

“Feeling the Family Love”
A Fifth Sunday of Easter 10:00 am
John 14:1-14; May 14, 2017
Congregational UCC, Buena Vista, CO
Rev. Rebecca K. Poos

I. IN MY MOTHER’S HOUSE ARE MANY ROOMS

“Don’t let this throw you. You trust God, don’t you? Trust me. There is plenty of room for you in my Mother/Father’s home.

If that weren’t so, would I have told you that I’m on my way to get a room ready for you? And if I’m on my way to get your room ready, I’ll come back and get you so you can live where I live. And you already know the road I’m taking.”

Thomas said, “Master, we have no idea where you’re going. How do you expect us to know the road?”

Jesus said, I am the Road, also the Truth, also the Life. No one gets to the Mother/Father/Spirit God apart from me. If you really knew me, you would know my Mother/Father as well. From now on, you do know God. You’ve seen Her!”

II. MOTHER’S DAY: BANE OR BLESSING?

Ah, Mother’s Day. The bane of every preacher’s existence. It always falls on a Sunday, of course. That’s intentional. And it’s always “loaded.” For Hallmark alone cannot tell us what to celebrate in our lives—because life is just not that simple. One person’s celebration and honoring is another’s pain and grief. Some folks literally “endure” Mother’s Day, or just see it as “something to get through.” In any case, it’s something to be dreaded, not anticipated with joy.

And that’s not because some folks are just killjoys or “need to get over it”, but because life—in so many ways—doesn’t look like the Hallmark cards or the beautiful bouquets of roses. Abuse, neglect, regret, and grief are real. And we need to “get honest” about how we’re feeling—especially in church.

If you are feeling anything less than joyful today on this Mother’s Day, that’s OKAY. Feel it. Acknowledge your grief, name your regret.

The other reason Mother’s Day is dreaded by pastors and sometimes barely acknowledged in church is because it’s “not biblical.” But I disagree. Maybe the “official declaration” of Mother’s Day in 1914 happened long after our scriptures were written, but Mother Love from Mother Earth and Mother Church are the most original kinds of love we know, and are at the core of our faith, and certainly our holy texts.

Today’s scripture passage is a case in point. Jesus is urging the disciples to see *themselves* “in God”—in Mother/Father/Spirit God, tapped into the Source of all life, *just* as he is. “If you miss everything else I’ve taught you,” urges Jesus: Remember this! Please!

III. MOTHER’S DAY MAKE ROOM

And, once you get very clear that you are in God, *expand* your vision of God’s house. It’s not just about you and yours. Your mother love in your life to be celebrated and grieved all at once, but: “there are many rooms in Mother/Father God’s house.”

Make room for *all* the mothers. *All* the mother love. All the missing mother love felt by the children of God, and wrap them in *your* Mother/Father love, being channels of Divine Love.

Mother’s Day is a calling. To all of us—male and female—it matters not. A calling to make room. In our hearts, in our memories, in our mind’s eye. In our prayers.

One writer put it this way:

“This Mother’s Day take a moment to think of all the mothers in the world who are in need. There are millions of women in the world living on less than a dollar a day. There are women in this country who are wondering how they are going to feed or diaper their children from day to day.

There are children who need medical attention that their parents may not be able to afford. Anyone who has ever had to worry about such things can deeply sympathize. For those of us who have escaped such worries, we can only imagine the level of instinctive stress that uncertainty can provoke.”

IV. MOTHER’S DAY MAKE ROOM AT HOME

It’s also a calling to “think globally and act locally.” Now that we’ve wrapped our thoughts around mothers all over the world, think closer to home. Where is mother love enveloping you right here? Here in the church, in the community?

Our congregation is wrapping one another in mother love as we create and grow together. The new garden is being created and planted. Stories and histories are being shared. Memorial celebrations remind us who and Whose we are. The music groups all coming together to play and sing in worship is a “wrapping in mother’s arms” kinda thing.

The two trips being planned, though one is called “mission trip” and one is called “Pilgrimage”—the ultimate goal is the same—to gather together in community and explore and live out our faith in the world.

The care ministries this church does are many and amazing. What better way to share the love with our church mothers and fathers than by bringing soup, or a meal, or a backpack to those who have nurtured us or need nurture?

V. MOTHER’S DAY—MY MOTHERS

And then, bring it even closer home and think about your own mothers. The ones who gave you birth. Give thanks for the gift of life they’ve given you. Forgive them where they are not perfect. None of us ever are—as parents or as children. Kacie spoke eloquently about connecting when she led the service a couple weeks ago.

How vitally important it is to make real and tangible connections with one another in this computer-and-smart-phone driven-ether we live in. To stop multi-tasking, problem-solving, and addressing the nuts and bolts of everyday life and just connect at the soul level.

I had the unique pleasure of connecting with my mother *and* my mother-in-law this past week. Something that doesn’t happen every year near Mother’s Day. One visit was brief and the other was timeless, but both were profound and meaningful.

