

Motherhood and the Mission of God

Introduction

Risky Business

- A. This may come as a shock to you, but I am not a woman. And, consequently, neither am I a mother. So I'm aware that attempting a Mother's Day message is a bit risky. I'm speaking of things unknown to me at a fundamental level. I risk coming off as misinformed, naïve, simplistic, even offensive.
 - 1. But I felt called to try. While I'm certainly unworthy of such a topic, I couldn't shake the desire I had to press in and ask God for something that might honor and bless the mothers in this church.

A Message for Every Member

- A. I'm aware as I begin this message that some might already be starting to tune out. "I'm not a mother. Why should I care?!"
- B. I have a deep-seated conviction that everything we do in our services here preaches in some way to every individual present. So when I choose to preach an entire message on motherhood, I do it with every member of this church in mind.
 - 1. Men—Do you want to know what such a thing preaches to the men? "O let's be a church that honors its ladies! Whether that lady is your wife by marriage, your mother, sister, or daughter by biology or your mother, sister, or daughter in the Lord—let's be a church that honors its ladies! They are worth a Sunday, and so much more!"
 - 2. Children—What about the children? By honoring our mother's here, I'm turning you in the direction of the 5th commandment: "[Honor your father and your mother](#)" ([Ex 20:12](#)). And, in doing so, I am laboring for your blessing. For, as we saw a few weeks ago, Paul calls it "[the first commandment with a promise](#)" ([Eph 6:2b](#)): namely, "[that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.](#)" (v. 3).
 - a. Kids you get this right? You see that look in your mommy's eye when you don't honor her. And you're thinking: "Things are not going to go well for me, I'm not going to live long in this land...unless I learn to honor mama."
 - 3. Women—What about the women who aren't mothers. (1) There are unmarried ladies here, who might want kids but shouldn't. (2) There are married ladies here, perhaps, that want kids but are unable. Their body's just not working. Mother's Day isn't for celebrating. It's for weeping. (3) Then there are those who are married, and able, but unsure about all this motherhood stuff. Am I ready for kids? Do I want to have kids?

- a. Whatever the case may be, as a woman, you are still called to motherhood. For the Scriptures present motherhood, as it has been redeemed in Christ, as more than a mere biological phenomenon. It is more than physically birthing, or even adopting, kids. Motherhood, having been coded into the very DNA of women by God Himself, will find expression in her life, if not biologically, then certainly spiritually. Whether you have biological children or not, you are called by God to motherhood in this the spiritual family of God. There are sons and daughters of God in this church who need your tender compassion, your self-sacrificing nurture, your spiritual mothering.
 - i. As Paul writes at the close of his epistle to the [Romans](#): “Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord; also his mother, who has been a mother to me as well” (16:13). “I’m not her biological son, but in Christ, by the Spirit, in this family of God, she has been to me a mother.”

(1) This church needs mothers like that!

- C. There will be more on this last point later, but I open this way as a pleading to everyone here: You may not be a mother, but this sermon is profoundly relevant to you!
- D. I have three reflections on Motherhood for us that follow the basic storyline of redemptive history—Creation-Fall-Redemption: (1) Motherhood Is in God’s Image; (2) Motherhood Is through God’s Son; (3) Motherhood Is on God’s Mission.

(1) Motherhood Is in God’s Image

A High Calling, Profound Privilege, and Bright Glory

- A. We begin where motherhood begins which, coincidentally, is where creation begins. Motherhood is as old as the world, as old as humanity, because without motherhood humanity would cease to exist.
- B. Scripture’s presentation of Motherhood is at odds with our culture from the outset.
 - 1. In Scripture, Motherhood is a high calling, a profound privilege, and a bright glory.
 - 2. In our culture it is not a high calling, it gets in the way of a woman’s “calling.” It is not a profound privilege, it is a nuisance, a burden. It is not a bright glory, it is somewhat shameful to be “just” a mother. Like being a mother isn’t enough. “What do you do?” “I’m a stay-at-home mom.” “Oh, you mean you’re just a mother?! Then...what do you do all day?!”
 - a. One husband reflecting on this writes: “Yes, my wife is JUST a mother. JUST. She JUST brings forth life into the universe, and she JUST shapes and molds and raises those lives. She JUST manages, directs and maintains the workings of the household, while caring for children who JUST rely on her

for everything. She JUST teaches our [children] how to be human beings, and, as they grow, she will JUST train them in all things, from morals, to manners, to the ABC's, to hygiene, etc...She is JUST everything to everyone. And society would JUST fall apart at the seams if she, and her fellow moms, failed in any of the tasks I outlined. Yes, she is JUST a mother. Which is sort of like looking at the sky and saying, 'Hey, it's JUST the sun.'"

