

Sermon Text for May 10, 2020

Mother's Day and Fifth Sunday of Easter

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I Samuel 2:1-2, Luke 2:41-52

“Allowing your heart to guide you”

Happy Mother's Day to all of you who were born from a mother, which would make all of us. I hope you were able to receive your flower from the children of the church as we try to celebrate this Mother's Day in a way that we normally do, we normally have the kids pass out flowers to all the women of the church this Sunday. Hopefully you have your flower in a prominent place. If you don't know who created your flower reach out to Beth Feiler and she will tell you and if you wanted to reach out to the child to thank you she can help you with that as well. We will never forget this Mother's Day.

What are some of your memories for Mother's Day? Some of mine were when I was an adult and my girls were much younger we used to go to my mom's retirement village when we lived in Florida. My grandmother was still living in the same retirement village as my mom, so that would have been their great grandmother, and we would visit with them outside of the pond. They still remember those visits. But this year I think everyone will remember this Mother's Day. Especially as we find ourselves all cooped up together and so many dad's are finding themselves in roles that are somewhat reversed and appreciating to a much higher degree what they had not fully been a part of in the past.

What is unique about mother's that we celebrate. I don't tend to be completely a traditionalist, I like to look at Scripture which helps us define what it is about Mother's that is important so I go to Jesus' words in Luke 13:34 where he states: "How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings." So Jesus says one of the primary attributes of a mother is that of protection, of keeping the family, keeping her children under her wings.

Today we find ourselves with both Scriptures depicting mother's who made decisions that were led by their hearts. The both found themselves in times of uncertainty when they did not fully understand what was happening around them. Times similar to which we find ourselves today. Times when we don't fully understand what is happening around us and so as a result our judgment and our ability to make decisions just might be compromised. We find each of these characters in the Bible able to make the correct decisions simply because they, as the

sermon title suggests, allowed their hearts to guide them. In these times when the future is uncertain we should take our lead from them in this same way.

Each of their decisions also contained an element of being willing to sacrifice something which was exponentially important for the sake of following the will of God. Let's read.

READ SCRIPTURE

Some years ago in Washington State a wildfire had ravaged a forest and a park ranger was walking along the path that was covered in debris assessing the damage. He came across a scorched quail that was lying in the middle of the path, obviously dead with its wings spread out. With sadness he used his walking stick to gently move it off the path when from under her lifeless wings scattered a brood of chicks that had been saved by her sacrificial act. The scene that Jesus described on his way into Jerusalem was played out in real life by this quail, and in many ways I think depicts a uniquely qualifying attribute of what it means to be a mother, whether it is biological or otherwise, which is a strong innate desire to protect those who are around you, especially those who are the most vulnerable. Maybe that could be a good starting definition of a mother.

Our first figure in our Scripture today was a complete role model of a mother in not only this way, as a protector, but also in the way in which she allowed her heart to guide her which was ultimately guided by God's command. We pick up in the life of Hannah after she had dropped off her son as she had promised in the temple to serve the rest of his life away from her and with the temple priests. She had promised to the Lord that he would be the servant of the Lord and she was following through.

Listen to what she says as she drops him off at the house of the Lord and then says: "My heart exults in the Lord." She follows it up with "My strength is exalted in God." She had done that which was required of her, but can you imagine the tension and the anxiety and the heart ache of leaving your first-born son, at that time your only son behind. Being willing to sacrifice for the Lord that which is closest to you is not easy. Hannah was able to do it because she was able to follow that which her heart required her to do. In a time of confusion, in a time of uncertainty, Hannah did what was right.

Then we get to Mary in the New Testament. There is no other figure in the entire Bible who has shown more faithfulness to God and in so consistent a manner. Pretty much every Bible character has a run in with God where they are unfaithful to God in some time in their life. Not Mary, every single encounter that we have with her, she remains faithful and she remains a

servant of the Lord no matter what is required of her. The first two chapters of Luke are almost more about Mary than they are about Jesus, at least content wise. Now, let's not get that twisted. Nowhere in Scripture is she seen as a co-redemptress, that is heresy, but it is also heresy to say that she is not a primary figure in the Bible and it is also heresy to say that she does not remain consistently faithful to God more than any other person in Scripture.

