

## Wesley United Methodist Church

May 11, 2014

"Like the Love of A Mother."

John 10:1-10

A man was boarding an airplane one day. As he came on board, he happened to notice that the head of the plane's cockpit flight crew was a woman. That was no problem. Still, it was a new experience for him. As he found his seat, he noticed three persons sitting immediately behind him. One was a young boy about six or seven years old. Next to him was a man in his early thirties. And next to the man was a woman in her early sixties. The man could not help overhearing the conversation among these three persons as the plane made final plans for departure from the gate. It was not long before he realized that they were the woman pilot's family. The boy was her son. The man was her husband. And the older woman was her mother. Suddenly he realized why the family was on the plane. This was the first time the woman pilot had been the head of the flight crew! They were here to honor her promotion.

The plane taxied down the runway and poised itself for takeoff. The engines began to roar, and the plane gained speed quickly. Within seconds they were airborne. As the plane began to ascend the bank to the south, the six-year-old boy began to applaud! "Way to go, Mom. Way to go!"

This morning we are applauding our Moms. "Way to go, Moms, Way to go!" Truly, today's Mom deserves all the support and applause she can get.

Our text this morning suggests that God is like a loving Mom and a loving Dad as well. Jesus uses the analogy of the Good Shepherd, but he could be speaking of the good parent just as easily. He says, "My sheep recognize my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life and they shall never perish. No one shall snatch them away from me, for my Father has given them to me, and He is more powerful than anyone else, so no one can kidnap them from me."

On this day when we honor our mothers and celebrate the significance of the Christian family, what are some of the analogies we could draw between the love of a parent and the love of God?

For one thing, the love of God is a very personal kind of love. "My sheep recognize my name," says Jesus, "and I know them..." We live in a lonely world. So much that is counted as love is artificial. It sometimes seems that we don't really count for much. But there is one place where most of us still are somebody. That is at home. At home we are not simply a number. We are a valued member of the family. So it is with God. With God we are more than a number...more than a face in a crowd. God loves us with a very personal love. Even the very hair of our head is counted. That is the first thing said from our Scripture.

For another thing, the love of God is a very giving kind of love. "My sheep recognize my voice," says Jesus, "and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life and they shall never perish..." The very nature of God is to give. He gave us life in the first place. He sustains our lives with his gifts of sunshine and rain and much more. And when our days are finished on this planet, He gives us eternal life. Jesus once asked, "Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!" (Matth. 7:9-11) God is a giving God.

A mother took her six-year-old boy into a doctor's crowded waiting room. As they waited their turn, he began to ask her all kinds of questions. In half an hour he managed to cover almost every subject known to humanity. To the wonder of all the others sitting in the room, his mother

answered each question carefully and patiently. Inevitably, he got around to God. As the other people listened to his relentless “how’s” and “why’s” it was plain to see by the expressions on their faces that they wondered: “How does she stand it?” But when she answered her son’s next question, she answered theirs too. “Why,” he asked, “doesn’t God ever get tired and stop?” “Because,” she replied after a moment’s thought, “God is love; and love never gets tired.” That’s true. If you or I were God, we would tire of giving, particularly when we get so little gratitude in return. A pastor was visiting some of his parishioners. He took his young daughter with him. As they visited an elderly couple, the man gave her a handful of peanuts. Expecting her to show a spirit of gratitude, the father asked his daughter, “Honey, what are you supposed to say?” Sincerely, and with her eyes fixed upon the man, she asked, “You got any more?” That sounds like many of us. We accept God’s gifts, never saying “thank you” but simply asking, “Have you got any more?” Yet God keeps giving. That’s his nature.

For you see, god’s love never quits. Jesus said, “No one will snatch them from me...” St. Paul said, “Nothing shall separate us from the love of God...” and that is good news. God never quits loving. That’s also true of the love of a faithful parent.

Of course, there are two sides to this. There was a story in Reader’s digest some time ago written by a man. Here’s what he said: “My mother has always treated me like her baby, no matter what my age. After turning 30, I purchased a computer and learned to use it. Thinking I’d impress her with my skill and maturity, I sent her a well-written letter, complete with computer graphics, borders and an elaborate typeface. I phoned to ask her what she thought of the letter. ‘It’s lovely, dear,’ she replied. ‘I have it hanging on the refrigerator for all the neighbors to see.’ Any of you know a mother like that who still sees a thirty-year-old offspring as a child? It’s not all that uncommon. At least we know we’re loved. The good parent never quits loving even when we don’t deserve it.

There is a story about a man in a little English village named John Deckard. He was a clerk in a textile factory. A modest and quiet man, he lived in an ordinary little house at the edge of town with his wife and his six-year-old son, Rob. Like thousands of Englishmen, every morning John put on his plain tweed suit, got in his bicycle, and rode to work. Returning home at five in the evening, he would work in his garden until suppertime. Then he would spend a quiet evening with his pipe and family. He was a very ordinary man living what most people would call a very ordinary life. But he had one claim to fame. For five consecutive years he had won the blue ribbon in the Village Garden Show with his prize rose. It had gone on so long that people had come to expect it. John Deckard’s prize rose would win, and that’s that.

Behind his house was his rose garden. When he returned home each evening, he would don his coveralls and spend his time out there with his roses. Some said he had more than just “a way with flowers.” Some said he mothered them, that he talked to them and that they understood what he said. This year, deep in his own heart, John Deckard knew that he would again win the blue ribbon, for this year his rose was truly a rose among roses. Never had he seen such perfection in a flower. This was his masterpiece and as he watched it daily his contentment and pride grew.

The show was on Saturday and he planned to transplant his rose to a pot early in the morning. But while he was at breakfast, the tragedy happened. His little son Rob burst into the kitchen, and chatting excitedly he rushed to the table and said, “Look Daddy, Look what I have for you!” And in his grimy little hand, half its pedals gone, its head drooping, was John Deckard’s prize rose.

That afternoon, visitors to the Garden Show were astonished when they came to John Deckard's entry. For in a flower pot he had thrust a stick, and attached to it, at the very top, was a picture of his little son, Rob. When the judges heard what happened, they gave John Deckard an honorary blue ribbon. Some said that the rose that was not a rose was the finest he had ever grown. God's love is like that and we can all be thankful.

So, hooray for our Moms. They deserve it. But also hooray for God. God is a loving parent. His love is a very personal love. His nature is a very giving nature. His love never quits.