

Easter VII Year B: 12 / 13 May 2018

St. James Episcopal Church, Clinton NY

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**The pattern and parallel between the love Jesus had of his disciples  
and each of us and the love a Mother has for her children.**

*Hear my words as a babe Listens to his Mother.*

*Feel my message, like the Embrace of a Mother.*

*Amen*

Today is a glorious day to be preaching as it is the First Sunday after Ascension Day and we are celebrating Mother's Day and hopefully Spring has actually arrived. So much has occurred in these months of Biblical history and could you imagine being the Disciples of Jesus during this time. Ascension Day is when we celebrate Christ rising into heaven after appearing to his disciples for 40 days after his Crucifixion! This concludes the time Jesus will spend in this world with his disciples and marks the conclusion of Jesus' post-resurrection appearances. It is the final elevation of his human nature to divine glory and to the hand of God.

Next week we will celebrate the Feast of Pentecost which is seven weeks (50 days) after Easter Day. The story goes: 40 days after the resurrection Jesus ascends into heaven. But before he ascends, Jesus promises that he will not leave us "comfortless," but will send the Holy Spirit to strengthen and to guide us, to guide the church. Ten days later, on the Day of Pentecost, Holy Spirit descended on the people gathered.

Now I have been reflecting on all of these things as I prepared my Sermon today and kept in mind that it was Mother's Day weekend. What a glorious day to know that our life has direction, a savior and a passion. We have been given the opportunity to live a life of compassion, joy and failure and still know that Jesus has given us the gift of eternal life and forgiveness.

I was starting to see a pattern and parallel between the love Jesus had of his disciples and each of us and the love a Mother has for her children. Now I realize that Mother's Day can also be a difficult time for people because of their own personal situation. I know that very well. In my last Sermon, I spoke of my son Harrison who was adopted and raised in a single parent household. I fought many a battle this time of year when Harrison was in elementary school trying to explain the insensitivity of "Mother's Day Art Projects" and the difficulty that could bring my child. It was not until Harrison was a teenager that I understood that being a Mother had many meaning. It was Mother's Day weekend and my Husband and I were on the sidelines at a soccer game, how we spent most weekends! The Coach decided that as a tribute to Mother's, each player would present their Mother with a carnation. As I got agitated and uncomfortable, worrying how this would make my son feel, Harrison ran across the field and delivered his carnation to my Husband and said "Happy Mother's Day". Another lesson learned by the innocence of youth. Mother's Day is a celebration of a primary caregiver and is different for every person.

Let us look at our Gospel today and see what JESUS said to the Apostles and how that relates to Mother's Day. In John 17 Jesus spoke to his Apostles before he Ascended into Heaven. Just imagine being a Disciple having lived through the last years following Jesus and more importantly the last 90 days or so. Here was the Person that was leading you and guiding you and now is about to send you out on your own. Very similar to the role a Mother figure played in each of our lives. Jesus Said to his Apostles:

All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them.

**I can hear my Mom say:** I have given you life and have raised you. Now it is time for you to go out into the world.

**Jesus Said:** And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world and I am coming to you.

**Who hasn't heard a Mother say:** You only get one Mother in this world and I cannot ever be replaced by a spouse or mother-in-law. I am the one always there for you.

**Jesus said:** Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given to me, so that they may be one, as we are one.

**A Mother would say:** Lord, please look over my children and please do not let anyone harm them or they will have to deal with Mama Bear! And no one wants that.

**Jesus Said:** When I was with them, I protected them in your name, that you have given me.

**A Mother's Warning:** I can say whatever I want about my children, I can criticize, reprimand and correct them. But don't YOU dare say anything bad about my children.

**Jesus Said:** I guarded them and not one of them was lost except the one destined to be lost, so that scripture might be fulfilled.

**Every Mom I know has said:** I will lay down my life for my children and give up anything to provide for my children. No matter what you do, I will always be there to pick you up, brush you off and get you back on track.

Please do not think that I am taking Jesus' words lightly, but I wanted to make a point. Like Jesus is there for us in every move we make, so is a Mother. I am fortunate to have a Mother that has supported and guided me through very difficult times. She was also been by my side during my successes and triumphs. She has handled everything with love and support and continues to guide me every day by the strength and fortitude that she shows. I realize that not every child has this joy, as Harrison did not, but most have a guiding force in their life that has "mothered you".

In the 90s my Mother dealt with my coming out as a Gay man. Her first response was "A Mother always knows" and her love for me has never wavered. She was supportive of a horrible relationship that I was involved in and that I knew she did not approve of and never said "I told you so" when things fell apart. When I decided to adopt my Son, she was supportive. She and my father were in Hawaii and were the first faces I saw when I got off of the plane to welcome their new grandson. They immediately fell in love with my bundle of joy at first sight. Through the most difficult times in my life, my Mother stood by my side and was supportive. The telephone calls, cards of support and visits were always exactly what I needed.

I know that I have not always given her the easiest of paths to deal with, but she was always able to stay on course and keep me on course.

Because of that love and support throughout my life, I knew three years ago when she was dealing with the failing health of my Father, that it was time for me to be there for her. My husband and I made the decision to leave Metro New York City and move to Utica - somewhat of a culture shock after not having lived in the area for nearly 30 years. But it was the right thing to do to support my Mother as she has supported me my entire life. We supported my Mother and it was her devotion to the man she had been married to for over 60 years that demanded that she take care of him and that he was comfortable in his own home up until his death.

I never realized how strong and devoted my Mother was to her family and my Father, until on the day of his death, as she crawled into his bed to take a nap with him and then bravely told him that she would be OK, giving him permission to pass into God's hands. This week will mark the Ninth Anniversary of his Death, and like the nine months of gestation for a baby, my Mother is slowly being reborn. She has struggled with being alone and taking on the role of both Mother and Father for her children while her children have begun to be a parental figure for her. She has shown grace and dignity in learning the new way of life, as her entire world has been turned upside down. And like Jesus taught his disciples how to carry on once he Ascended, my Mother has taught me how to go on without our my Father's daily presence.

As I was preparing my Sermon I saw a post on Facebook by Zane Baker

"You can never find a better best friend than you Mother, so respect Her,  
cherish her and Love her while you can, She could be gone one day  
and you will find not anyone like her."

This completely applies to the Disciples and the strength they had to have as Jesus left them as well as it applies to everyone that Mothers. A Mother's love is like Jesus's love, unending, unwavering and unlimited.

I want to wish each and every Mother and especially my Mother, A Happy Mother's Day.

AMEN