- C. O what a high calling, what a profound privilege, what a bright glory it is to be a mother.
 - 1. But what makes the calling so high, the privilege so profound, and the glory so bright, is that, fundamentally, Motherhood Is in God's Image.

From Womanhood to Motherhood

- A. If we go back behind Motherhood for a moment to consider Womanhood, we read this in [Gen 1:27](#): "God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."
 - 1. God is the fountainhead of all being, and He is the archetype, the original pattern that is imaged in both male and female together.
 - a. I dare not speak of God with female pronouns, for the Bible does not permit such a thing. But, certainly we must speak of Him as the source, archetype, and pattern of all things feminine. For that is the meaning of [Gen 1:27](#)!
 - i. Womanhood emerges from and images God.
- B. But as we continue from the Womanhood of [v. 27](#) we come to the Motherhood of [v. 28a](#): "And God blessed them. And God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth...'"
 - 1. Here is where we start to see the crown of womanhood in motherhood. Womanhood, in general, and Motherhood, in particular, images God.
 - a. But How? I'll give you three ways.

(1) Motherhood Images God's Tri-Unity

- A. We must not miss the fact that when God sets out to make man in His image He speaks in the plural: "Let us make man in our image" ([v. 26a](#)).
 - 1. What becomes clear as Scripture unfolds is that God, in His very being, is in relationship with Himself—Father, Son, Holy Spirit...a tri-unity. So when God sets out to make us in His image, He makes us a community—male and female.
 - a. And as the Spirit proceeds out from the loving union of the Father and Son, so children proceed from the two (male and female) becoming one flesh. Many and yet one.

(2) Motherhood Images God's Creativity

- A. And this leads to a second way Motherhood images God: in His creativity. In the creation narrative, God is portrayed as creating first the realms of heaven and earth, sea and land, and then He fills them with life.
 - 1. In the same way, Adam and Eve are called to “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth...” (v. 28a). Which we know happens by way of Motherhood, pro-creation.

(3) Motherhood Images God's Charity

- A. God self-identifies as Father and I would never deviate from this, but from the Godhead arises not just the pattern of Fatherhood but of Motherhood as well.
 - 1. God is not a Mother, but He is still like a Mother. And just as much as we need His power, provision, and protection, so also we need His nurture, tenderness, and charity.
- B. Consider Isa 49:13-15: “¹³ Sing for joy, O heavens, and exult, O earth; break forth, O mountains, into singing! For the Lord has comforted his people and will have compassion on his afflicted. ¹⁴ But Zion said, “The Lord has forsaken me; my Lord has forgotten me.” ¹⁵ “Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you.”
 - 1. Is this not one of the most precious promises in all the Scriptures?! And it comes to us in the packaging of Motherhood! “I will be like a mother to you. There’s no way I will forget to have compassion on you!”
 - a. As He says to Israel a few chapters later: “As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you...” (Isa 66:13a).
- C. Mommy, I know there will be times when you feel like caring for your child is mundane, exhausting, maybe even dehumanizing—like this little one stole your life from you—but truly it is imaging the charity of God in a most beautiful way.

(2) Motherhood Is through God's Son

Coming Redemption through Motherhood

- A. But Eve failed to image God in the way outlined here, did she not? Rebellion against God's command led to distortion of God's image.
 - 1. The tri-unity, the creativity, the charity were all marred by sin and instead into the world comes division, destruction, and not self-sacrifice but self-defense and self-preservation to the sacrifice of others.

- B. But upon the marring of God's image in the fall, God immediately sets out upon its renewal, and He's going to do it within the context of Motherhood.
1. To Satan, the serpent, God says: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel" (Gen 3:15). In other words, from the woman will come a Son who will trample the Devil's head though He will be wounded in the process.
- C. Here is likely why we move immediately from God's cursing of the world in vv. 14-19 to Adam's naming of his wife in v. 20: "The man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living." Eve means "life".
1. It seems crazy to come out of the curses talking about life. After all, through this couple came not life but death: "You are dust, and to dust you shall return" (Gen 3:19b).
 - a. Yet, with this curse of death still hanging in the air, Adam thinks to himself: "I've got it! Now I know what I'll name my wife: Life." What's that all about?
 - i. Either he is utterly naïve, or he caught what God was saying in v. 15. In the curse on the serpent, he heard a promise made to mankind of triumphant Son who would be born to the woman. And this promise of life rang out louder than any curse of death. She shall be called Eve!
- D. Motherhood, after the fall, then, is only properly understood in light of the Redeemer. Motherhood is now all about this Son!

Christ and the Lens of Motherhood

- A. It's interesting that, as we follow this Promised Seed, the whole of His redemptive work can actually be understood through the lens of Motherhood:
1. First, the promised Child, the Christ, is born to a mother (Luk 1-2).
 2. Second, Christ longs for Israel like a mother: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!" (Luke 13:34).
 3. Third, Christ groans in labor pains like a mother: [Speaking to His disciples of His impending death and resurrection, He gives them this analogy:] "When a woman is giving birth, she has sorrow because her hour has come, but when she has delivered the baby, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world" (John 16:21).

