

## Mother's Love

Texts: Acts 10:44-48

1 John 5:1-6 (Series B. 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter, Mother's Day) Ps. 98

John 15:9-17

### Prayer

This is one of my favorite stories of Mother's Day celebration: There is an ancient legend about two warring tribes in the Andes, one that 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 of the people, they kidnapped the baby of one of the lowlander families and took the infant with them up into the mountains.

The lowlanders didn't know how to climb the mountains. They didn't know any of the trails the mountain people used. Consequently, they were unable to track the mountain people in steep terrain.

Nevertheless, they sent out their best party of fighting men to try to climb the mountain to rescue the baby. The party of lowlanders tried one trail and then another. They tried one method of climbing and then another.

After several days of futile efforts, and without success and feeling helpless and hopeless, the men decided that the cause was lost, and they prepared to return to their villages below. As they were packing their stuff for the descent, they saw the baby's mother walking toward them. They realized that she was coming down the mountain that they themselves were unable to climb. And then they saw that she had her baby strapped to 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, could not?" She shrugged her shoulders and said, "***It wasn't your baby!***" This is Mother's Love, the most powerful instinct in women.

A mother's love is so unconditional and exceptional that it is in a category by itself. Some give it its own name. They call it "Mother's love." It is a degree of love that is only fully expressed by the love of a mother. It is the kind of love that persists no matter what wrong is done to it. Even among wild animals, a mother will give her life to save her offspring. So, people respond to that degree of love with an equally fierce loyalty.

To understand this truth, we need to understand the church. The church is a family, the family of God. Through baptism, we have been adopted as children of God. God is our father and Christ is our brother. And everyone else in the world who has been baptized is our kin.

When Jesus was told that his mother and brothers were looking for him, what did he say? He said, "Who are my brothers and my mother? Those who do the will of my father are my brothers and sisters and mother." When we are baptized we are joined by the power of the spirit to a new family.

In God's eyes, we cease to be John Doe and Jane Doe. And we become children of our Heavenly Father. In this family, the older and experienced members have the responsibility of raising and caring for the younger and inexperienced members. In that sense, we are all parents to those who are growing in the faith around us.

I give credit to many godly people who have helped to shape my faith and belief in God, in my Christian journey (*Vitalis, who disciplined me when I became a Christian in 1969; Maria Heuberger, in Kitzingen Germany; Maria Forum Jensen in Olgod in Denmark*). I believe that, in Christ, we are all foster fathers and mothers for God's children. So, today, we honour all women in the church because, in God's eyes, you are mothers all.

More and more, I worry about the dangerous effect of the world. The world wants to lure God's children into ways of life that offer no real fulfillment: into materialism, into drugs, into hatred, into spiritual alienation from God. It's easy to immunize them against the diseases of the body but what about the diseases of the soul?

In light of this awesome responsibility that Christian mothers have, I am reminded of Paul's letter to the Ephesians in the first chapter, "I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers" (Eph.1:15-16). In this passage, Paul gives thanks for the faith and love of the Ephesians. Obviously, they were a people who had great faith in Jesus. And, obviously, they were a people who lived out that faith in love for one another. They were a church of Christian mothers and fathers who cared well for God's children.

But Paul knew that the Ephesians faced trouble. So, he began to pray for them. He prayed that they would receive a spirit of wisdom and revelation. He also prayed that the eyes of their hearts would be enlightened so that they would know of the hope they had in Christ.

It is important to note what it is he wanted them to see. He wanted them to see what their **hope** and their **power** was. Paul knew that the forces opposed to the Ephesians were greater than they were. The people of the church of Ephesus would be easily crushed by their foes.

But Paul also knew that Jesus had ascended into heaven; and that all things, all powers, were subject under him, even the powers which opposed Ephesus. This was their **hope**: the power of the glorified Christ, the power of God Almighty. Like Paul, I give thanks for the faith and love of the mothers of this church.

I remember the love and nurture of many of them. There was my own mother of course. Her example of faith, trust, and devotion to Jesus Christ had a great effect on me. She is one of the reasons I am a Christian today. But there were many others whom I alluded to earlier.

The image of God as Shepherd is a good example of this. God cares for us as a good shepherd. God provides for our every need. God takes us to green pastures and leads us beside still waters. And God protects us from wild animals that would devour us.

Like a mother, God prepares a table before us in the presence of our enemies. When others would flee, God remains steadfast, providing for our every need, just like a mother who stands by her child through difficult times.

Of course, God's love is greater than any love a human can produce. "Motherlove" is only an analogy that helps us understand God's love. But it's a good analogy. It helps us understand how loving and giving God's love is. The most unconditional example of human love is a Mother's love. To say that God loves us more than that at least gives us a frame of reference. Jesus is the prime example of God's "Motherlove." In Jesus, God died for his children. The ultimate expression of love is to give one's life for another (John 15:13).

This life is short, though it can feel endless when we encounter very demanding, difficult, and desperate days ~ and people. Feeling supported in the trials of faith by the presence of Christ and the Holy Spirit, and in community, we can come to believe that working to act in, through, and by love, first, last, and always ~ as best we can, in this mortal time ~ will get us to the always, forever, eternal reward.

We need the insight to know what is true and good. We need the patience to persevere. We need the grace to be forgiving when little hands and feet do what they shouldn't. We need the faith to know that a point comes when we can't do anything and that it is all in the Lord's hands.

I also pray we might have insight into the power, which is our hope. There is a power that can overcome all that threatens our children. The source of this power is the glorified Jesus Christ. Don't try to be a Christian mother without it. It is impossible. You can only succeed at being a Christian mother if your source of power is the one who ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God Almighty, Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

**Prayer concerns:** *Matilda Molyneaux-Piper, Wess Bourgaize, Johannes Eidnes, Hanne Bourgeoise, Ellen Eriksen and family & COVID-19 patients, essential and frontline workers.*

Almighty and Ever-Loving God, infuse us with the inner peace and fortitude to let the actions of our lives be the instruments of rejoicing that play a new song of faith and love, each and every day. We ask through Jesus, our Loving Redeemer; and the Holy Spirit, Your Truth; who together with You, are One God, now and forever. **Amen.**

**Make melodies in your heart with these hymns:**

Day of Rest and Gladness # 521  
Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee # 836  
Love Divine, All Loves Excelling # 631

**Happy Mother's Day!**

May 9, 2021