



THE THREE MOST IMPORTANT MOTHERS IN THE WORLD

Pastor Al Detter Mother's Day Sermon

5:30, 9:15 & 11:00am Grace Church May 10-11, 2008

We celebrate Mother's Day this weekend. Every one of us spent up to around 9 months in our mother's womb. None of us remembers those days but our mothers sure do. Our mothers went through a lot to bring us into the world—morning sickness, weight gain, the discomfort of a large tummy day and night, some in bed rest, most experi-encing something between discomfort and excruciating pain at childbirth. I've often thought as a man that I couldn't have gone through a pregnancy.

I think it was a mother who wrote this about men. It's the top 10 things that would happen if men got pregnant:

- 10) All methods of birth control would be 100% effective.
- 9) Morning sickness would rank as the nation's #1 health problem.
- 8) There would be pregnant mothers' parking spaces in front of malls.
- 7) Men would stay in bed the last 2 months.
- 6) Congress would pass a law prohibiting natural childbirth.
- 5) Maternity leave would last 2 years with full pay and benefits.
- 4) Children would be kept in the hospital until they are toilet trained.
- 3) Men wouldn't think twins were so cute.
- 2) There would be baby formula on tap in restaurants.

And the #1 thing that would be true if men got pregnant----

- 1) There would be a cure for stretch marks.

So on this Mother's Day, we pay tribute to our mothers who went through so much to bring us into the world. Two years ago, I asked Derek to preach the Mother's Day sermon. Do you know what Derek did when he preached that sermon? He made everybody cry. Then last year, I asked Diane Wright to do the sermon. She did a masterful job and do you know what Diane did when she spoke? She made everybody cry. I think I'm going to cut you a break today.

I want to talk about the 3 most important mothers in the world. You might come up with a slightly different 3 than I. But these are the top 3 mothers in the world in my estimation and I want to pay tribute to each of them.

Mother #1—Eve.

Eve is rarely talked about, either in the Bible or in churches. But she's a woman to be honored. Her proper name, Eve (hawwa), is used only 4 times in the Bible (Gen. 3:20; 4:1; II Cor. 11:3; I Tim. 2:13). The term "woman", speaking of Eve, is the more prominent way of referring to Eve in the Bible. In fact, "Woman" was the 1st name Adam gave to Eve (Gen 2:23).

It's very interesting what we take for granted about Adam and Eve. Everything was brand new to them. As we encounter them in the 1st three chapters of Genesis, they had to figure out the marriage relationship as husband and wife. There had never been any marriage before. God told them they would have children. There had never been a human baby in the world before. Adam and Eve didn't have a clue to what was normal for people like we do. I think God brought them up to speed on all these novel things.

Even before they had children, Adam realized in some fashion that his unique relationship with his wife would start a movement by which many other people would come into the world. So Adam gave his wife a 2nd name, Eve, which means “the mother of all living (Gen. 2:20)”. She became the actual mother of Cain, Abel, and Seth and by proxy, the mother of the entire human race.

There’s been a continuing debate for many years, even in churches, as to whether or not Eve was a real person. If all we had was the Genesis account about Eve, I think you could make some kind of a case that this was a story to teach some important truth rather than a historical person.

But when you look at other parts of the Bible, Eve is viewed as an actual, historical person. For instance, in the genealogies of Luke 3, you start out with Jesus in verse 23. Was Jesus historical? Yes. The verse goes on to say that Jesus’ father was Joseph, a historical person. And so it goes, verse after verse naming historical people until you get to verse 38 which reads, “The son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.”

Now tell me, when in the genealogy did we move from historical people to fictional people back to God? It didn’t happen. Who was said to be God’s son? Adam as part of a historical genealogy. Who was Adam’s wife? Eve. We’re dealing here with our 2 historical parents.