- a. “We’re going into labor here.” That’s what the cross is all about. He is taking upon Himself the death due our sins so that we might walk in newness of life in Him.
- 4. Fourth, Christ gives birth like a mother: “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3).
 - a. That’s mommy language! Because of sin, you and I are born spiritually dead. But because of Christ, by His Spirit, you and I can be born again!
- B. Christ redeems motherhood by doing the work of a mother Himself!

Before a Mother a Daughter

- A. Let me give you one massively important implication from all of this for mothers: Before you can be the mother God’s created you to be, you must first be the daughter God’s redeemed you to be.
 - 1. Motherhood is only properly understood now through God’s Son. And through God’s Son you’ve been redeemed, regenerated, and adopted as God’s beloved daughter.
 - a. You need to know the love and grace of God that are yours at the outset if you are ever to make it through the minefield of motherhood.
- B. Being a mother is hard. It takes you to the end of yourself does it not. And at the end of yourself it’s not always pretty. You’re going to see your sin. And your kids will see it too. But what then?
 - 1. My sense is that a lot of mother’s deal with an almost constant nagging sense of guilt, even years after the kids have left the home.
 - a. You’re just never good enough. You blew it. You raise your voice too often. You let them watch too much TV. You never did devotions with them. Maybe they’d be walking with the Lord if you had. You did too many devotions with them. You scared them away from the faith. You’re guilty.
- C. But hear me now: Because of the Promised Offspring, God’s Son, and His work on the cross, though you are not a perfect mommy, though you are still dealing with the sins of your flesh—His name over you is not Death, but Life!
 - 1. What name do you take to yourself? The name of the curse? Or the name of the promise?
 - a. O mother, if you have repented and trusted in God’s Son, then you are united to God’s Son by His Spirit. And if you are united to God’s Son by His Spirit, then you are God’s daughter. And if you are God’s daughter, then life

not death will have the last word over you, grace not condemnation will prevail. Your name, because of Jesus, is Life!

- i. And he is able to take your broken parenting and make of it something beautiful.

D. Hallelujah! Motherhood is through God's Son!

(3) Motherhood Is on God's Mission

Motherhood and the New Birth

A. The commission given to Adam and Eve—that they be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth with God's glorious image—could originally be fulfilled through procreation alone.

1. If they had loved and obeyed God, they would have given birth to children who loved and obeyed God, and they would have given birth to children who loved and obeyed God, until the whole earth was filled with God's glory.

- a. Motherhood was obviously vital to this process.

B. But after the fall, what was once achievable through mere procreation now can only be achieved through conversion. We give birth to children in need of being born again. Hence, the Great Commission given to us by Christ that we go into all the nations and make disciples.

1. But the frontier of this mission field does not begin somewhere in the 10/40 window. It begins with that little girl sitting by your living room window. It's not enough that she be born in Adam, she must be born again in Christ!

- a. And again, motherhood is vital to this process.

C. Consider what was said of Timothy's mother: " ¹⁴ But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it ¹⁵ and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim 3:14–15).

1. Somebody in Timothy's childhood was teaching Him the Scriptures and getting him ready for salvation in Jesus. But who?

- a. Mommy! "I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well" (2 Tim 1:5).

D. Motherhood is on God's mission!

Beyond the Boundaries of Biology

- A. I close with a word to every woman here, whether you have biological children or not: With the coming of Christ, with the Great Commission given to us in Him, with the focus now not so much on physical birth but on the new birth of the Spirit, motherhood, to our utter amazement, starts to broaden out beyond the boundaries of biology.
1. When Jesus is told that His mother and brothers are looking for Him, how does He respond? “³³ ‘Who are my mother and my brothers?’³⁴ And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, ‘Here are my mother and my brothers!’³⁵ For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother’” (Mark 3:33–35).
 - a. What this means for every woman in this church is staggering! The claim to motherhood is no longer merely biological, it’s spiritual. Motherhood is no longer confined to those who labor in the physical birth. It is now especially ascribed to those who labor in the spiritual birth—those ladies who labor to see others born again and raised up in Christ!
- B. You might not ever get married. You might never realize the dream of holding your little baby in your arms. But you are called by God to be a mother. You might be married. But your womb, for a reason God only knows, might be as dry as the desert. And you feel like something less than a woman because of it. You are called by God to be a mother.
1. You are called to labor for the new birth in others. To nurture the young faith in others. To lay your life down for the raising up of your sons and daughters in the faith.
- C. May all the women in this church, in one way or another, fulfill their high calling to motherhood to the glory of God! Happy Mother’s Day!