I sat down with Jean Brody on Tuesday, and shared with her the tear-inducing little notes and loving sentiments the Choir had all written in a card for Clarke and me when Jean was so sick a couple weeks back.

I got choked up reading them, as did she. We both felt the love of “Mother Church” in those sweet notes. It means the world to her that this congregation loves her and stays connected. Never, ever, underestimate the power of that love and holding dear ones in prayer—especially when folks have moved away geographically.

Over last weekend, I connected with my own mother Mildred in Portland, Oregon. She couldn’t quite remember my name the first day, But she quickly took my hand and we walked round and round the courtyard full of gorgeous flowers and sunshine.

We shared stories and tried to remember things in her apartment—finding some things with more luck than others—and some memories were hard for her to piece together. I was saddened to witness a once-very-sharp mind “confusing so easily” as she describes it. And, I wondered if it was hurtful and frustrating for her to *try* to remember, as the eras of our family life tend to collapse in on each other in fuzzy ways.

But then, a holy moment happened on my last day with her.

We were sitting in the garden, in the lovely Portland sun (something you'd better enjoy while it lasts!), smelling the flowers and time stood still.

The afternoon had no limits on it, nor, amazingly did her energy. She didn't want to move, and she didn't want me to leave. She still wasn't sure of my name and which of her 5 kids I was, but I was present. And that's what mattered. Cognitive coherence: dates and times and the sequence and order of things—is so very UN-important in the “thin places.”

“Be still, and know that I am God.”

Be still, and connect. On whatever level—at the soul level, in the Mother love of creation and human relationships that go deeper than the details.

We passed the entire afternoon, just being mostly still, talking story a bit, and enjoying each other's company in the sunshine. We ventured out to find a fresh strawberry milkshake, and soaked in more of the goodness of the earth. Over fresh strawberries, I asked her if she had any thoughts about her Celebration of Life service after she's passed through the veil. She started singing.

First, “In the Sweet, By and By,” and told of my father's last words to her being, “I'll see you Over There; in the sweet by and by.” (We had never heard this story before, but it *so* doesn't matter!

And then, when I asked her favorite old songs or scriptures or poems, the answer to each question was the same:

MY GOD AND I

My God and I go in the field together;
We walk and talk as good friends should and do;
We clasp our hands, our voices ring with laughter,
My God and I walk through the meadow's hue.

And I have sung that song all week. I knew it from my childhood, and I know it still—just as I now know what my mother's legacy of faith is to me: walking in the Garden, hand-in-hand, with the God who gave us birth and each other.

VI. MOTHER'S DAY—ONE DAY NOT ENOUGH

Mother's Day. Loaded, emotional, avoided by some. Biblical? Spiritual? To be celebrated in church? You bet!! “In my Mother/Father's house are many rooms. I go to prepare a place for you, and you—in turn—are to make room for one another. For many mothers of all kinds. And to wrap them in the love which you have from me.”

And, not just one ONE day out of the year, either! We are compelled to take it beyond today. My mother certainly would expect it of me—for at the core of her soul and lifelong faith journey is mission and care of all God's children.

Consider this advice for how we carry it forward from an anonymous writer who suggests one day a year for Mother's Day is *definitely* not enough.

“There are many ways to celebrate Mother's Day, but here are a few unconventional suggestions that will prove to your own mother that she did a good job raising you. How about dropping off a box of diapers and/or a case of formula to a local food bank or women's shelter?

If you have some baby furniture or clothing that your own children have outgrown, how about donating that stuff to a local charity? Does our local hospital have a fund for children who need care? Are there doctors in our community or city who volunteer in clinics overseas who might need supplies?

There are countless ways to help support Moms locally and globally. Let your own Mom know that you were thinking about her and all of the many things she provided for you along the way...and that you did a good deed in honor of her. It will make her proud.

One day is nice, but it is not enough.

So while we take this day to especially honor mothers, let us think of it as a planning day.

How can we honor our mothers, grandmothers, mother-in-laws, and aunts each and *every* day? How can we recognize their special contributions to our lives *every* day?

Let us take a moment to jot down three ways we can truly honor mothers, from our own mothers to the young mothers in this congregation, to the mothers who might be missing their grown up kids, to mothers who may have passed away.

To our “church mothers” here in our midst. Give Nan, and Marge and Gloria and Mary and Millie, VirJeanne, Jean and every church mother you can find a hug today! And share your 3 things—your commitments going forth with each other at Coffee Hour.

Now, let us make a commitment to honor these women *every* day of the year because one day is not enough!

YOU KNOW THE ROAD!

“Don’t let this throw you. You trust God, don’t you? Trust me. There is plenty of room for you in my Mother/Father’s home.

If that weren’t so, would I have told you that I’m on my way to get a room ready for you? And if I’m on my way to get your room ready, I’ll come back and get you so you can live where I live. And you already know the road I’m taking.”

How does Jesus show us the way on this holy Mother’s Day? Down the road of *connecting*: with our own mothers, all our Relations, Mother Earth, Mother Church, and sharing that nurturing love with all we meet. Happy Mother’s Day to one and all! Amen.