

LOVE, FAITH AND MOTHERS

In all three readings today, Mother's Day, the subject of the readings was **love**. We closely associate **love and mother** like in the descriptive phrase "a mother's love". "I remember my mother's prayers and they have always followed me. They have clung to me all my life is the way Abraham Lincoln related the two – **love and faith**.

Down through time both men and women have attempted to adequately describe a mother and the love she displays. However, just like when we try to describe God's love in human terms the description falls short. In the end we cannot fully comprehend God's love, so too a description of a mother's love can never be given the full depth of its meaning because it is a quality that goes beyond mere words. We see it, but never can we put its depth into words. I believe there is a reason for that – **God had gifted a woman with a capacity to love like no other of his creation**.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge might have given us a tiny glimpse in his quote - "*the love of a mother is the veil of a softer light between the heart and the heavenly father.*" We all, whether a son or a daughter, may have never appreciated that precious quality we saw displayed before us when growing up, but over time we know that we know in our hearts we were a beneficiary of that mother's love.

The problem we run into in our culture is that we have set aside a day. Only a day, to show our appreciation for that unending love shown us from the moment of birth and through the years we have our mothers with us.

Near the end of Anna Jarvis' life, the founder of Mother's Day, she had grown displeased to say the least with the celebration of Mother's Day because of its widespread commercialization. Today I am positive Anna would be overwhelmed how florists, card makers, and restaurateurs among others have "captured" the day. *Anna's desire was a day of sentiment, not profit.*

In addition, culture has so twisted the meaning of various words in our vocabulary that the meaning of those words has become ambiguous at best, meaningless at worst. Love is one such word. We can "love" anything from food to a car to a sports team! Really??? Love's definition has changed and evolved through time and cultures. However, there is one location where it remains defined and unchanged – the Bible, in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7.

The ultimate definition of love is found in the words of John 3:16. You might say to me “okay that sounds good, but...” am I supposed to apply this to my boyfriend, my marriage, and my friends? **Then my question, my challenge is, have we “surrendered” to the culture so that a word such as love is defined by its lowest common denominator, not by a higher standard.** Yes, a standard that we may never achieve, but we keep trying to achieve? As we look in many places we can clearly see that high standards have been lowered or even eliminated!

On this Mother’s Day we are reminded that there is a place, really a person who we can look to for love in action. A mother’s love mirrors the scripture. Is it a “perfect love” no, after all she is human! I would venture to say if we began from the back of the church this morning and came forward many of you would stand up and bear witness to a mother’s love in your life.

How does that “love” look? We have mentioned the love chapter verses and the golden Gospel from John. *There are stories of mothers who get a brief moment in scripture*, but when we stop and look at them, *we realize that a mother’s love brought about some amazing things.* These women were not perfect; however they lived their life with purpose. **Why? Because the key ingredient they had was faith.**

Look in Matthew 15:21-28, the story of the Canaanite woman who asked Jesus to cure her daughter. In Verse 28 Jesus speaks these words - *“O woman your faith is great”*. Despite three strikes against 1)her being a woman, 2) being a gentile, and 3) being a Canaanite her faith put love into action by the way of a request. This woman so loved her daughter she dared approach Jesus! In today’s world we cannot even begin to comprehend the dislike, the hatred Jewish people had for her and her people. I John 4:18 talks of *love casting out all fear*. This mother’s love overcame all fear!

Remember Moses’ mother, Jochebed, whose faith and love cast out all fear putting Moses in a reed boat and sent him adrift. Faith and a mother’s love are a powerful combination!

Remember too, Lois and Eunice, the mother and grandmother of Timothy, who raised him in faith and love to know and love the Word as they did. We know how effective Timothy was in his mission work.

There is the sacrificial love of a mother, found in Hannah, the mother of Samuel. Her faithful prayers to God brought the birth of a son promised to a life in the temple. For her love of God and the faith she had in him she gave up her son for a greater mission.

There are other women in the Bible that because of their faith and love, God gifted them with saving a nation, producing the wisest man ever and keeping a lineage alive that produced the Savior of the world, because of God's love for us.

It can be said that a mother's love is an earthly snapshot of God's love. God weeps for us and yet He helps lift us up and move us forward, not unlike a mother who suffers silently with pain, heartache and sorrows and ponders these emotions in her heart.

Who receives that call when there are problems in a son or daughter's life? It is a mother, who is frequently a tower of safety as well as a tower of strength in stormy times. **Isaiah 66:13** *"as one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you; and you will be comforted in Jerusalem."* **God compares himself to a mother!**

Another way that God and mother are alike is found in Proverbs 3:5-6 *"trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths"* just substitute mom in there it works!

Mom is quite the teacher. When you are discouraged mom inspires and encourages. Mom corrects when you are disobedient. When doubt arises, mom says "you can do it". Mom guides her children with wisdom and authority. I Peter 5:7 *"throw all your worry on Him, because He cares for you."* Moms have broad shoulders, they carry all our concerns. **Moms are always there for us just like God is there for us!**

When those rough times come, sure as the sun rises, mom listens. There are no "I told you so" when she saw something in that boy or girl you did not see. I know watching our grandson when he got hurt and seeing him climb up into his mother's lap and seeing her hold him in her arms and seeing the almost immediate comfort the child feels. **It's the same for us as a child of God we can go to him with our troubles, heartaches, disappointments and there is no "I told you so" just comfort and healing. We come to Him, sight unseen, and are reassured that He has heard us and will do something for us just like moms do.**

No matter the hurt, how we are feeling, the day's problems, school problems, spouse problems, moms listen, understand, are concerned and interested. Just like God no matter what we bring to Him, He cares and loves us and His interest is compared to knowing the number of hairs on our head. Yes, mothers are very much like God. I believe that is by design, God's design. I know over the years of my life I have heard many express the sentiment that their mother or grandmother was a godly example to them.

In our youth we may or may not realize how special and godly she is, but young people listen to the wisdom of the years – your mother has God-given wisdom, talent or insight that will make you a better person in the years to come.

We are told to love God and since the message today has compared God and mothers and their love for us, I would like to pass along to you how we can do that very thing.

Likely the two most important “how to” in loving mom – love her verbally and physically. Simple acts, really. Just tell her you love her and give her a hug and a kiss on the cheek. Believe me you are never too big or too old to do it.

Whether you are young or old, love her with patience, after all look at all she has put up with! Listen to what she is saying, at the time it may not make much sense, but it will at some moment in time. Make time for her, whether young or old, to sit with her and enjoy her company, because some day like a number of us here, you will no longer have that opportunity to sit in her company. Only memories will remain in here.

Remember of all the commandments only the fourth carries with it a promise of a blessing. *“honor your father and your mother that your days may be long upon the land”*.

They must very important to God, mothers, because He put a measure of His love in each and every one. Their faith and their love make them who they are, your mother.

Honor them this day and every day.

Amen.