




**WE CELEBRATE ALL
 WOMEN THIS
 MOTHER'S DAY...
 ESPECIALLY THESE.
 HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY**



Music

Scripture: John 15:9-17 (GNB)

Focus passages: 9 & 12

I love you just as the Father loves me; remain in my love. My commandment is this: love one another, just as I love you.

Message: “A Mother’s Love”

(Sing)

Beautiful Savior, King of Creation,

Son of God and Son of Man!

Truly I’d love thee, Truly I’d serve thee,

Light of my soul, my joy, my crown.

(from the 1965 Lutheran Churches Service Book and Hymnal #434,
Silesian Folksong, 1842)

That was one of my mother’s favorite hymns. I think Mom knew and loved and served Jesus all her life. Even when Alzheimer’s Disease began to gradually destroy her memory and her ability to hold a conversation, she still prayed, and she still believed that God was with her. It was through my parents, who raised us as part of a church family, that I grew in faith and came to know and love Jesus.

Mom loved music, especially hymns, and she taught us all to sing from a very young age, learning hymns and spiritual songs. The saying, “Those who sing pray twice” was really true for us. There are many people who find music important on their spiritual journeys, and sometimes music speaks when we have no words. But the point I’m making is that my mom shared the love of God with us through music and example, and she taught us about God’s love in the ways she loved us.

That's what Jesus tells his disciples, including us in the verses from John 15. Jesus loves us as God loves us, and we are to remain or abide in that love: welcome it, know it, feel it, hold onto it, grow in it, and share it with others. Jesus commands us to love others, just as he has loved us.

On this Mother's Day, I invite all of us to remember the mother figures in our lives. Who are the ones who loved us deeply, fiercely, and unconditionally? Maybe it was our biological mother, or grandmother. Or it could have been an aunt, older sister, maybe even a single father who had the role of both mother and father. It also could have been a foster mother, Sunday school teacher, pastor, youth leader, coach, teacher, or any other role model who helped us to experience the love of God in our lives. How did they love us so that we could understand God's love?

One of my favorite and very moving stories is about the love of God through a mother figure. John Todd was born in Rutledge, Vermont in the early 1800s into a family of several children. At a very young age, John's mother and father both died, and the children were left without parents.

Their relatives wondered what they would do with all the children and how they could send them out to friends and relatives. One dear and loving aunt said she would take little John. The aunt sent a horse and a servant named Caesar to get John who was only six at the time. Caesar arrived and put the little boy on the back of the horse with him. On the way back an endearing conversation took place:

John: Will she be there?

Caesar: Oh, yes, she'll be there waiting up for you.

John: Will I like living with her?

Caesar: My son, you fall into good hands.

John: Will she love me?

Caesar: Ah, she has a big heart.

John: Will I have my own room? Will she let me have a puppy?

Caesar: She's got everything all set, son. I think she has some surprises too.

John: Do you think she'll go to bed before we get there?

Caesar: Oh no! She'll be sure to wait up for you. You'll see when we get out of these woods. You'll see her candle shining in the window."

When they got to the clearing, sure enough, there she was standing in the doorway with a candle in the window. She reached down, kissed him and said, "Son, Welcome home!" She fed him supper, took him to his room and waited until he fell asleep. John experienced God's grace and love through his beloved aunt. He grew up to be The Rev. Dr. John Todd, a great minister of the Gospel. But it was there at his aunt's home, his new mother, that he grew up. It was always a place of enchantment because of his aunt; it awed him that such a place of love and transformation existed. She had given him a glimpse of God's accepting and unconditional love.

Years later, long after John Todd had moved away, his Aunt wrote to say her own death was near. Her health was failing and she wondered what was to become of her. This is what John Todd wrote her:

"My Dear Aunt, years ago I left a house of death not knowing where I was to go, whether anyone cared, whether it was the end of me. The ride was long but Caesar encouraged me. Finally, he pointed out your candle to me and there we were in the yard, and there you stood embracing me and taking me by the hand into my own room that you had made up. After all these years I can't believe it, how you did all that for me; I was expected; I felt safe in that room, so welcomed and loved. It was my room.

