



from the desk of ...
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Mother's Day

A MOTHER'S LOVE

1 Kings 3:16-28

Today is Mother's Day. On the internet this week I came across this list of things that our Mom's have taught us over the years. (X)

- Our Mom's taught us about anticipation ...
 "Just wait until your father gets home."
- Our Mom's taught us about logic ...
 "If you fall out of that tree & break your neck,
 don't come crying to me."
- Our Mom's taught us about time travel ...
 "If you don't straighten up,
I'm going to knock you into the middle of next week!"
- Our Mom's taught us to think ahead ...
 "If you don't pass your spelling test,
 you'll never get a good job."
- Our Mom's taught us how to become an adult ...
"If you don't eat your vegetables, you'll never grow up."
- Our Mom's taught us foresight ...
 "Make sure you wear clean underwear,
 in case you're in an accident."

- Our Mom's taught us about genetics ...
"You're just like your father."
- Our Mom's taught us about our roots ...
"Were you born in a barn?"
- Our Mom's taught us about elderly wisdom ...
"When you get to be my age, you'll understand."
- Our Mom's taught us about the science of osmosis ...
"Shut your mouth & eat your supper!"
- Our Mom's taught us about contortionism ...
"Will you look at the dirt on the back of your neck!"
- Our Mom's taught us about stamina ...
"You're going to sit here until you eat every last piece of that broccoli."
- Our Mom's taught us about justice ...
"One day you'll have kids,
& I hope they turn out just like you."
- Our Mom's taught us about hypocrisy ...
"If I've told you once, I've told you 5,280 times,
don't exaggerate!"
- Our Mom's taught us fashion design ...
"Are you going out dressed like that?"
- Our Mom's taught us housekeeping ...
"Pick it up yourself, I'm not your maid"
- Our Mom's taught us about weather ...
"It looks as if a tornado swept through your room."
- Our Mom's taught us about religion ...
"You better pray that'll come out of the carpet!"

This is the one day of the year when we celebrate our Moms. Now of course we should do this all of the time. And the tragic thing is, for most of us, we don't totally appreciate our Moms ... until after they're gone.

It's hard to believe that my Mom passed almost 23 years ago. She never knew any of her great-grandchildren; she never knew about the C.C.R.M.

Now if it is true that the 1st few years of a child's life are the formative ones, when they learn the basic building blocks on how to live ... then my Mom has been the most influential person in my life.

A London editor once submitted to Winston Churchill (X) for his approval a list of all those who had been Churchill's teachers. Churchill returned the list with this comment ... "You have omitted to mention the greatest of my teachers ... my mother!"

And I suspect that most of us could make a similar affirmation. I can't even begin to appreciate the impact on my life that my Mom has had.

Okay ... both Scripture & Church history give witness to the significance of mothers in the lives of faithful believers. For example, Paul writes to Timothy ... (X)

"I remember the sincere faith you have, the kind of faith that your grandmother Lois & your mother Eunice also had. I am sure that you have it also." (2 Timothy 1:5)

The 5th Commandment (Exodus 20:12) requires that we honor our mothers as well as our fathers ...
a surprise demand delivered into a patriarchal society.

The Proverbs, likewise, remind us that children are to please their mothers & give them joy & happiness.

(The Proverbs 23:25)

And the N.T. makes clear that both parents are to be obeyed & respected ... not simply fathers. (Ephesians 6:2)

Even a superficial reading of Scripture reveals the important contribution of mothers in God's redemption plan; i.e. Hannah with Samuel, (1 Samuel 1:28) ...

Mary with JESUS (Luke 2:51).

Possibly the greatest honor paid women, however, is the way in which God Himself compares His concern for His spiritual children to that of a mother. (X) "I will comfort you, as a mother comforts her child." (Isaiah 66:13)

Augustine (X) was one of the greatest Bible scholars the Church has ever known. But as a young man he lived a very worldly lifestyle, becoming involved with many of the same things young guys do today. His lifestyle was of great concern to his mother, Monica, who prayed for years for her son to come to faith.

