

TITLE: "A Mother's, and a Savior's, Love"

TEXT: John 21:1-17 (NT pp. 115-116)

After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias; and he showed himself in this way. ²Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. ³Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing."

They said to him, "We will go with you."

They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

⁴Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. ⁵Jesus said to them, "Children, you have no fish, have you?" They answered him, "No." ⁶He said to them, "Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish.

⁷That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!"

When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on some clothes, for he was naked, and jumped into the sea.

⁸But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, only about a hundred yards off. ⁹When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. ¹⁰Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught."

¹¹So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn. ¹²Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast."

Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, "Who are you?" because they knew it was the Lord. ¹³Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. ¹⁴This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

¹⁵When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?"

He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you."

Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs."

¹⁶A second time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.”

Jesus said to him, “Tend my sheep.”

¹⁷[Jesus] said to him the third time, “Simon son of John, do you love me?”

Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, “Do you love me?” And he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.”

Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep.

Introduction - Those Who Care

I have a test that I want you to take:

1. Name the last 6 winners of the Academy Award for best actress or actor.
2. Name the last 10 people who won the Nobel or Pulitzer Prize.
3. Name the last five winners of the Miss America contest.
4. Name the players on the team who won the 1993 World Series.
5. Name the last 5 people who won gold medals in Women’s Figure Skating.

How did you do? The point is that we don’t remember the people who are in the headlines of yesterday. For a while they are on the top of the heap in their field and their names are on the tongues of thousands. Then the applause dies, the headlines are replaced with other names and the awards tarnish in trophy cases.

Here’s another quiz. See how you do with this one.

1. Name five of your favorite teachers grades K-12.
2. Name 3 friends who helped you during a difficult time.
3. Name five people who have taught you something worthwhile.
4. Name a few people who have made you feel appreciated and special.
5. Name six people you enjoy spending time with.

Was that quiz easier? It certainly was for me. The lesson is that the people who make the biggest difference in our lives are the ones who care for us...personally.

One of the people who cared the MOST for us, I’ll bet, is our mothers. Looking at the second quiz, there are several answers which include my mom’s name: one who helped me through a difficult time, one who taught me something worthwhile, one who made me feel appreciated and special and one I enjoy spending time with. Mothers may not make the headlines often, but they often top the list of those who care for us personally.

...And, as I read this morning’s biblical text, I realized that Jesus is a lot like a mother. And now I will tell you why...

1. I love you

Prior to Jesus' appearance on the shore that we heard about this morning, the newly resurrected Jesus had appeared three times. First Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene. And the fact that Jesus appeared to her before others indicates how much Jesus cherished their relationship. Later, but prior to this morning's events, Jesus also appeared to the male disciples, as a group, two times.

In this morning's text, Jesus spent time with Peter. Peter needed this time. Before the crucifixion, Peter said that even if it meant his death, he would follow Jesus wherever he went. Jesus then told him that before the next morning Peter would deny him three times. And, sure enough, Peter denied Jesus three times. And, when he realized that he had denied his Lord, in guilt and remorse, Peter had wept bitterly.

In this morning's text, we can imagine that Peter was still filled with guilt and remorse; and Jesus does the kindest and most loving thing possible: he spends time with Peter.

That's what mothers do. I was visiting a family and the two older children were watching the baby. Later, the older child came in holding the baby at arms' length and said, "Mom, he has a stinky diaper!" Not many children, or adults, will spend time alone with a baby with a stinky diaper. Moms do.

Who do kids go to when a friend grabs a favorite toy, when boyfriends and girlfriends break up with them and even later when spouses divorce them? Many times it's Mom.

Erma Bombeck said: "A child needs a mother's love MOST, when he or she deserves it the least." And it doesn't seem to matter how old the child is either. ...Just spending time with someone is one of the most poignant ways of saying "I love you."

That's what Jesus wants to do for you: tell you he loves you and spend time with you.

2. I forgive you

Jesus trusted Peter and Peter let him down. That early morning on the beach, Peter needed love, which he received from the Lord, but he also needed forgiveness. Jesus did not say, specifically, "Peter, I forgive you for denying me," but He did do two things that showed that He had. First of all, Jesus never mentioned Peter's betrayal. That is one of the wonderful things about Jesus: Jesus not only forgives, he forgets our sins, just as He did Peter's.

