

“GODLY MOTHERHOOD”

Proverbs 31:10-31

Holiday Island Presbyterian Church

May 13, 2018

INTRODUCTION:

Welcome to Mother’s Day.

**This is the day that is set aside each year
to recognize and honor all those who serve –
or have served – as mothers.**

**I once heard about a man – now deceased – who wrote a poem
and attached it to the gift he gave his wife on Mother’s Day.**

Thinking it was the “thought” that counts and not the gift he wrote:

**M - is for the mink coat you want
O - is for the opal ring you crave
T - is for the tiny sports care you'd love
H - is for the hat that makes you rave
E - is for the earrings you'd admire
R - is for the rug on which you'd tread**

**Put them all together and they spell bankrupt,
so I'm giving you this handkerchief instead.**

Now you know why he is deceased!

On this Mother's Day

**I hope your family is a little more generous and loving
in their actions towards you.**

THE MOTHERHOOD OF GOD:

**Let’s start with a very controversial subject:
the “motherhood” of God.**

**We all know that God is spirit,
without body or gender.**

**We also know that God has certain attributes:
God is all-knowing, all-powerful, ever-present.**

**And, on occasion, God exhibits the attributes of a mother.
God said to Israel:**

**“As one whom a mother comforts, so will I comfort you.”
Isaiah 66:13**

**We don't spend much time thinking or talking about
the mothering aspects of God.
Certainly, they are a real and present attribute.**

The Jews have a sweet saying:

**“God could not be everywhere, so God made mothers.”
And this is true, for a loving mother
is God's tenderest image to humanity.**

Perhaps this saying is derived from Isaiah 49:15:

**“Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no
compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may
forget, I [God] will not forget you!” (Isa. 49:15)**

**As close as it may come to blasphemy,
the God portrayed in *The Shack* may be closer to the truth
than we care to think.**

**In that book – and movie,
God is portrayed by a black woman
with a masculine title, “Papa.”**

In the story, we are reminded

of a whole mix of theological questions
and the problems of projecting the divine onto a screen.

One of those questions is the “gender” of God.

“I am neither male nor female,” Papa says, “even though both genders are derived from my nature. If I choose to *appear* to you as a man or woman, it’s because I love you. For me to appear to you as a woman and suggest you call me Papa is simply to mix metaphors, to help you keep from falling so easily back into your religious conditioning.”

So, bearing in mind that God is neither – and both
– male and female and neither -
we can proceed.

There are four major categories of mothers.

Godly ones

Good ones

Not so good ones

Absent ones.

GODLY MOTHERS:

Let’s start with “Godly mothers.”

The scripture this morning
give us the “gold standard” for being a mother.

I once had a woman tell me she wanted me to do her funeral
but if I used this Proverb,
she would rise from her coffin and get me
before I concluded the service!

Let’s face it,
other than my wife,

there are no perfect women . . .
. . . except those in this room, of course.

The woman described in this Proverb sets a very high standard
and most women – no matter how hard they try –
ever fully attain this lofty goal.

However, it gives us a standard, a goal, an example
toward which women can aspire.

It reminds us what a precious gift mothers truly are.

And because God's love for us is limitless
and is not based upon our works,
if we fall short of that ideal, we are forgiven.

So, remember:

This is a goal to work towards
and not a standard by which to judge.

ABSENT MOTHERS:

Unfortunately, there are “absent” mothers.

Mothers, who for one reason or another,
have simply not been present for her children.

Perhaps a mother was separated from her children by death.
Or for reason known only to herself,
she chose to abandon the role of motherhood.

There are mothers who are forced to work to support her family,
and I do not include them in this category –
unless she is so consumed with her work
she neglects her children.

By the grace of God,

God has provided for those who grew up without a mother.

Or, at least, without a biological mother.

**For these “motherless” children,
there is a special category of mothers
who were never biological mothers
but still managed to pour themselves
into the lives of children.**

**They come in all sorts of descriptions:
nurses, teachers, next-door neighbors.**

**They are there for children,
when discouraged, she offers words of comfort and inspiration.
When disobedient, she is there to gently correct.
When faced with problems, she is there to counsel.**

**This world would be a bleak and desolate place
without the presence of these surrogate mothers.**

NOT-SO-GOOD MOTHERS:

Then there is the category of “not-so-good” mothers.

