

MOTHERHOOD

Proverbs 31:10-12, 25-31, John 17:20-26 and Psalm 97

A husband came home from work and found his three children outside, still in their pyjamas, playing in the mud, with empty food boxes and wrappers scattered all around the front yard. The door of his wife's car was open, as was the front door to the house and there was no sign of the dog. Proceeding into the entry, he found an even bigger mess. A lamp had been knocked over, and the throw rug was wadded against one wall. In the front room the TV was making a loud sound of a carton channel, and the family room was spread with toys and various items of clothing. In the kitchen, dishes filled the sink, breakfast food was spilled on the floor, a broken glass lay under the table and a small pile of sand spread by the back door. He quickly headed upstairs, stepping over toys and more of the piles of clothes, looking for his wife.

He was worried she might be ill, or that something has happened. He was met with a small trickle of water coming out the bathroom door. As he peered inside he found wet towels, scummy soap and more toys scattered over the floor. Miles of toilet paper lay in a heap and toothpaste had smeared over the walls. As he rushed to the bedroom, he found his wife in her pyjamas comfortably wrapped on the bed, reading a novel. She looked up at him, smiled, and asked how his day went. He looked at her bewildered and asked, 'what happened today?' She again smiled and answered, 'you know everyday when you come home from work and you ask me what in the world I do all day?' 'Yes,' was his incredulous reply. She answered, 'Well, today I didn't do it.'

Today is Mother's Day, a day we all are called to honor our moms. For many United Church congregations, Mothers' Day is a beautiful time to remember and celebrate the woman who have given birth, nurtured their children, and left a profound legacy of Christ likeness. We need to view motherhood with God's eyes and honor his vision of motherhood by holding it in high esteem and affirming those who aspire to motherhood and those who are mothers. Know: Motherhood is ordained by God and part of his plan. Therefore, God holds motherhood in high regard and we should too.

Although Proverbs is a book based on metaphor, yet it is packed with word-pictures of universal truths. The mother identified in this text is not in the kitchen scrubbing dishes. She clearly takes care of her role and takes care of her spouse, household and excels at domestic activities. She is quite active outside the home as well. She is a successful businesswoman and among other duties she is an entrepreneur who works late into the evening. She plans ahead and makes dresses for a living.

My mother taught me so many Godly virtues throughout my childhood that have stayed with me even to this day. I can still recall during her adult education I learnt my first bible verses in (Mende) the language of my birth. "See I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare the way; the voice of one crying in the wilderness; 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his path straight,'" (Mark 1:2&3). She taught me to pray. She instilled a sense of imagination in me, "Don't do that again. She taught me how to anticipate, "Just you wait until your father comes home...." She taught me how to

count...at least to three ("1, 2, 3!"). She taught me repentance, "Don't you ever do that again...." And she taught me self-control, "Don't touch anything..." and then she'd often combine self-control with imagination. As a minister now, I regard her as my first teacher.

A well-educated 14th century woman, Julian of Norwich, devoted her life to God through study and contemplation of scripture. She wrote a theological treatise entitled "Showings" and her words have now become a hymn that we might rightly sing today: "Mothering God, you gave me birth. Mothering Christ, you took my form. Mothering Spirit, nurturing One." God is always more than we imagined. God is always closer than we had dared to dream.

The life of faith is a journey filled with surprises. Just when we think Mother's Day is about cards and flowers, we're reminded that the original Mother's Day proclamation urged an end to war: During the decade-long (1990-2000) war I remember the women's bravery, confronting the rebels, not with guns and matches but in tears and pleas to lay down their weapons in place of a peaceful solution. We can also argue that though we call God our "Father", we hear Jesus praying as a mother worried for her children. "I will not leave you orphaned," Jesus said. "You are my own and I will be with you forever."

As the scripture calls us to honor mothers and fathers, Martin Luther says in the Fourth Commandment, "It is a much higher thing to honor than to love." Whether parent or child, sibling or spouse, every one of God's children has a role in taking care of one another. And, like the pattern set by our heavenly family, we must provide and care for each other with love. We can follow Heavenly Father's example by encouraging our loved ones in their trials, listening to their worries, cheering for them in their efforts and successes, and comforting them in their sorrows.

This unity or oneness with the Father and the Son is a relationship that is a firm desire to be in tune with God. Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise), "that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land." Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. (Ephesians 6:1-4)

Jesus' prayer doesn't stop with those seated at the table. "I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one." Jesus is praying also for you and for me. We are the ones who have come to believe because of the disciples' words. Jesus' prayer hangs in the space between earth and heaven, between time past and time present and time yet to come. Jesus is praying that we will remain faithful and trust in the presence of the Holy Spirit. HAPPY MOTHERS DAY.