the time to get ready...

Folks, by Jesus’ example, that’s what we’re shooting for, too! When we know *that* kind of peace—the kind that comes from knowing that our house is in order and the houses of those we’ve been entrusted to care for are in order. If we have *that* kind of peace, what kind of ‘bad day’ can’t we get through? That’s what my mom found out...

I’m going to end, this morning, with Jesus’ ending. Let’s go back to our morning scripture lesson—to John 19—and turn to V. 28. The very next thing that happened after Jesus’ words to his mother and to John—was this: “Jesus knew that by now everything had been completed....”

Folks, do you want to have the kind of *peace* that can carry you through any ‘bad day?’ Do you want to have the contentment and satisfaction of knowing that your life has been complete ... as God intended it to be? Do you want to really *know* that not only will you be O.K., but also your loved ones will be O.K. too ... even after you’re gone?

Then, get ready. Make sure your *houses* are in order. And remember this distinction between the two houses that you need to make sure *are* in order: Your physical house is about *doing* ... and taking the time to get the details done; your spiritual house is about *being* ... and growing to know what it means to be a ‘child of God’ in the truest sense...

Too often, those two things are a little mixed up in people’s minds. But, both are necessary to know the *peace* that Jesus knew on the cross. My prayer is that all of us will be able to experience this *same* peace—even today...