

Wesley United Methodist Church

May 10, 2015

(Mother's Day)

"Love Each Other."

John 15:9-17

A little boy watched, fascinated, as his mother gently rubbed cold cream on her face. "Why are you rubbing cold cream on your face, mommy?" he asked. "To make myself beautiful," said his mother. A few minutes later, she began removing the cream with a tissue. "What's the matter?" he asked, "are you giving up?"

Welcome to this Mother's Day 2015. It's not easy being a mom. Those of you who have children know it's not easy, regardless of their age.

One mom says that she's going to try something different next summer with their dog and with their kids. Next summer, she says, she's sending the dog to camp and the kids to obedience school.

That wonderful writer, Erma Bombeck once said, "What mother has never fallen on her knees when she's gone into her son's bedroom and prayed, 'Please, God, no more. You were supposed to give me what I could handle.'" I don't believe it makes a difference if they're boys or girls. About 30 years ago I purchased two large mirrors for my older girls, they were hung up and the girls loved them. On the right upper corner I attached a sign that read, "Hang up your clothes." The mirrors are in my granddaughter's rooms now. The signs are still on it...maybe they will have an effect now.

It's not easy. Or someone has said, "The hand that rocks the cradle usually is attached to someone who isn't getting enough sleep."

Of course, Sometimes it's not easy being a child either. Comedian George Wallace says, "I grew up hearing such blankety-blank things. My mother would say, 'That's the last time I'm gonna tell you to take out the garbage.' Well, he adds, "thank God." Every mom has her perks, but let's face it, most of us would have been lost without our moms.

A couple was moving across the country. They decided to drive both cars. Their 8-year-old son Nathan worried. "How will we keep from getting separated?" Dad reassured him, "We'll drive slowly. One car can follow the other." "But what if we DO get separated?" "Well, then I guess we'll never see each other again," Dad joked. Nathan quickly answered, "Then I'm riding with mom.

Smart young fellow. Actually, the situation can be summed up in the words of one mom when she said "I'd like to be the ideal mother, but I'm too busy raising my kids."

Our reading for today from John's Gospel is perfect for Mother's Day because it is about love: "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business, Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit, fruit that will last and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. This is my command: Love each other."

There are several thoughts that came to mind from this reading. First of all, that love is a command. Jesus isn't giving us a suggestion that we love one another. This is a command! You know what happens when you disobey a command while serving in the military.

To be a follower of Jesus Christ is to love our families, love our friends, even love our enemies. "By this all men will know that you are my disciples," said the Master, "if you love one another."

You can't be any more direct than that. There aren't many rules to the Christian faith, not really, but this rule is iron clad. We are to love. Of course, this was not the first time that Jesus lifted up love as the great

commandment. In Matthew 22:34-40, an expert in the law tested Jesus with this question: "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the law?" Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments," Jesus declared.

John Ortburg talks about a friend of his who had a tough life. This man had virtually no father growing up and his mother was a difficult person. She married five times, none of the relationships lasting long. She had little time for her children and gave them little encouragement. This adult man still carries many wounds from her inattention.

However, late in life his mother developed a degenerative muscular disease and gradually lost almost every physical capacity. You can imagine how difficult she was to care for. None of her other children would have anything to do with her. Neither would any of the men she had married no one except this son, Ortburg's friend.

Ortburg says, "Mt friend decided to love. He took her into his home and cared for her, feeding her by hand, combing her hair, and cleaning up her messes...about all she could do was cry and moan." Ortburg thought to himself about his friend, "How can he stand this? I've been given so many blessings the church, Scripture, family and I don't know if I could love like this."

When his friend's mother died sixteen people came to the funeral. None of her other kids came. The son who cared for her had a little toy tape recorder his mother had gotten him one Christmas and he played a tape of he and his mom singing a Christmas carol. He talked about how she loved Christmas and how that when he was kid he would play the guitar and she would sing with him. Ortburg says, "He didn't love her perfectly, not by a long shot. But he loved her when loving was the hardest. He loved her when no one else would love her, and he remembered her with kind words."

That must have been difficult loving her when she showed him so little love. But that's what Christian love is. That's the kind of love Christ gave us when we were undeserving. Love is a command.

Secondly, love is sacrificial. Christ speaks of "laying down one's life for one's friends..." For many of us love is a squishy emotion without any real content. "I love you for what you can do for me," is the basic rule of such love. "You meet my needs and so I have a warm feeling for you." We sing about such love, but in our hearts we know such love is horribly superficial. True love is sacrificial.

There is a story about two tribes in the Andes that were at war. One tribe lived in the lowlands and the other high in the mountains. The mountain people invaded the lowlanders one day, and as part of their plundering, they kidnapped a baby of one of the lowlander families and took the infant with them back up into the mountains. The lowlanders didn't know how to climb the mountain. They didn't know any of the trails that the mountain people used, and they didn't know where to find the mountain people or how to track them in the steep terrain. Even so, they sent out their best party of fighting men to climb the mountain and bring the baby home.

To make a long story short, the men tried for several days and had climbed only several hundred feet. Feeling hopeless and helpless, they decided to return to their village below. As they were packing their gear for the descent, they saw the baby's mother walking toward them. They realized that she was coming down the mountain that they hadn't figured out to climb. And then they saw that she had the baby strapped on her back. How could that be? One man greeted her and said, "We couldn't climb this mountain. How did you do this when we, the strongest and most able men in the village, couldn't do it?" She shrugged her shoulders and said, "It wasn't your baby."

Every parent worth his or her salt understands. There is nothing that we will not do for our children. Of course, some are at that stage of life when it is our parents who need our sacrificial love. It's part of the circles of life. Our parents provided for our needs when we were young, but now it is they who have pressing needs. Who will be there for them or us?

Love is what life is all about. In 1 Corinthians 13 Paul summed it up like this: "These three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love." What that means is, the bottom line of life is love. God created this world so that he would have persons he could love. God sent his only begotten Son to die on the cross because of love. When one day we are gathered around God's throne with all those we love, we will discover that the final payoff for living is love. I challenge you today to go forth from this place determined to live a life of love that you might perfectly fulfill the commandments of Christ.