Now it's your turn to go, I'm writing to let you know, someone is waiting up for you, your room is ready, the light is on, the door is open, don't worry, Auntie, you're loved and expected! I know. I once saw God standing in your doorway - long ago!"

(reference: The Autobiography of John Todd, this version was found at <http://www.worksbyfaith.org/someone-is-waiting-a-story-of-dying/>)

Jesus is the visible manifestation of God's love, and mothers or mother-figures, embody God's love so we can understand and experience that love more fully. Admittedly, not everyone has had great experiences with their mothers, but hopefully, somewhere in their lives, there was someone who loved, supported, and nurtured them along the way so they could grow in God's grace.

A church community is called to be a place where we all can experience God's love and grace in the family of God. We learn, grow, and share with each other through worship, Sunday school, youth groups, and community activities. Let's face it, no one person and no one church is perfect. As human beings we all sin and fall short of the grace of God, but the gift of grace is that we are forgiven and called to forgive each other, and love as Jesus loves us.

Our challenge is to remain in the love of Christ so conflicts can be resolved, and so we demonstrate caring - kindness - respect - compassion - forgiveness - and love to others. This is our calling: to carry on the work of Jesus in the world as we remain in his love, work through the challenges we face, and persevere in loving as he loved.

May we strive to love as Jesus loved, and may we share that love with others, near and far. May we praise the name of Jesus, who loved us as God loves us. In the words of another verse in the hymn "Beautiful Savior":

Beautiful Savior, Lord of the nations,
Son of God and Son of Man!
Glory and honor, Praise, adoration,
Now and forever more be thine! Amen.
(see the citation at the beginning of this message)

Prayer:

God, our heavenly Parent, you have brought us into this world and nurtured us through those women, and even men, who have mothered us. You have helped us to know your love through them, whether they have been biological or guardians. We give thanks for those who have raised us, recognizing that their greatest gift was to love us, care for us, and release us to become all we can be as your children in the world. We give you thanks for mothers, aunts, grandmothers, teachers, coaches, role models, and those who love us just because they see something special in us, that gift of life and spark of divine that comes only from you. They recognized the gifts in us and guided us to the in the best way they knew how. They loved us as you love us, fiercely and completely. Thank you. Amen.

Lord's Prayer: (*Margaret Rolfe*)

"Loving God, within and around us, we revere you. We seek to live life as you would want us to do; with love and respect for all people and all things in the universe. May we find each day sufficient for our needs, and find forgiveness when we do wrong, just as we forgive those who do wrong to us. In times of trouble, may we center our lives in you. For your being is love, which comes with strength and with beauty, throughout eternity. Amen.

Hymn: "Blest Be the Tie That Binds" (UMH #557)

Sending Forth



WE LIFT UP IN PRAYER

Juliann
Joan Allen
Naomi
Erin Frane
Madeline
Charles Gilman
Josh Jones
Jenn

Harry Junkins
Marilyn & Gil
Donna Smith
Sophia
Bobbie Noble
Dan Strange
Danny Westbrook

Christine & her parents
Those in nursing and assisted living care
Our Church family



WHO WE ARE

FUMC PORTSMOUTH A RECONCILING CONGREGATION

We, the congregation of the First United Methodist Church of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, are dedicated in worshipping, learning, and serving with all people as we embrace Jesus Christ's message of love and acceptance. As a United Methodist Church we stand fully behind the statement "Open Hearts, Open Minds, and Open Doors". We celebrate our diversity and invite all persons regardless of age, gender, racial or ethnic background, sexual orientation, marital or socioeconomic status, nationality, physical or mental ability into full membership and participation in the life of this community of faith.



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