

Mother's Day Sermon
Sunday, May 8, 2022
First United Methodist Church

Scripture: 1st Corinthians 13: 4 - 7 (NIV)

“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.”

The word of God for the people of God, thanks be to God!

Message:

Happy Mother's Day!

If you are a mother or desire to be one, congratulations! I can think of no finer occupation. We are ever so grateful for all that you do for God's children. We honor you today and every day!

I don't know about you, but I was blessed to have had a wonderful mother for more than sixty years of my life. When I was just six months old, on April 2, 1950 my mother who was raised a Methodist had me baptized at the Taft Methodist Church. And that single event has blessed me for 72 plus years and hopefully will bless me into eternity.

For thirty-six years as an educator in the Panama-Buena Vista Union School District and the last 23 years as an Elementary School Principal I had the pleasure of working with hundreds of wonderful mothers and teachers. One of those mothers and teachers was our own Kathleen Schaffer.

With all this experience working with mothers I still did not claim to be an expert on Motherhood.

I have a feeling that Mother's Day brings out all types of feelings for each of us.

One of my favorite female Christian writers, Ashley Kappel, shares her feelings about Mother's Day with us when she writes:

"Going to church is supposed to be a homecoming, a breath of fresh air, and a chance to learn something.

But sometimes on Mother's Day, it's more than that: it's a sinking pit in a stomach, a hidden tear behind a program, or a skipped sermon blamed on a little bug.

I grew up smiling as the pastor asked the mothers in the congregation to stand, recognizing them on their special day. (I hope you noticed I did not do that.)

Ashley continues: "It wasn't until I struggled to have our first child, losing two precious children along the way, that I realized those experiencing infertility often dread Mother's Day sermons.

She writes: "I mentioned to my mom that I wasn't sure I could sit through another service about motherhood.

Christmas Eve had gutted me as I sat contemplating Mary's moments before childhood.

Easter left me hopeful but still forlorn, longing for the child I didn't have.

And now I had to face Mother's Day with empty arms and an aching heart.

I went anyway, Ashley writes. I sat and breathed deeply, desperate to heart and feel the song of Mary's heart as she learned about her pregnancy.

How confused, how panicked she would have been, even as her faith bolstered her for the journey.

Ashley says, "I got my happy ending. My beautiful baby was born the next year and another the year after.

Mary had her joyful moment too.

Ashley concludes: "No mother has it easy. (Can I hear an Amen!)

No mother's journey is perfect, smooth, or remotely the same.

No matter what your path to motherhood, or if you are still on that journey, or have relinquished that dream altogether, I'd like to celebrate you this Mother's Day.

You are loved. You are seen. You are valued!

As I thought about motherhood and all the wonderful mothers I have known and worked with, one thought kept flashing through my mind: motherhood is a terrific example of love!

When we need a great definition of love - whether it is God's love for us, our love for each other, a married couple's love or a mother's love for her child, I can find no better definition than in 1st Corinthians chapter 13.

Hear the Apostle Paul's words again and see if they don't do a great job describing a mother's love for her child.

Love is patient, love is kind.

It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.

It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.

Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.

It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

If you had a mother like that you are truly blessed!

If you are a mother that demonstrates all those qualities, your children are greatly blessed.

If you look at that list of the qualities that should make up our love for each other and especially our children, you will notice fourteen characteristics of true love. I encourage you to go back and count them sometime.

Since our time this morning is short, I am only going to focus on four of these fantastic qualities of love.

*I want to focus our attention on the middle phrase. Paul says about love: **It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.***

So, first love is not rude.

Leo Buscaglia wrote a wonderful poem titled "Loving You" and it goes like this.

"The next time I have the urge to speak negatively or rudely to you, I'll swallow and be silent. Loving you doesn't give me license for rudeness.

If I can't be generous and supportive, I'll at least try not to stand in your way. Loving you means wanting you to grow.

I won't put my problems onto you. You have enough problems, I'm certain, and you don't need mine. My love should simplify your life, not complicate it.