When we move to Paul’s teaching, he doesn’t tell us that Adam and Eve are meant to be an allegory as he does in Galatians 4 (vss. 22ff.) when he talks about the bond-woman and the freewoman. And when Paul says in I Timothy 2:13-14 that Adam was 1st created and then Eve and that Eve was deceived and not Adam, the normal inter-pretation is that Paul is talking about 2 historical people.

And when Paul is teaching in I Corinthians 11 about how the 1st man and woman got here in order to teach about Christian headship, he says that the woman originated from the man in verse 8. There’s no clue that we should take this in any other way than literal. I’m totally convinced that Eve was a real person based on the teachings of the Bible.

What do we tend to remember Eve for? Being deceived and eating the forbidden fruit and giving it to her husband to eat. We mostly remember how she blew it. The unfor-tunate outcome was a loss of innocence, sin, death, shame, pain, and trouble in the world.

But let’s not be too hard on Eve. She’s not the one through whom the world became tainted by sin. Paul makes it clear that condemnation came to the whole human race through the disobedience of Adam, not Eve (Rom. 5:12-19). The entire race became sinners through Adam. The solution for the sin problem of the human race came through the 2nd Adam, Christ. And, by the way, the reason Mary carried the Christ-child without passing on the sin nature to Jesus is because the sin nature is carried through the father and not the mother.

Eve is a pretty important mother. She’s the mother of all living. So let’s honor her today. Let’s not dwell on how she failed. Let’s give her gratitude for being the mother of the human race. And let’s dwell on some of her good qualities. She was a beautiful woman, so said Adam. She had a great marriage. She was a great helper. She was a great mother. She loved God. And it is said of Eve’s seed in Genesis 3:15, referring to Christ, that her seed would be the One to defeat Satan.

So, “Mother Eve, we honor you today. Had you not lived, none of us would be here. Had we been in your shoes, everyone one of us would have failed in the Garden. So instead of dwelling on what you did wrong, we’re grateful for all that you did right.”

Now on to the 2nd most important mother in the world:

Mother #2—Mary.

The Mary I’m talking about here is 1 of 6 Mary’s in the New Testament. This Mary is the mother of Jesus and she’s 1 of the 3 most important mothers in the world because she gave birth to the Son of God who died on the cross and rose again to give life to all who believe in Him.

We don't know a lot about Mary. We know nothing about her background other than that she was a peasant from Nazareth. Most of what we know about her centers around 2 major events in her life—the birth of Jesus and the death of Jesus, even though there are other passages in the Gospels through which we learn something about Mary.

We meet up with Mary in Matthew and Luke's gospels in the well-known story of the birth and early life of Christ. Mary and Joseph are living in Nazareth, engaged to be married. An angel appears to Mary and tells her that she'll conceive a child by the Holy Spirit and bear the Son of God. Of course, this causes a scandal because most everyone thinks that she and Joseph had premarital sex.

In her pregnant state, she visits her cousin, Elizabeth, for 3 months who's pregnant with John the Baptist. Mary returns to Nazareth and as she's approaching her due date, she and Joseph journey to Bethlehem to register for the census. She gives birth to Jesus in a stable and that's where the shepherds find them.

They find a house in Bethlehem and take up residence there. The magi come to see Jesus when He's a year or so old. Herod is enraged that a King has been born and he orders the slaughter of all males 2 years old and younger. Mary and Joseph are warned in a dream to flee to Egypt with Jesus. After Herod dies, an angel directs Mary and Joseph not to return to Bethlehem but to move back to Nazareth (Matt 2:1-23).

The next time we encounter Mary is when Jesus is 12. He's confounding the Jewish leaders in the Jerusalem temple during the Feast of the Passover. Mary and Joseph leave Jerusalem and go a day's journey supposing Him to be in the caravan when they realize Jesus is missing. They return to Jerusalem and find Him in the temple and Mary scolds Him (Lk. 2:41-51).