When Augustine decided to travel to Rome she prayed earnestly that God would keep him there with her, & under her influence.

She went down to a little chapel on the seashore to spend the night in prayer, close by where the ship was anchored. But, when morning came, she found that the ship had sailed even while she prayed!

But although the answer to her prayer was "no", her true desire was granted. For it was in Rome that Augustine met the sainted Ambrose, who led him to faith in Christ.

God's wisdom displayed in the devotion of a mother.

Today's Scripture passage is also about a loving mother, along with human sin, & a wise judge. So, listen now to Good News, as recorded in the 1st book of Kings, to you who have gathered here for worship on this Mother's Day.

Within your hearing now comes the Word of the Lord ...

One day two prostitutes came and presented themselves before King Solomon. One of them said, "Your Majesty, this woman and I live in the same house, and I gave birth to a baby boy at home while she was there. Two days after my child was born, she also gave birth to a baby boy. Only the two of us were there in the house - no one else was present. Then one night she accidentally rolled over on her baby and smothered it. She got up during the night, took my son from my side while I was asleep, and carried him to her bed; then she put the dead child in my bed.

The next morning, when I woke up and was going to nurse my baby, I saw that it was dead. I looked at it more closely and saw that it was not my child."

But the other woman said, "No! The living child is mine, and the dead one is yours!"

The first woman answered back, "No! The dead child is yours, and the living one is mine!"

And so they argued before the king.

Then King Solomon said, "Each of you claims that the living child is hers and that the dead child belongs to the other one." He sent for a sword, and when it was brought, he said, "Cut the living child in two and give each woman half of it."

The real mother, her heart full of love for her son, said to the king, "Please, Your Majesty, don't kill the child! Give it to her!"

But the other woman said, "Don't give it to either of us; go on and cut it in two."

Then Solomon said, "Don't kill the child! Give it to the first woman - she is its real mother."

When the people of Israel heard of Solomon's decision, they were all filled with deep respect for him, because they knew then that God had given him the wisdom to settle disputes fairly. (1 Kings 3:16-28)

May the Lord grant that we may engage in contemplating the mysteries of His Heavenly wisdom with really increasing devotion, to His glory and to our edification. Amen

A year ago, on February 12th, I preached a sermon on (X) Abraham Lincoln & his Christian faith. At that time, I told you how much Kathy & I both admire him.

Outside of Scripture, I can't imagine a greater man.

I believe that his Gettysburg Address & 2nd Inaugural Speech are 2 of the finest speeches ever given by anyone. Lincoln's writings, even though simplistic in word, are powerful in thought. We listen to them, & our mind just bursts with incredible images & thoughts that come out of just a few words.

As most of you know, I have a "few" things hanging up in my office ... & one of them is this quote from President Lincoln. "All that I am or hope to be I owe to my Mother." Isn't that a wonderful statement? ...

And it's especially so, when we discover a little about Nancy Hanks. (X) She was not an educated woman. Nor was she an influential woman. To be honest, I wonder if more than a handful of people in her day even knew who she was. But she made her mark, & her amazing qualities came through in her son. Lincoln understood that & acknowledged her later in his life. He also stated ...

"No one is poor who had a godly mother."

Lincoln isn't alone. Most people are fiercely loyal to their mothers. You've seen the scene 5,280 times. It's become so commonplace that we hardly even think about it anymore.

It's the Rose Bowl, the Cotton Bowl, the final 4 It's near the end of the game. One of the 2 teams is ahead enough that the celebration has already begun. The camera starts panning the sidelines of the winning team.

And all the players are holding up a "#1". Then one after another we hear them, or maybe we just read their lips. What do the players say? ... (X) ("Hi Mom!")

"Hi Mom!" Isn't that interesting? ... And it tells us something. Of all the people they could say "hi" to on national TV ... why Mom? Why not Dad? Why not their High School coach? People are **loyal** to their mothers, because their mother's **love** is so great.