I don't always have to be right. I can accept the fact that you are right as often as I am. Loving is sharing with each other. If I already know I'm right, all the time, I'll never profit from your insight.

I don't always have to be running the show. Loving is an ebb and flow. Sometimes I'll need to give in. And at other times I'll need to take control.

I don't have to be perfect, nor do you. Love is a celebration of our humanness, not our perfection.

I can give up wanting to change you. If I want you in my life, the best thing for both of us is for me to accept you as you are. After all, love is moving forward together in mutual growth.

I don't need to place blame. Since I'm an adult who makes decisions based upon personal experiences, there is no one to blame for a poor decision except myself. Love puts the responsibility where it belongs.

I can give up expectations. To which is one thing, to expect is another. One brings hope, the other can bring pain. Love is free of expectations.

Isn't that a great description of the love we see in wonderful mothers.

Again, love is not rude!

Second, love is not self-seeking.

To be self-seeking is to put your wants, desires and needs ahead of the needs of others.

I have learned over the years that the things our children want most from us is our time - our precious time.

There is a story about a beautiful little girl who was very sick and had to be confined to a hospital bed for quite some time.

Since her family was very wealthy, they brought her the finest of toys - huge over-stuffed animals, a variety of dolls with every imaginable change of dress, an ornate dollhouse, and the latest of games.

The little girl's mother was well known in social circles, and her face was often seen in the society columns at various charitable events.

She brought something new every time she came to the hospital to visit her daughter.

She never stayed very long, for she was always due at some luncheon or social gathering, but she never failed to bring a gift.

The nurses and the doctors complained about the abundance of toys, games, and flowers that made it almost impossible for them to get around in the girl's room.

One day the little girl was particularly unhappy in the midst of all her fine gifts.

Her mother was paying her daughter her usual short visit.

The girl was desperately clinging to her mother, who tried to extricate herself so that she would not be late for a luncheon she was scheduled to attend that afternoon.

The mother tried to interest the child in a new and expensive doll that she had brought with her that day.

*"Mommy," cried the little girl, "I don't want another doll, I want **you!**"*

Surrounded by all the material things that a child could ever want, the girl desired the most important thing of all, her mother's attention.

Again love is not rude and is not self-seeking!

Third, love is not easily angered.

How is your anger barometer? Do you have a short fuse? Or does it take alot to make you mad.

You know, Jesus very seldom got angry and only when those in authority were ripping off the poor, the widow and the stranger.

There is a story I just love titled "It's Possible." Since I was an educator for 36 years of my life you will see why I like this story.

The teacher asked her class what each wanted to become when they grew up. (Sounds familiar?)

A chorus of responses came from all over the room. "A football player." "A doctor." "An astronaut." "The president." "A fireman." "A teacher." "A race driver."

Everyone in the classroom had a response.

Everyone, that is, except Tommy. The teacher noticed he was sitting there quiet and still.

So she said to him, "Tommy, what do you want to be when you grow up?"

"Possible," Tommy replied.

"Possible?" asked the teacher.

"Yes," Tommy said, "my mom is always telling me I'm impossible. So when I get to be big, I want to become possible."

I think as parents we often take our anger and frustration from our jobs home with us and allow the little irritations of our children or spouses to bring that anger to the surface.

I think we can all set a new goal that we will not allow our anger and frustration in one setting to boil over into our family times.

Again, love is not rude, it is not self-seeking and it is not easily angered.

Finally, love keeps no record of wrongs.

From my experience as a parent, a spouse and a Elementary Principal, I have had to work hard not to remember the faults of others.

Every once in a while, I would have a teacher or the parent of one of my students apologize for something they said or did that was wrong and hurt others or myself. And I would tell them that I forgave them the minute the offense was executed.

But not keeping a list of the wrongs of other people is not easy.

Jo Ann Merrill catches our theme in a wonderful poem titled "Love: A Variation on a Theme."

