

We Are Each Other's Keeper
John 2:1-11
First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
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I don't think Mary, Jesus' mother, gets enough press. I don't think we hear enough about her in the Bible.

I don't remember how long I've felt that way. Maybe it started when I had my first child. Maybe the first time I joked about how no one wanted to see me anymore, but they were just interested in the baby - maybe that is when my affection for Mary began. Or maybe it happened little by little as my children grew and gained independence. Or maybe, especially thinking of this story, maybe I see in Mary my own desire to find the right balance when parenting adult children.

Whatever caused me to pay more attention to Mary, I love that John included this story.

Although, if I could suggest something to John, I would suggest a little more detail. Because the way it is told, we often hear it as if Mary is wrong and Jesus is right. Or we sometimes laugh at the fact that Jesus did what his mother asked, sometimes laughing at Mary as if she is a nagging mother, sometimes at Jesus as if he is a momma's boy. But I just can't help but wonder what other conversation was part of this story.

So, I'm going to ask you to indulge me a bit and to journey with me as we overhear a conversation, potentially a conversation that was in the background of this story.

Narrator: On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what concern is that to me and to you? My hour has not yet come."

Jesus: "What concern is that to us?" I asked. After all, my mother was one of those people who just couldn't see a problem and not try to solve it. But wine? Why did we need to worry about the supply of our friends' wine at their wedding? I was confident that there was plenty. And, while I had been gaining some followers, I wasn't sure that right there in the middle of someone else's party was where I needed to show off my abilities.

Mary: But this was about more than wine. Sure, I was happy for our friends to have enough for all their guests, but this was never about wine. It also wasn't about wanting to show off my son's talents.

Jesus: Although, you are pretty proud of me, Mom.

Mary: Yes, I am pretty proud. But, regardless of whether he could do miracles or not, there was something that I always worked to instill in my children. It was this - we are each other's keeper. How you are matters to me and how I am matters to you. While we aren't responsible for everything someone else does, we do have a responsibility to take care of each other and to do what we can to make each others' lives better.

Jesus: I probably should have asked the question a little differently. When I said, "What concern is that to me and to you?" I knew what her answer was. She had taught me from the time I was little that if someone needed something and I could help, I should.

Narrator: *His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."*

Jesus: "Do whatever he tells you," she said to them. She knew I was going to help. She raised me to be a person who helps.

Narrator: *Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, "Now draw some out, and take it to the person in charge of the banquet." So they took it. When the person in charge tasted the water that had become wine and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), that person called the bridegroom and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now."*

Jesus: I mean, if I was going to help, I was going to do it right. Of course it was good wine.

So often we read this story and we talk about the pressure Mary put on Jesus. We talk about Jesus' resistance but then also how he did what his mom asked. We talk about timing - about why this wasn't the time but why he went ahead anyway.

But, as I listen to that question, "What concern is that to me and to you?" I wonder what motivated Jesus to ask it. John tells us he goes on to say, "My hour has not yet come." I wonder whose timing he was considering.

See, we are sometimes slow to ask critical questions, especially of Jesus, but I can't help but wonder, here as his ministry was just beginning, if his hesitation, if his claim of wrong timing, might not have been nerves as much as anything else.

After all, while Christianity has spoken of Jesus' divinity, it has spoken of his humanity in equal parts. And if we believe that Jesus is fully human, then we have to leave room for him to be nervous, to feel insecure, to even get it wrong sometimes.

And, if we can let Jesus be human, then it is actually a gift to us because it might help us allow ourselves to be human as well. And being human means sometimes getting it wrong, but sometimes getting it right. Being human means sometimes asking the wrong question, but sometimes the right one. Being human means acknowledging our hesitation but allowing ourselves to overcome it, to even change our minds, and in doing so, to live in ways that make the world better for others.

Mary suggested that Jesus could help. Jesus asked, “What concern is that to you and to me?” Jesus claimed the timing wasn’t right. But, in the end, Jesus did what was asked.

I wonder how this example might influence us. After all, too often we ask, “What concern is that to me?”

Too often when we see our neighbors struggling, we put our heads down and choose not to look.

Too often when we hear of people losing rights or benefits or their very lives, we look away and simply say, “I’m glad it isn’t me.”

Too often our individualistic approach to thinking and decision making keeps us separated from our neighbors.

But what if anything that impacts another is our concern?

What if we are our siblings’ keepers?

What if what matters to anyone really does matter to everyone of us? What if the joys and the struggles of our neighbors actually impact us?

We’ve all heard this before, in fact I’ve shared it in worship previously, but I want to share again the poem that grew out of a 1946 post-war confessional by the German Lutheran pastor Martin Niemöller. The version at The United States Holocaust Museum reads this way:

*First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out—
Because I was not a socialist.
Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out—
Because I was not a trade unionist.
Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—
Because I was not a Jew.
Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me.*

Today in our own lives, people are living in the aftermath of wildfires.

Today in our own lives, people are being denied medical care because of the size of their bank accounts or the gender on their birth certificate.

Today in our own lives, people are being jailed for being homeless and children are being removed from their parents because of an inability to pay the bills.

Today in our own lives, people are seeing signs of abuse on their neighbors and turning away.

Today in our own lives, human rights and protections are being taken away because of gender, race, sexual orientation, and gender identity.

And, too often, especially when we aren't in the line of fire, we ask, "What concern is that to me?" Too often we let ourselves off the hook of living more fully in community, more connected to our human family. Too often we say, "I would help if the timing were better, if I had more money, if I had the ability."

But we are called into community. We are called to do what we can when we can with whatever we have. We are called to care, not just out of self-interest, but to care for our neighbors living as if their lives matter as much as ours. We are called to be concerned for the other...to be the others' keeper...to act on the others' behalf. May it be so.