We find ourselves in Luke today. I couldn't get away from Luke, no matter how hard I tried. Remember, Luke is also the one who wrote the Acts of the Apostles, the book of the Bible that we have almost completed now nearly 3 years in. But look at Mary and her life as described in the first two chapters of Luke. Let's look at her life and the faithfulness that is portrayed, just in the first two chapters.

We find Mary as a teenage young girl who is not married and is pregnant and is a virgin. She is visited by Gabriel who tells her that this is part of God's plan. Mary then goes and visits her relative Elizabeth the mother of John the Baptist, who is also miraculously pregnant. At that visit she composes what we call the Magnificat in which she states: "God has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts." Don't be like the proud, or else your heart will deceive you. She then delivers her child in Bethlehem and lays him in a manger. While there they are visited by shepherds and after their visits we read in vs.19 that Mary: "treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart."

Then Mary and Joseph go to the temple where they meet Simeon who tells Mary in vs.35 that "a sword will pierce your own soul too." She also meets Anna who speaks about the future role of her son. Twelve years have passed until we pick up where we read this morning until we find the climax of these chapters with Mary in vs.51: "His mother treasured all these things in her heart." Quite a couple of chapters describing the life of a mother who has under her care the Savior of the world through his infancy and then adolescence. So imagine that this is her responsibility as they are walking back from Jerusalem and she discovers that she is missing.

As parents we have all been there. That panicked few seconds which for Mary and Joseph then lead to a panicked few days. Imagine that day trek back to Jerusalem looking for Jesus who was nowhere to be found, expecting the worst. Once they find him then Mary and Joseph settle into their good cop bad cop scene with Mary always playing the bad cop. Child, notice what she calls him, child. Mom, I'm 12, I'm not a kid anymore. Right, you can almost hear that dialogue and know that it is a consistent one in that household.

How could you disrespect us like this? Didn't you know that I needed to be in my Father's house? We read in vs.50 that after this dialogue, after the reunion and Jesus once again being obedient and heading back with them, that neither Joseph nor Mary understood what had happened. They did not understand what he had said to them.

What we find here, and this probably not something you might want to hear on Mother's Day, but for both Mary and Hannah family love and loyalties have their place and flourish only under the love and loyalty to God. We know that this is true as later on in life, in Luke 11:27-28 Mary is praised with these words by an admirer of Jesus: "Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts that nursed you." Basically saying your mom raised you right. But Jesus responds by saying, well, actually, blessed are those who do the will of my Father.

Is there anyone who did more the will of the Father than Mary in Jesus' life, in his death as she was one of the few by his cross, in his resurrection as she was one of the first who witnessed to the life saving message of the Gospel that He is Risen, He is Risen Indeed. And it doesn't end there. She continues her loyalty to God in the early church as well. Yet in all of this we read in vs.50 that she did not understand, as we don't understand all that is happening around us and how God is at work in this setting in which we find ourselves today. How do we make decisions when we simply do not understand?

We find here that we don't have to understand everything to be able to make decisions that are pleasing to God. If we allow our heart to guide us. You see for Mary and Hannah it is much more important that their maternal ties yield to those of Jesus' heavenly Father. That is how you let your heart lead you. When you identify the ties that you have to your Savior Jesus Christ and allow that to shape your decisions.

So how are we doing in this confusing time? How are you allowing yourself to make your decisions? Are you allowing your anger, your selfish desire to have your needs met dictate what you do and what you think? Look at what we find today this Mother's Day as we see two heroes of Scripture, two pillars of the faith, Hannah and Mary, who direct us and guide us to make decisions based upon our hearts which are focused upon the desires of our Father. Allow your hearts to exult in the Lord as you find your strength in the Lord. Amen.