I have an article in my files that was in Time magazine a # of years ago. It's about the mother of Zacarias Moussaoui, (X) the only September 11th terrorist who was brought to trial.

When asked about the events of that day, she replied, "They were atrocious." Then asked if she visited her son in prison, she responded,

"Of course, he's my son, & I love him no matter what."

A mother's love is an amazing thing.
And I could argue that it's the closest thing we'll find on earth to **God's love**.

This brings us to our Scripture lesson this morning.
Now I know this is not your usual Mother's Day text ...
but it is a classic story.

The 2 mothers in this drama were prostitutes.
If you're like me, that puts some preconceived images in our mind. A prostitute is normally not an accepted person in society. It's an "occupation" we men would not want our daughters to be doing.

But both secular & cultic prostitution were widespread in the ancient Near East. Prostitutes were generally slaves. They were poor women.

It doesn't help to have no "father's" mentioned in this story. That probably means that their babies were conceived under sinful circumstances.

Once again, this whole scenario is kind of a sad thing. And if we were to find ourselves in front of these 2 women, some of us might be pretty uncomfortable. We might squirm a little bit if they were sitting next to us in our pews.

I find it kind of amazing that King Solomon even took the time to worry about these 2 ladies.

There must have been many demands on his time.

He would have had "important" people to deal with each day. As a king there would have been political & economic decisions to be made.

There was a nation to rule. An army to lead.

His daily calendar would have to be full.

And in the midst of all that,
he takes time to listen to 2 prostitutes.

Now these women, & the men who paid for their services, were living out a sinful lifestyle. But Solomon was **concerned** about these 2 women because God was **concerned** about them. That's something we must remember. Society may distinguish classes of people, with some being viewed as "better" than others, but that kind of thing doesn't exist in God's world. (Galatians 3:28)
We're all on level ground when we stand before the Lord.

Certainly, we're familiar with enough Scripture so that I shouldn't have to spend time here this morning convincing you that the Church should stand for moral purity. (1 Timothy 5:22) That should be obvious.

But the Church should also be a place of **forgiveness** & **restoration**. (2 Corinthians 2:5-11) And even though these women were not living up to God's standards, He still loved them. He was concerned about them.

You know, if God held His love from us until we got our performance up to speed ... we'd all be in big trouble.

So, these 2 women show up in front of the King & tell him their problem. (Lincoln used to make himself available in the morning in the White House to anyone who wanted to see him.) These women had baby boys born within 2 days of each other.

Now in those days there were no cribs & infants stayed in bed with their mothers, so they could be easily nursed. And one night, we're not told how much time had passed; one of the women rolled over & accidentally smothered her baby.

When she woke up & discovered what she had done she made a quick "switch-a-roo" with the other mother. But then, the 1st mother, when she found the dead baby in her bed, & looked closely at him in the morning light, immediately realized that he was not her son.

(You cannot fool a mother. I know that from personal experience. I tried to fool my Mom, many times & never got away with it.)

So that's the dilemma that Solomon faced. It was impossible to prove by conventional means which of the women was telling the truth. That's why the comment that "no one else was present" is so important.

There were no witnesses, & DNA testing wasn't available to the King. It was one lady's word against the other. What was he going to do? ...

Well, he came up with a method which certainly would be illegal today, but it did bring about the correct answer that he was looking for.

"He sent for a sword." (When the true mother saw the sword, Solomon knew it would present her with an emergency situation. Her response to the very thought of what he might do to her child would create emotions that only a mother could express.)

A sword was brought to the King. He ordered ...
 "Cut the living child in 2 & give each woman $\frac{1}{2}$ of it."

"The real mother, her heart full of love for her son, said to the king, 'Please Your Majesty, don't kill the child! Give it to her!'"

That says it all ... the real mother,
 had a "heart full of love for her son."

Real mothers are a testimony of **self-sacrificing love**.

No price is too great.

No limitation as to what they are willing to give.

Here's a woman who had a child. The child had no father that was in the home, but that doesn't matter, she's committed to loving her child dearly.

