

"A Mothering Love"

1 Peter 5:6-11 & John 17:1-11

May 8, 2005

Today as we celebrate Mother's Day we do it with the recognition that it is not a church or religious event - but it is a part of our culture that draws us to something very important, the recognition of and appreciation for our mothers who give so much of themselves to one of the most important tasks is life. We do so recognizing that this day may also be a hard one for many people. Motherhood is not always a bed of roses - for some it may be a very difficult road. For some, Mother's Day is a difficult time when the absence of 'mom' is felt most keenly. For others, biological motherhood is not possible. For some, the person who has provide that motherly nurture is someone other than the biological mother. Having recognized these realities, still we celebrate and give thanks for the way that Mothers and motherhood in all of it's forms can exemplify that nature of God that reaches to and teaches us children of unconditional love.

Today's gospel text is part of what has come to be called the "High Priestly Prayer" of Jesus. Even this title is impressive. And the prayer is awesome. There have been great theologians who have been so in awe of this prayer of Jesus that they would not make any comment about it. Martin Luther was afraid to interpret it in any way because he found it to be too deep and unfathomable. Another theologian refused to preach on this text throughout his whole life - but on his death bed he had it read three times in his last hour of life.

Maybe it is just because I am not as smart as those great theologians - but I think that it is really quit simple. I would never presume to understand many of the deep theological issues that it raises - but too often we look so critically at the details that we fail to hear the overall tone - or the emotional heart of the whole prayer. I believe that anyone of us - if we listen with our hearts as well as our ears we can perhaps feel the meaning of this prayer.

"Jesus prays: 'I am asking on their behalf [the disciples] - not on behalf of the whole world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me {these, my children} Holy Father, protect them in your name.'" It is a prayer of tremendously deep love and concern. It is a prayer that comes from the heart of one whose love has compelled him to do all that He can to guide and protect those He loves more than life. It is the prayer of one who knows that the time is coming when He will not be physically with them to guard and protect. As I thought about it as the text for this Mother's Day - it seemed to me to be the prayer of a parent - a parent at his or her absolute best - a parent whose love for her children is so great that the children's welfare comes above all else.

In my files I found several things about the prayers of mothers. One was entitled "A Mother's prayer" - "*O give me patience when wee hands, tug at me with their small demands. And give me gentle words and smiling eyes, do keep my lips from hasty, sharp replies. And let not weariness, confusion and noise, obscure my vision of life's fleeting joys. So when in years to come my house is still, no bitter memories it's rooms may fill.*" Amen --- That's nice - but I believe that the prayer of a parent goes far beyond that - at the best, a mother's prayer [or father's] goes far deeper. It is a prayer for life, strength, health, safety and [as a Christian parent] it is for a relationship with God and life eternal. And so Jesus prays for His own as a loving parent prays for their child - - - "protect them!"

A parents prayer is a powerful thing. Abraham Lincoln's mother died when he was only 9. But he said: "All that I am or hope to be, I owe to my angel mother. ... I remember my mother's prayers and they have followed me. They have clung to me all my life." --- And so Jesus prays for us - prays for the Father's protective love.

But a parents love does not stop with prayer. They guide and admonish out of the same love. And so does our God.

1 Peter 5:6ff - - - Humble yourself, discipline yourself, be alert, resist the devil I know that such guidance by a parent can often be seen as an attempt to keep the child from having any fun. But in fact we know that it comes out of a knowledge of the dangers that the world presents - it comes out of a deep love that would seek to prevent the child from experiencing pain and danger. And so it also comes from our God - words of guidance spoken to protect, spoken because God knows the power of the roaring lion.

There is a lot of other advice that we like better. One listing of "Advice for Life" that we ran across included such things as:

"If you can't be kind, at least have the decency to be vague."

"If you try & don't succeed, cheat. Repeat until caught. Then lie."

"There are very few personal problems that cannot be solved through a suitable application of high explosives."

"If life gives you lemons, squeeze the juice into a watergun and shoot other people in the eye."

We might laugh at such humorous words of advice but too often they typify our lives and how the world guides our actions. The advice - the guidance that comes from the mothering love of God is so very different than the advice of the world - humble yourself, be alert, resist the roaring lion and know that we are lifted up before the throne of our God by our savior who seeks to protect and give life.

The parenting love of God seeks life and life in abundance for all of us, His children. Our God seeks to guide out of love - and our Lord prays for you. For all of you who are parents or who provide the parenting love and protection needed by another, I encourage you to continue to love, guide and pray. At the same time, remember that our God out of the depth of His love for you seeks to do the same for you.

AMEN