Secondly, Jesus SHOWED Peter that he trusted him by giving him an important job to do. In the text we see that Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him three times if he loved Him. But after each of those three times, the same number of times Peter had denied Jesus, he gave Peter the opportunity to SHOW his love by carrying out the very work Jesus had been doing before his crucifixion.

What was that work? Jesus said he was the Good Shepherd and he came to feed and care for His sheep. And now Jesus was entrusting this ministry to Peter. By doing this, Jesus was saying, as dramatically as he possible could, "I forgive you."

How many times have you Moms out there forgiven your kids?

For stinky diapers.

For calls in the night.

For broken promises to: clean their rooms, do homework and help with chores.

For these and many other transgressions, Moms SHOW their forgiveness by trusting the child again, and again, and again. That is what Jesus will do for you: Jesus will forgive you again and again, forget your sins and give you new opportunities to do carry on His work.

3. Supper's ready

The disciples had been out all night and had caught nothing. They were tired, discouraged and hungry ...and Jesus fed them. Eating with someone had deep significance for Jesus. The last thing Jesus did with his disciples before being arrested was eat with them, saying, "This bread is my body given for you" and "This wine is the New Covenant in my blood."

In last weeks' text, Jesus walked up to two disciples who were heading to the Village of Emmaus. Jesus listened to them and answered the questions they are struggling with. The disciples did not recognize Jesus until when? Until they ate together.

And, in the Book of Revelation, Jesus says: "Listen! I am standing at the door knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you and you with me" (Revelation 3:20).

Moms are good at preparing meals, whether they are strained green beans and pureed chicken from baby food jars or a huge Thanksgiving dinner. Nothing turns individuals into a family like eating together. Like a good mother, Jesus enjoys eating with his friends and Jesus wants that same friendship with you.

Now I want to read from an article by a mother whose name is Dale Hansen Bourke [“Motherhood—It Will Change Your Life” from her book *Everyday Miracles: Holy Moments in Mother’s Day* 1989, Word, Inc., Irving TX found in *Guideposts*, 5/90]

My friend and I are sitting at lunch when she casually mentions that she and her husband are thinking of “starting a family.” ...”We’re taking a survey,” she says, half jokingly, “Do you think I should have a baby?”

“It will change your life,” I say carefully, keeping my tone neutral.

“I know,” she says, “No more sleeping in on Saturdays, no more spontaneous vacations...”

But that’s not what I mean at all. I try to decide what to tell her. ...I want to tell that no matter how sophisticated she is, becoming a mother will reduce her to the primitive level of a she-bear protecting her cub. That a slightly urgent call of, “Mom!” will cause her to drop a soufflé or her best crystal without a moment’s hesitation.

I feel I should warn her that no matter how many years she has invested in her career, she will be professionally derailed by motherhood. She might successfully arrange for childcare, but one day she will be waiting to go into an important meeting, and she will think about her baby’s sweet smell. She will have to use every ounce of discipline to keep from running home, just to make sure she is alright.

Looking at my attractive young friend, I want to tell her that she will never feel the same way about herself. That her life, now so important, will be of less value to her once she has a child. That she would give it up in a moment to save her offspring, but will also begin to hope for more years, not so much to accomplish her own dreams, but to watch her child accomplish his.

I want to describe to my friend the exhilaration of seeing your son learn to hit a baseball. I want to capture for her the belly laugh of a baby who is touching the soft fur of a dog for the first time. I want her to taste the joy that is so real it hurts.

My friend’s quizzical look makes me realize that tears have formed in my eyes. “You’ll never regret it,” I say finally. Then I reach across the table, and squeezing my friend’s hand, I offer a prayer for her, and me, and all of the mere mortal women who stumble their way into this holiest of callings.

Conclusion – Three Favorite Phrases

I recently read of a survey that asked the participants what phrase they would most like to hear spoken sincerely to them. The top three phrases were these:

I love you.
You are forgiven.
Supper is ready.

Three things Moms say all the time. And these are the three things that Jesus says to you on this Mother's Day:

I love you.
You are forgiven.
Supper is ready.

Amen.