The next time we see Mary is at the wedding in Cana of Galilee (Jn. 2:1-11). This is where Jesus did His 1st miracle by turning water into Welch's grape juice, I mean wine. Mary tries to solve the problem of running out of wine at the wedding by turning to Jesus to do something about it. The presence of Mary at this wedding and a few other New Testament passages lead us to believe that Mary accompanied Jesus and His disciples from time to time as they ministered over the 3-year period of His ministry (Lk. 8:19-21).

The next time we see Mary is at the cross of her Son. She's heartbroken as she sees Him crucified. From the cross, Jesus commissions the Apostle John to care for His mother (Jn. 19:25-27). About a month later, we encounter Mary for the last time in the New Testament. She's in Jerusalem in an upper room with 119 others devoting themselves to prayer (Acts 1:14).

That's about what we know about Mary other than that she was a very godly woman (Lk. 1:26-30), that she had other children (Mt. 13:55-56), and that she herself admitted that she needed Christ as her Savior (Lk. 1:47). The fact that we know so little about Mary has bugged people for centuries. By the 5th century AD, many legends about Mary appeared that have absolutely no historical validity. As far as I'm concerned, the only truth about Mary is to be found in the Bible.

I think it's important to stress again how the sin nature is imparted to children. It's by the father and not by the mother. So when Jesus was conceived in Mary by the Holy Spirit, that's how Jesus could take on humanity without sin. Mary was a sinner who needed a Savior because her father passed on the sin nature to her. But because Jesus was the only human in history without a human father, even though Mary was a sinner, her sinful nature was not imputed to her baby, Jesus. That's a huge point or we wouldn't have a Savior! Mary has had an interesting reception by those who call themselves Christians. In my opinion, Catholics have made too much of Mary and Protestants have kind of ignored her. But Mary is to be highly appreciated among us. In Luke 1:42, Elizabeth said of Mary, "Blessed are you among women." The word "blessed (eulogeo)" here means "to speak well of", from which we get our English word, "eulogize". Elizabeth is prophesying that Mary will be perhaps the most appreciated woman in history.

Mary herself says, "From this time on, all generations will count me blessed," just a few verses later (Lk. 1:48). Mary uses a different Greek word (makarizo) that's translated "bless". It's the word we find in the beatitudes

when Jesus says, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, etc”. This word means “to be enriched by God to the point of joy”. Mary is saying that the future generations of history will realize how fortunate she was that God selected her above all women to bear His Son. It indeed was a unique and joyful privilege for Mary that all should recognize.

All Christians should honor Mary. She has an incredibly unique place in history. We shouldn't err in either extreme—to worship and to pray to her or to underplay her as virtually insignificant except at Christmas. Mary is the mother of Christ and to be perpetually honored and appreciated.

So, “Mother Mary, we honor you today. God chose you above all women who ever lived to bear His Son. We're grateful that you accepted the divine assignment. You're a great role model for faith, obedience, and humility.”

There's one more important mother in the world.

Mother #3—Your Mother and Mine.

Our mothers are the 3rd most important mother in the world because without them, none of us would be here. Each of us has a mother who gave us life. She didn't choose us and we didn't choose her. It was arranged by God, the mother we'd have. Our mothers brought us into the world and they deserve honor.

The word “mother” is used over 300 times in the Bible.

We engage the word “mother” there in a number of ways. It's often used to specify the one who bore someone in a family relationship—so and so, the mother of so and so. We're told to bless (Prov. 30:11, 17) and honor our mothers always (Ex. 20:12; Deut. 5:16; Eph. 6:2) and to obey them when we're children (Eph. 6:1). Mothers are told to teach their children the law of God (Prov. 1:8; 6:20; 31:1).

We're told that a wise child brings joy to a mother and a foolish child brings heartache to her (Prov. 10:1; 15:20; 19:26). We're told never to curse our mother (Ex. 21:15, 17; Lev. 20:9). We find good mothers and bad mothers in the Bible. Then for many of us, there comes the time the Bible speaks about when we're told to leave our father and mother to marry someone (Gen. 2:24; Eph. 5:31). So we get a lot of coaching about relating to mothers in the Bible.

