

May 9, 2021

Texts: Jeremiah 17: 7-8; John 15: 9-17

Title: "Love and Happiness"

(slide one) Happy Mother's Day to all our mothers and all those who've been like a mother to the people in your life. Mothers shape our lives and build our families and serve as our safe place as we go out into the world. They have a unique power to influence their children no matter how old their children are.

Phil Keith, who was at one time a police chief in Tennessee who tells of getting a call from his mom while he was in the middle of a tv press conference. Keith knew his mother wouldn't call him unless something was seriously wrong, so he excused himself from the press conference to answer the phone. His mom said to him, "Phil Keith, are you chewing gum?" He said, "Um, yes, mom." She said, "Well, it looks awful. Spit it out."

So the Police Chief spit out his gum and went back to the press conference. Mothers are people of influence. But if you ask most of them, they'll say their power's very limited.

Of course, we all come from different circumstances. Not everyone has had a mother who was deeply involved in their lives but thankfully, many of us have. And I hope that we've learned to appreciate the sacrifices our moms have made in our behalf.

Jesus told his followers, "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love." Jesus' words are the model for us all: moms, dads, grandparents, all of us. Because God loves us, we love one another. Because He

forgives us, we forgive one another. At the center of the Gospel is the self-giving love of God.

**And I hope you'll notice a link between love and happiness.** (Slide 2 - Jn 15:11) Jesus says to his disciples, "I've said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete." *Love is essential to joy.*

Pastor Larry Brincefield tells of reading a book about the life experiences of several overseas missionaries. He expected to read about the hardships of their work. Instead, the book is a record of the joy these missionaries find in serving others. He read about a woman named Donna who serves a poor community in Tecate, Mexico. She said, "I consider it a blessing to do this work amongst the migrant workers. It's my joy and my reward." She found such joy in serving the needs of people in this really poor area that it felt to her like being in heaven. She said, "If there's an eternal reward, then that's only icing on the cake." Giving and receiving the love of God creates happiness, or shall we say, it creates "heaven" in the here and now.

It's hard to really be happy when we live only for ourselves. Love and happiness are related, you can't have one without the other. But also, (Slide 3 - Jn 15:13) *Love requires sacrifice*. He explained it like this, "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends."

Few of us will ever be asked to literally die for someone. But to love people in the same manner that God loves them, we've got to lay down our selfishness and our prejudices and our grudges and, sometimes, even our so-called rights. It's a

process. Learning how to love can take a lifetime to figure out.

A few years ago, I heard of a young man who was almost arrested for climbing up the outside of a 19-story apartment building in Philadelphia. This wasn't one of those climbing enthusiasts who climb tall buildings for publicity. The building was on fire and his mother was trapped inside.

The young man didn't think twice when he began scaling the outer wall of the burning apartment building to rescue his mother who was bed-ridden and lived on the 15 floor. The Police weren't letting anybody into the burning building.

The young man reached his mother's balcony, he was able to then direct firefighters to her apartment and they were able to rescue her before the fire reached her. A police officer told the young man that he could've been arrested but he would let him go with a warning. The young man said this about his mom, "She's not surprised by the things that I do for her. She knows I'll do anything for her, anything!"

Jesus had one priority in life: to restore our relationship with God. And when we couldn't achieve that restoration on our own, Jesus gave up his life to break the barrier to our knowing God. He was willing to do anything for us.

Love requires sacrifice. Jesus is asking us (ok, commanding us) to love others in the same way that he loves us. Most mothers (and Dads) know about being willing to make almost any sacrifice for their children. Anything!

God so loved the world that He gave . . . Where there's no giving, there's no love. That's true within the family, that's true between friends, and that's true

within society. A society that's simply looking out for themselves is in trouble.

Finally, I think Jesus is telling us in this passage: (Slide 4 - 1 Cor 13:2) **Love is the very essence of our faith.** Paul writes: "If I have faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing." That pretty well sums it up. If we can't to have love for others, our faith is a sham.

If we're having trouble loving other people, then we need to examine our relationship with Jesus. He's the source of sacrificial love. He's our example. As he loved us, so he commands us to do the same. True self-giving love is what Motherhood is all about. On this day when we celebrate the sacrificial love of Mothers, let's see where we might live that kind of love, even if we're not a Mom, to honor our Lord. Amen.