"If I have a house of spotless beauty with everything in its place, but have not love, I am a housekeeper - not a home maker.

If I have time for waxing, polishing, and decorative achievements, but have not love, my children learn cleanliness - not godliness.

Love leaves the dust in search of a child's laugh.

Love smiles at the tiny fingerprints on a newly cleaned window.

Love wipes away the tears before it wipes up the spilled milk.

Love picks up the child before it picks up the toys.

Love is present through the trials.

Love reprimands, reproves, and is responsive.

Love crawls with the baby, walks with the toddler, runs with the child, then stands aside to let the youth walk into adulthood.

Love is the key that opens salvation's message to a child's heart.

Before I became a mother I took glory in my house of perfection. Now I glory in God's perfection of my child.

As a mother there is much I must teach my child, but the greatest of all is love."

Isn't that a great poem?

As a parent, one of the things I have learned is that once you are a parent you are always a parent - once you are a mother you are always a mother. For example my oldest son Brayn is married and he and his wife Melissa have our only grandchild - Leonardo who is 5 years old.

Both parents are teachers and therefore anytime Leo is sick or his preschool has to shut down because of spring break or an outbreak of COVID 19, cause who gets called to help watch Leo? You are right grandpa and grandma.

Also, my middle son, who is also a teacher, lives with my wife and I which can be handy, but also presents its challenges.

My daughter Brook, who joins me in church most Sundays, doesn't drive so guess who her chauffeur is most of the time? You're looking at him

If you are like me and have a child who has moved back in, which is more common than you think, hear these words of wisdom.

It's impossible to love the same child for twenty years. (After twenty-years, it's not the same child.)

Grown-up kids are like winter storms. They may be late, but they never fail to show up.

Consider yourself a successful parent if they flip off the headlights before turning into the driveway at four in the morning.

Remember when you worried because you didn't know where your children were?

Now, you do. They're back in their own rooms.

When children return to the family home, it's a gesture of reciprocal love.

You drove them to school and now they're driving you up the wall.

You can't reason with them, and you can't hit them.

How did they get so big and strong on junk food?

Why did they have to return just when everything started to click for you? (Your teeth, your knees, your back.)

You never realize what a happy marriage you've had until the kids move back - and then it's too late.

Finally, before they left, the kids were deductible. Now, they're just taxing.

Don't feel sorry for yourself if you have one or more kids still living with you, someday they might be useful.

A suggestion, if you have adult kids living with you. My wife has a friend in her sixties, who had two adult kids who never left home no matter what she did to encourage them to get a place on their own.

She recently bought a new home and left the kids in the old one!

*Remember, **Love is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.***

Let me close with this wonderful poem for mothers, reminding them what you can and cannot do for your children:

"I gave you life, but I cannot live for you.

I can teach you things, but I cannot make you learn.

I can give you directions, but I cannot always be there to lead you.

I can allow you freedom, but I cannot account for it.

I can take you to church, but I cannot make you believe.

I can teach you right from wrong, but I cannot always decide for you.

I can buy you beautiful clothes, but I cannot make you lovely inside.

I can offer you advice, but I cannot accept it for you.

I can give you love, but I cannot force it upon you.

I can teach you to be a friend, but I cannot make you one.

I can teach you to share, but I cannot make you unselfish.

I can teach you respect, but I can't force you to show honor.

I can grieve about your report card, but I cannot doubt your teachers.

I can advise you about friends, but I cannot choose them for you.

...

I can tell you the facts of life, but I can't build your reputation.

...

...

I can tell you about lofty goals, but I can't achieve them for you.

...

I can teach you kindness, but I can't force you to be gracious.

I can warn you about sins, but I cannot make your morals.

I can love you as a child, but I cannot place you in God's family.

I can pray for you, but I cannot make you walk with God.

Isn't that a good reminder of what moms can do and not do for us.

Again, I want to wish all our mothers a happy mother's day. I want you to know that you are greatly loved and that we appreciate all the sacrifices you make for us every day.

God bless you always. Amen!