**I grew up with a not-so-good mother.
She was neurotic to the point
she was sort of a Jekyll and Hyde mother.**

**One moment, she could be loving and giving,
the next moment she would be judgmental and far too harsh.**

**Most of the time, she was a good mother,
but too often she became frazzled, angry and impatient.**

**However, she managed to teach me a few things about life:
My Mother taught me LOGIC:**

"If you fall off that swing and break your neck, you can't go to the movie this Saturday!

My Mother taught me HUMOR:

"When that lawn mower cuts off your toes, don't come running to me."

My Mother taught me GENETICS:

"You are just like your father!"

My Mother taught me ANTICIPATION:

"Just wait until your father gets home."

My Mother taught me about RECEIVING:

"You are going to get it when I get you home."

My Mother taught me RELIGION:

"You better pray that will come out of the carpet."

My Mother taught me about STAMINA:

"You'll sit there until all that spinach is finished."

My Mother taught me THE CIRCLE OF LIFE:

"I brought you into this world, and I can take you out."

Over time,

I began to understand her and eventually accept her.

With God's help, I have forgiven her.

Not every woman in this world grew up with a good model of what a mother could be.

And they are living with ghosts that haunt them and cause them to act and react badly.

Sometimes, in order to escape the demons of their past

- or even their present –

these women turn to sinful pursuits:

- drugs and alcohol

- infidelity

- unrestrained anger and revenge

- escaping through their work

**For those who either have – or had – a mother like this,
the feminine attribute of God is your gift.**

**No matter what you have been told,
no matter how you have been treated,
God loves you and will comfort you
and lead you to a place of peaceful forgiveness.**

GOOD MOTHERS:

**Ah, then there are the good mothers!
God bless them every one!**

These are the women who have done and are doing their best.

Dr. James Dobson says this:

"There are few assignments in human experience that require the array of skills and wisdom needed by a Mom in fulfilling her everyday duties. She must be a resident psychologist, physician, theologian, educator, nurse, chef, taxi driver, fire marshal, and occasional police officer. And if she succeeds in each of these responsibilities, she gets to do it all again tomorrow."

**There are mothers who take their calling so seriously
that they become "helicopter moms."**

**You know, they "hover over their children
like helicopters.**

**Well, perhaps they are over-protective;
but that is better than not caring at all.**

**A good mother wants the very best for her children.
Just like God, she sees the potential in her child -**

she has big dreams of what her child could be.

Her goal is to raise her children
in a way that they thrive, not just survive.

And if they seem to “hover” a bit . . .
well, bless them for it.

The love a mother shows her children on earth
is but a pale reflection of the love God has for each of us.

With unfailing tenderness,
God comforts the weary, wounded spirits of God’s children.

Just as a mother is quick to soothe and sympathize,
God is there to enfold us in loving arms
and remind us how deeply we are loved.

It is unfortunate that the parable of the Prodigal son,
tells us of the father who waits patiently for the son to return.
I wish we knew what the mother was doing.
My best guess is that she was praying fervently
for the eventual return of her son.

CONCLUSION:

And so it is, on this Mother’s Day
that we pause and give thanks to all those women
who served as our mothers.
And those who served as mothers to our children.

And we also give thanks to God,
who with a strange, inarticulate comfort
calms the troubled soul like a devoted mother.

**Like a loving mother,
God asks no question, but accepts us as we are.**

**We are invited to approach God
with our nagging doubts, our worldly loss,
our broken hearts,
our deep gashes of disappointment.**

**We can confess our sins and shortcomings,
our fears and anxieties to this loving God
knowing that we will be understood and forgiven.**

**What troubles us may remain,
yet, in carrying all to the mother-heart of God,
we are comforted.**

**In the presence of God,
we are calmed and consoled as a child folded
in the arms of a loving mother
and soothed in the silence of love.**

**On this day,
let us also honor God who made all mothers,
and who waits to do far more for us
than the best and holiest mother is capable of doing!**

PRAYER:

Loving, Creating and Sustaining, God, we thank you for the women in our lives who have served as our mothers. Bless them. We thank you for the women who love and care for our children. Bless them.

May each woman here know that they are wildly loved by You, just as they are. Not because of what they accomplished- or didn't. May you know that you are adored by God, just because.

May you be empowered to love your children – and those under your care – in the same way.

May you be equipped to tackle every challenge, every situation, and every day with courage.

May excitement fill your heart as you start each day. May God bless you with pleasant surprises during each day.

And when you lay your head down at night, may your blessings be many, may your cup overflow with thanksgiving.

And then, may your sleep be restful and your dreams refreshing and sweet.

Most of all, Loving and Supporting God, we thank You for Your unconditional love for each of us. This we pray in the Name of Jesus, who showed us Your love. Amen