

May 12, 2013 - Mother's Day/7th Sunday of Easter

First, Inglewood Sermon Text: 1 John 5:3, John 17:26b

Scripture References: Matthew 22:37-40, John 13:35, Jon 15:16-17

Gospel Lesson: John 17: 20-26

MISTAKEN IDENTITY

In the Gospel text Jesus speaks about love. What a fitting topic for Mother's Day. Before getting into the text, I want to acknowledge the mothers in the congregation this morning. Several years ago, a well-known woman columnist who often wrote about the life of a suburban housewife, wrote a conversation between the Creator and one of his angels. I'd like to share that with you this morning.

When the good Lord was creating Mothers, He was into His sixth day of "overtime." An angel appeared and said, "You're sure doing a lot of fiddling around on this one!" God nodded and said, "Yes, but have you read the specs on this order? She has to be completely washable, but not made of plastic. She has to have 180 moveable parts ... all replaceable. She'll have to run on black coffee and leftovers. She'll need a lap that disappears when she stands up. She'll have to have a kiss that can cure anything from a scraped finger to a disappointed love affair. She will also need six pairs of hands." The angel shook her head slowly and said, "Six pairs of hands? ... No way!" "It is not the hands that are causing me problems," said the Lord. "It's the three pairs of eyes that mothers have to have." "That's on the standard model?" asked the angel. The Lord nodded

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and said, "One pair is to see through closed doors when she asks, "What are you kids doing in there?" ... although she'll already know. She needs another pair here in the back of her head that can see the things she shouldn't have to, but things that she has to know. And of course, she'll need a set of eyes here in front that will be able to look at a child when he goofs up. Those eyes will be able to say, "I understand and I love you," without even muttering a word." "Lord," said the angel touching God's sleeve gently, "You had better go to bed. Tomorrow ..." "I can't," interrupted the Lord. "I'm so close now to creating something that is so much like myself, that I just can't stop. I've already created one who can heal herself when she is sick, feed a family of six on one pound of hamburger, and can get a nine-year-old to stand under a shower." Slowly, the angel circled and carefully looked at the model of a Mother. "It's too soft!" the angel sighed. "But she's tough!" said the Lord excitedly. "You cannot imagine what this mother will be able to do or the things that she will be able to endure." The angel asked, "Can she think?" "Not only can she think, but she will be able to reason and compromise," said the Creator. Finally the angel bent over and ran her finger across the cheek of the mother. "There's a leak in her!" the angel pronounced. "I told you that you

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were trying to put too much into this model." "That's not a leak," said the Lord. "It's a tear!" "What's it for?" asked the angel. The Lord said, "It's for joy, sadness, disappointment, pain, loneliness, love and pride."

"Wow! You're a genius!" said the angel. The Lord looked somber and said, "But I didn't put it there!"

Yes, a mother has to be many things and endure many things. We are on call 24/7 365 days of the year. We are accountants, chauffeurs, doctors, event planners, financial managers, gardeners, housekeepers, conflict managers, teachers, tutors, and the list goes on, never seeming to end. And we are to do all these things looking good and being cool! Given the job description, I don't think many of us would want the job. Yet, as little girls we dreamed of becoming a mother someday. Why is that? Is it because we don't see the downside of motherhood? We certainly don't think about the pain of labor or remember it after experiencing it. At least not enough to keep us from having more children! There must be something that surpasses all the challenges of being a good mother, that makes it worthwhile. Nurturing, protecting, teaching, molding that child and seeing him or her become a strong, confident, God-loving, caring adult with

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the potential to change the world is what brings us joy and makes everything else worthwhile.

What is a Mother's love? It's something that is made up of much deep devotion, joy, pain and sacrifice. It is endless and unselfish and it endures whatever may come. It is full of hopes, dreams, tears and pleasure. Nothing can ever destroy it or take that special love away. It is very patient and forgiving. A Mother's love is a lifelong commitment to selflessness. More often than not, it requires much more giving than receiving, something that is given with delight, gratitude, enthusiasm and much satisfaction.

A Mother's love never fails or falters even though the heart is breaking. It is always believing when all the rest of the world is condemning. A Mother's love is a splended miracle that man cannot understand. It is something that cannot be measured, for it has no beginning or no end. These are not my words, but the words of some unknown poet. A mother's love is a similar to God's love as we can get and it doesn't even come close!

Happy Mother's Day to all the mother figures out there and remember to tell the mother in your life how much you love her. But today's message

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isn't about showing love for our mothers, it's about God's love for us and showing our love for Him.

Let's pray: Father God may the words that I speak be your words; may the message that is given and received be your message. May the meditation of our collective hearts and minds be acceptable in your sight. Amen.

In the Gospel lesson, Jesus is praying to His heavenly Father for the disciples. He says to the Father that He has taught the disciples all about the Father and His love. Jesus prays that the love that the Father has for Him will be instilled in the disciples and that they will have Jesus in them as well. This prayer is not just for the 12 disciples who were with Jesus, it is for today's disciples, the followers of Christ. It is for us.

How do we show our love for God? According to 1 John 5:, verse 3 says, "This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his command are not burdensome,..." How do we show our love? We show our love by obeying God's commands. Do we know what those commands are? There are only 2 Jesus states in Matthew 22:37-40, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love

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your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." All the Old Testament Jewish laws including the 10 Commandments boil down to these two commands: to love God and to love our neighbor! We are to love God with all our heart, soul and mind. If we profess to be children of God; if we profess to be baptized into the family of God; then we are to obey. We are to obey just as parents want their children to obey. Our obedience is the way we show love for God.

Doesn't sound very hard, does it? Yet, we have such difficulty. How many things do we love more than God? Do we love our children more than God? Do we love our spouses more than God? What about our time, money, weekends, house, car, job? These are all things that can get in the way of our love for God when we put them first in our lives. Anything that becomes the center of our life, other than Christ, becomes an idol; an idol is something we love more than God. Even church work can be an idol, when the work becomes more important than our relationship with our Lord and Savior.

I don't often quote The Message, but I like the way it expresses John 13:35: "Let me give you a new command: Love one another. In the same way I loved you, you love one another. This is how everyone will recognize

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that you are my disciples—when they see the love you have for each other." Are you recognized as Jesus' disciple, a follower of Christ, a child of God or have you been mistaken for someone else?

I recently read the results of a poll conducted by a California research firm that found that church attitudes about people in general and gays in particular are driving a negative image of the Christian faith among people under 30:

non-church	churched
• 91%	80% Christianity had an anti-gay image
• 87%	52% Christianity was judgmental
• 85%	47% Christianity was hypocritical

Is this the image that we as Christians want people to have? "This is how everyone will recognize that you are my disciples—when they see the love you have for each other."

Brothers and sisters we have to exhibit more love for each other. Not just inside these walls, but every place that we are. We are God's chosen, adopted into His family through baptism, granted eternal life through His amazing sacrificial love. We are asked to do two things, love Him and love each other. It starts with you and me who know Christ and it can spread to the rest of the world who do not know Him. In John 15:16-17, Jesus said to

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His disciples then and says to us today, "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit--fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. This is my command: Love each other."

Jesus' prayer is for us. Do we have the love that our heavenly Father had for Jesus in us? Do we have Jesus in us? Do we see our Savior in our neighbors? What a different church, community, city, nation, world this would be, if Christians obeyed Jesus' commandment to love one another! It begins with me and you. God's peace and love to each of you.