In this room today, we all have feelings about the woman who brought us into the world. Some of us feel a lot of warmth and love as we think about our mother, whether she be living or dead. We kind of feel like Abraham Lincoln who said, “All that I am or hope to be I owe to my angel mother.”

Some of us have ambivalent feelings as we think about our mother. Somewhere along the line, we've experienced a wound or a breakdown in our relationship with her. You might be angry at her as a teenager. Or as an adult, you may have a bitter spirit in your heart because of what you feel she did to you while you were growing up or in your adult years. You may be grieving a bad relationship with her when you want a good relationship with all your heart. These are really tough situations.

None of our mothers were perfect. And none of us were perfect children. I'm grateful for everyone in this room who has a wonderful relationship with his or her mother. But this I'm finding out—more and more people are struggling with their relationship with their mothers. And when Mother's Day comes around, it's a very difficult time. Many would rather not come to church and hear a sermon about all the great mothers in the Bible and in the church. It's too painful.

And when they go to the card store, they pick up warm and fuzzy glowing card after glowing card and put them back in the rack because they know what's said isn't true of their relationship with their mother. They walk out of the store with a token card that doesn't say that much. They're reminded once again that the relationship they have with mom is surface and maybe some aren't even that fortunate.

I don't know where most of you are in your relationship with your mothers. If you're still at home, most moms are doing the best they can. If you're an adult and struggling with your relationship with your mom, if she's damaged you in any significant way, you need to realize that maybe she was victimized as a child and really doesn't understand what she's done to you. By all means, get some help and get healthy.

Today I stand before you in the struggling category. For all of my life, things went pretty well with my mother and me—until we hit some whitewater 1½ years ago. I will share no more than this because of discretion. But we have experienced some pain, I don't know how to resolve the situation, and I understand a whole new slice of ministry when people tell me they're struggling with their mother. Last Mother's Day, I wasn't in any shape to preach on anything relating to mothers. This year I've struggled. But I'm making progress.

Our church is a church of transparency and authenticity. At Grace, we recognize that people go through stuff from the pulpit to the pew. We can talk about our struggles discreetly and realize that we're not alone and that this can be a healing place for our wounds and struggling relationships. God's heart is for things to be well in our families (Mal. 4:6).

So, whether the relationship with our moms is good or strained, "Mom, we love you. Had you not lived, we wouldn't be here. You did the best you could. You weren't perfect and neither were we. But we want you to know that we love you and we thank God that He put us together. Hopefully we can enjoy each other and together enjoy Him forever."

Conclusion

We've looked at the 3 most important mothers in the world today. All 3 of them were life-givers. Eve was the mother of all living. Mary was the mother of the Savior who gives life to all who believe in Him. And your mother and mine was the one who gave us life on this planet. We need to be extremely grateful for these 3 mothers.

The last mother is the one who impacted each of us the most. Whether biological or adoptive, they're the ones with whom we had a personal relationship. Some of us are in a great place with our mothers. Some of us have said goodbye to our mothers in death and we miss them. And some of us are struggling with our relationship with our mothers. We feel grief and pain often. We're not sure what to do.

If you're struggling somehow in your mother-child relationship, maybe you with your mother or you as a mother with your son or daughter, I don't pretend to know how to fix it. But no matter what your situation, I call upon you to honor and love your mother without playing into dysfunction.

And I ask you to do what the old song says, "Leave it there, leave it there. Take your burden to the Lord and leave it there. If you trust and never doubt, He will surely bring you out. Take your burden to the Lord and leave it there."

Give your situation to the Lord right now in a fresh new way—that He'd work in your situation to resolve the conflicts and the hurts and that He'd work in you to be like Christ no matter what the problem.