Pastor Kevin Garman

Theme: Nurturing & Caring

Scripture: John 15:9-17

Mother’s Day May 9th, 2021

“Mother’s Day: The Nurturing, Caring Love of Mother’s”

O God, who makes all things new,
new stars, new dust, new life;
take my heart,
every hardened edge and measured beat,
and create something new in me.

I need your newness, God,
the rough parts of me made smooth;
the stagnant, stirred;
the stuck, freed;
the unkind, forgiven.

And then, by the power of your Spirit,

I need to be turned toward Love again. Amen.

~ by Pamela C. Hawkins, in *The Awkward Season: Prayers for Lent* (Nashville, TN: Upper Room Books, 2009), 30. Posted on **Prayer and Creeds**, https://prayersandcreeds.wordpress.com/

Today, we celebrate Mother’s Day. For many, this is a joyous time where they celebrate something special and unique about their mother’s, share stories and meals, and enjoy one another’s company, calls, and letters. It is our time to say, “Thanks, Mom! Thank you for all you do that goes unnoticed and unsaid.” Thank you for carrying the families burdens and struggles. This is a chance for us to relate to the most relatable aspect of humanity, motherhood. We all have mothers, whether we know them or like them, we were all brought into this world by a mother. This is our chance to say together, “Thanks, Mom! I love you!” What a joyous time!

For some, the thought of a mother may not bring much comfort. It is a complex and complicated commemoration. We cannot pretend nor can we ignore people’s experiences with their mothers that have been traumatic, painful, and hurtful. Maybe it is because your mother is no longer here to grace you with her presence, and regardless of the many years it may have been, you can never replace the loss of a mother, no matter how many years have passed. Mother’s day, what a joyous time and what a complex and complicated commemoration.

This may not be an official church calendar holiday, but it is an important holiday and time to celebrate because we, or at least me, I, often think of God’s love similar to the way my mother loves me. My mother values me, whether it be my opinions, my gifts, my passions, etc. My mother listens to me when I have a problem I need help with, when I want to tell someone something particular about my day, or she listens when we discuss more trivial topics like our love for football or outdoors adventures. Mom always listens, values me, and most importantly has always been a consistent presence in my sisters’ and my life.

Mothers are great examples of what love looks like and how to express love, but as a follower of Christ, Jesus teaches us what it looks like to love a neighbor unconditionally. As followers of Christ, we look to emulate Jesus’ teachings and examples, and what better way to look at Jesus love throughout his ministry all the way from him preaching the gospel in Jerusalem until his crucifixion on the cross. Jesus’ life was an example of love, so we honor this today as well.

“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you” (John 15:12).

First thing to note here is this is a commandment. This is not a statement to ponder on and get back to Jesus on when you’ve thought it over, nor is this an option. It is a commandment. Love one another. This is not a one time action where you can check it off a list. This is a continuous process in each and every relationship you are a part of because isn’t that what love is? A relationship? Love the people around you. The people that you care about the most and that care about you the most. Love those in your care and who depend on you. Love those who need you. Love one another.

Last week, we looked at the passage just before the excerpt of the gospel we read today. The analogy Jesus uses in this story is the vine and the vinegrower. Jesus expands on this analogy in today’s reading as he helps us understand love is the foundation of our being, love is foundation of our faith, love is the foundation of the gospel, and love is foundation to flip upside down the nasty, messed up things in our world and turn them into goodness. Love bears the fruit of the gospel and grows the fruits of the gospel within us when follow the commandment of loving each other.

In my experience, no one lives the commandment, love one another, better than my mother. My mother does not represent just one simple aspect of love, but she embraces and embodies all the different representations we see of love in the world. My mother is the nurturer when someone is hurt, needs guidance, or a listening ear. My mother is the disciplinarian when we have done something out of character or against the rules and her love in this instance is firmly communicating to help me and my sisters understand our mistakes, not be shameful of them. My mother represents a love that has grit and character as she takes care of each and every one of us in the family with a smile on her face and a hand outstretched to help. My mother is loves through her hugs, her laughs, and her joy. Because of my mother’s example, I have been able to see my entire what living the love of God looks like in the world as I have been blessed with the world’s best Mom. May we all do our best to live out this commandment and love one another.

The specific love Jesus talks about is sacrificial love, but what does that look like? To many of you, it looks like the love I just described about my mother. To others, it may be a friend, a caretaker you had growing up, a mentor, or many others, but hopefully, we have all had an example of a loving, nurturing person in our life who is there for us in more ways than one. Let’s be clear sacrificial love is not a call to martyrdom, sacrificial love is the daily encouraging call of Jesus asking us to love the world as much as he did to every person, every creature, and every community we encounter. The more we love ourselves the more we can love others. The more we love others, the more we are able to love.

You could even say that loving is a natural part of who we are. If love is just a relationship, then loving someone shows them you care. Loving someone is sometimes just showing up and saying I don’t have answer, I don’t understand, but we will get through this together. We can see that in many relationships in our lives, but for so many of us, we see it first from our mothers. Let us live the commandment Jesus gave to us to love one another.

In conclusion, this is a blessing for mothers. This is from my book of blessings I use from time to time. I also used it in the newsletter if you would like to read it yourself. This is John O’ Donohue’s blessing entitled, “For the Mother”

*“Mother, your voice learning to soothe your new child was the home-sound we heard before we could see. Your young eyes gazing on us was the first mirror where we glimpsed what to be seen could mean. Mother, your nearness tilled the air, an umbilical garden for all the seeds of thought that stirred in our infant hearts. You nurtured and fostered this space to root all our quietly gathering intensity that could grow nowhere else. Mother, formed from the depths beneath your heart, you know us from the inside out. No deeds or seas or others could ever erase that.”* -By John O’ Donohue

Blessings to all the mothers out there. Blessings to all the mother-like mentors, neighbors, and friends that are family. Blessings to the mother like love that God rains down upon us each and every day. Love is the gospel. Love is the answer. Love is God. Amen.