



CHRIST CHURCH CRANBROOK

In the name of the loving, liberating life-giving God. Amen.

So this is my first time preaching on Mother's Day and I have to say it was a little more challenging than I expected. At first, I thought, you know, this will be great. I can lift up motherhood, talk about their sacrificial love, their endless patience, their tireless understanding. I can talk about all the unseen and unappreciated things that mothers do for us that we just take for granted. The birthday parties you organized when no one was looking. The laundry you folded after we had gone to bed. The shopping you did, the meals you cooked, the errands you ran, the countless crayons you picked up, and the Cheerios you vacuumed. Oh my God, the Cheerios in every nook. And there are some things that you just will never appreciate until you become a parent yourself. For me, it is the Cheerios.

I thought I would praise the incredible sacrifice that mothers make for their children. The long days driving us from soccer games to swim meets. The late nights waiting by the window to make sure we got home okay. I was going to open with the old line – have you heard this one? When God realized that God couldn't be everywhere at once, God sent us mothers. But as I thought about this sermon and as I prayed about it and thought about all of you, I couldn't help but come back to the reality that for many of us, our families, well, they're a bit more complicated than that. Some of us had moms that really struggled. They faced real challenges. Challenges that they didn't always overcome. Some of our mothers couldn't always be there, and some of them, they didn't know how. Some of us are mothers who can't seem to shake the feeling that somehow our best isn't good enough. And some of us can't seem to let go of the mistakes that we might have made.

I'm also aware that Mother's Day can be a difficult day for other reasons. I know people in this parish, beginning with our own rector, who recently lost a mom. I know others who have spent years trying to become one. I know moms who've lost children, and if you're here today, and I know that some of you are, know that I stand here today in awe of your strength and courage and your faith.

There are non-traditional families in this parish as well. Kids who are being raised by grandparents or foster parents. For Joe and I, our girls were born through the miracle of IVF. They have two dads, five grandparents, a whole bunch of godparents. But they will never have a mother. So while I observe Mother's Day like everybody else, I call my mom. I make a point to tell her something that she

did for me, something that she taught me that's been a blessing in my life. It's been a blessing to other people. I'm also mindful that if it's perfect, it's probably not real. And if it's real, it's probably not perfect.

But the good news, the good news is that we follow a God who is just as concerned about those on the outside, as those on the inside, just as in love with those who don't fit the mold as with those who do. So if you're a bit complicated today, if you're suffering or grieving today, if your family is a bit more complicated, if your life or your past isn't as perfect as the Hallmark cards might make it sound, the good news is that we follow a God who goes out of his way again and again to find and to seek and to discover anyone and everyone who's ever been told that their life and their family and their experiences and their love somehow doesn't measure up, the good news is that God has found you and is with you today as well as He is every day.

I think this is why I'm increasingly drawn to the European tradition where Mother's Day is called Mothering Day. And I heard Pastor Manisha use that term this past week as well. And I like it because it suggests that when it comes to mothers, what matters isn't the noun, but the verb. It's not about gender or biology or traditional family roles, but about the love we offer one another. As Paul says, in Christ, there's no male or female. No father, no mother, no perfect, no imperfect. The only thing that matters, he says, the only thing that matters is faith expressed in love. Maybe that's what we're called to celebrate today. Not perfect mothers, not perfect families, but the perfect love of Christ. A love that we all have within us. A love that we are all called to share. A love that we all need.

Meister Eckhart, a 14th century Christian mystic and monk, he suggested something similar while reflecting on the mother of Jesus and what her sacrifice might mean to us today. And he said, what good is it to me? He asked, what good is it to me if Mary gave birth to the son of God 1400 years ago if I also don't give birth to the son of God in my own time, in my own life? We were all meant to be mothers of God, he said. For Eckhart, the journey of faith wasn't about looking for God somewhere out there, but an inward journey. One that invites and leads all of us to giving birth to the Christ within us, to the image of God that we are all pregnant with. And it occurred to me, it occurred to me that if that is true, if we are all called to give birth to the Christ within us, might it also be true that we are also called to mother the Christ within each other? To mother the child of God within all people.

When our girls were maybe two or three years old, they started to play with the little girl next door named Kimberly. She was about their same age. And one day the kids were playing in her backyard and Kimberly's mom came out and Kimberly said, hi Mom, went over and gave her a hug. And I don't know, maybe they just thought that that was her name, but our girls just followed suit. Hi Mom. And they went over and gave her a hug too. And I thought to myself for a second, should I

say something? Do I need to correct that? But it was just such a sweet, innocent moment, you know? And Kimberly's mom, she had this huge smile on her face. She was just glowing. Who was I to spoil that moment?

But it didn't stop there. Later that week, I was taking the girls to the park down at the end of the street in their stroller. One of our neighbors was out front in her house, gardening, and the girls saw her and kind of peeked over the edge of the stroller and they said, hi Mommy! And without missing a beat, she just says, oh hi, my little sweet peas. And again, she just had this look of sheer delight. And so for a precious week or two there, our girls, they just saw all women as mommy. And I remember thinking to myself as I stood there on that sidewalk, did I just catch a glimpse of the kingdom of God? A world where all kids might see all people, and all people might see them as just one extended family?

Our gospel today finds Jesus in the upper room. The Last Supper is over, and Jesus is praying on behalf of His friends. It's the last thing He says to the disciples before His arrest and His execution. And did you notice, what did He pray for? Well, it's the Gospel of John, so it's a very long prayer. Maybe a little wordy, but if I were to try to boil it down to one thing, I might boil it down to this: that we would be one. As the father and I are one, that we would be one.

Jesus prays for a world where we would be so completely reconciled to one another, our divisions so fully healed, our differences so completely erased that we would see one another as God does. One people. One family. No longer male or female, no longer Jew or Gentile, no longer Israeli or Palestinian, not transgendered or cisgendered, not Republican or Democrat, but one people bound together by one God, the same God who mothers us all.

And if that's a vision that seems a bit out of reach, so pie in the sky, so beautiful, yet so impossible, then I would say, look no further than the mothers around you. Mothers that when they are at their best, when they're at their most free, unrestrained by the traumas of the past, unburdened by the traumas of the present, when they're fully free to be the loving, liberating, life-giving people that God made them to be, we all catch a glimpse of what the world can look like when the final prayer of Jesus is finally answered.

And if you've experienced that type of love in your life, no matter who it came from. If you've been touched by it even for a fleeting, precious moment, then you also know it's not out of reach at all. It's not pie in the sky. It's within our grasp because it's within our experience. And if it's within our experience, then it can be replicated, it can be repeated, it can be multiplied. It's not a pipe dream. It is God's dream and God's dreams come true.

What if we were to help make it so? What if we, beginning today, stood ready to offer all children, all people, the same selfless love, the same endless patience, the same understanding, and compassion and unconditional love that we

Mothering Day - The Seventh Sunday of Easter 5_12_24

celebrate today? What if we were to see ourselves as a people called to mother?
To mother, the child of God, the child that is within you, within me, within all
people? What a wonderful world that would be. On Earth as it is in Heaven.

Amen.