Imagine what this woman had been through. At 1st she was heartbroken, waking up & finding her baby lifeless. Some of you may have had that experience.

Then, as she was trying to comprehend all that,
she discovered that it was not her baby,
& in fact, her baby had been stolen.

It's impossible to comprehend the range of emotions
that she dealt with in that short period of time.

Solomon was wise enough to use one of the most
powerful forces in the universe to get at the truth ...
a mother's love. Solomon knew that the love of a mother
for her child - even if it meant permanent separation ...
would remedy this dilemma.

A mother's love is a selfless love. It always puts the
needs of others before her own. And if this story from
Scripture teaches us anything, it is that mothers may
not offer **perfection**; but they do offer **sacrifice**.

I have another touching story in my files, it's a true
story that comes out of WWII & the holocaust. (X)
Solomon Rosenberg, along with his wife, their 2 sons,
& his mother & father were arrested & placed in a Nazi
concentration camp.

It was a hard labor camp, & the rules were simple:
"As long as you can do your work, you are permitted to
live. But when you become too weak to do your work,
then you will be exterminated."

Rosenberg watched helplessly as his mother & father
were marched off to their deaths.

He knew that the next to make that trip would be his youngest son, David ...

because David had always been a frail child.

Every evening Rosenberg came back into the barracks after his long day of hard labor & searched for the faces of his family. When he found them they would huddle together, embrace one another & thank God for another day of life. (I cannot even imagine how horrible that must have been.)

One day Rosenberg returned & didn't see those familiar faces. He finally discovered his oldest son, Joshua, in a corner, huddled, weeping, & praying.

He said, "Josh, tell me it's not true."

Joshua turned & said, "It is true, Poppa. Today David was not strong enough to do his work, so they came for him."

"But where is your mother?" asked Mr. Rosenberg.

"Oh, Poppa," he said. "When they came for David he was so afraid & he was crying. So, Momma said,

'There is nothing to be afraid of David,'
& she took his hand & went with him."

There are few things as strong as the love of a mother for her children ... a love so strong that she would choose to give up her life so her child would be comforted.

Remember the words of the Lord ... (X)

"I will comfort you, as a mother comforts her child."

That, my friends, is a mother's love ...
one that is concerned solely for her child.

It's also a picture of the sacrificial love Jesus has for us. To keep us from fearing death, He went before us. He met death head on ... & then returned from the grave so we would have hope in the Resurrection.

When I was 3-years-old my Mom read me Bible stories & had me memorize the 23rd Psalm.

Now the one verse in the 23rd Psalm that's significant to all this this morning is ... (X)

"Even though I walk through
the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil, for you are with me."

David Rosenberg's mother walked with him as he went to his death. Jesus promises to do the same for us. He stated ... (X) "After I go & prepare a place for you, I will come back & take you to myself, so that you will be where I am." (John 14:3)

Thank you, mothers, for holding our hands & walking with us in our darkest hours. Thank you for sacrificing convenience & ease so that we might have companionship. Thank you for the gentleness & kindness you've given us. Thank you for your Christlike example.

Growing up, there was one person who always pursued a relationship with me. There was one person who always prayed for me. There was one person who always read Bible stories to me. There was one person who taught me how to pray. There was one person who saw to it that I was in S.S. & Church. There was one person who cared enough about how my character was shaping up to discipline me & teach me to do right. There was one person who encouraged me to become all that God intended me to be.

Growing up there was one person I could always count on. I don't know where I would be today, or who I would be today, or even what I'd be today, if it had not been for the loving influence of my mother.

I suspect that most of you could make a similar statement.

This same Solomon,
who the Lord granted great wisdom, (1 Kings 3:12),
wrote many of the thoughts in the book of The Proverbs.

The one that I want to close with this morning is ...

"Do what your father tells you,
& never forget what your mother taught you."

(The Proverbs 6:20)

Those are good words for us to ponder on this day in
which we honor our mothers.

MARANA THA