

Brothers and sisters in Christ, today marks a very special day. As I'm sure you are most readily aware; today is Mother's Day. To all of the mothers in our congregation, happy Mother's Day!

What are your Mother's Day traditions? Is it an occasion for getting together, for making contact, sending or receiving cards, having a special meal and going to church with the whole family on this day.

Whatever it is that you do, it is a good thing to take time on this second Sunday in May to honor or remember one of God's greatest gifts to humankind, that is, our mothers... Mothers are indeed a gift from God, and besides every last one of us owes our existence to our mother.

On this day I pray that God would give us all humble hearts that allows us to give thanks to God for all our mothers--Our biological mothers to be sure, and more than that, for all our mothers, our grandmothers, great-grandmothers, mother-in-laws, step-mothers, foster mothers, God Mothers, and also our "mothers of the faith" for they too have gone far beyond biology and have raised us in the truth... A blessed, happy, memorable Mother's Day to all of you.

Mother's Day is not a Liturgical Holiday, in fact, many times I only make a passing reference to it because it coincides with a liturgical Holiday... Ascension Day. So, I don't always do this, but this year, I am going to make a break from the lectionary to preach a sermon on mothers. Besides, Ascension Day is technically on Thursday... so I'll preach about it next week.

In regards to mothers and what mothers do, especially after having twins, I quickly discovered that being a mom is more than a full-time job. Moms were homeschoolers before homeschooling became a thing. Moms were teachers long before children were old enough to sit in a classroom. Mothers are chefs and house cleaners, disciplinarians and drill sergeants. Mothers are cheerleaders. Menders of booboos and

healers of broken hearts. They are IT experts. Party planners. Councilors and chauffeurs.

Some mothers are gardeners and mowers of lawns. All mothers seem to know baking cookies is just as important as running the vacuum. They are doctors and nurses, and coaches. They mold personalities and shape attitudes and train leaders. Mother's three favorite words are "I love you". Favorite four "I believe in you." and I'll be honest, my mother and my mother-in-law are two of the best; but honestly, much of what they did went underappreciated until recently. Since we had twins, and at one point we had 4, 4 and under, I have learned what it takes to be a mom from watching Stephanie day and night.

Mother's Day might not be a liturgical holiday but a mother is a link to God... a child's first impression of God love.

Someone wrote this about mother's based on the Beatitudes. Blessed is the mother who can hold her children while letting them go. Blessed is the mother who puts a tranquil home ahead of an immaculate house. Blessed is the mother who knows a kind act will be remembered longer than an easy word. Blessed is the mother who really believes prayer changes things. Blessed is the mother who's Bible does not need dusting. Blessed is the Mother whose sense of humor is alive and well. Blessed is the mother who never gets tired and even when she is wont admit it.

With that as a background, I think that will help us to understand and or appreciate the mother we will meet in the Bible today. In Matthew Chapter 20.

Matthew says, ²⁰ Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favor of him.

²¹ "What is it you want?" he asked.

She said, "Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom."

²² "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said to them. "Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?"

"We can," they answered.

²³ Jesus said to them, "You will indeed drink from my cup, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father."

²⁴ When the ten heard about this, they were indignant with the two brothers. ²⁵ Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. ²⁶ Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ²⁷ and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— ²⁸ just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

This mother is one of the most amazing ladies and most people know very little about her or nothing at all. But that is about to change for you. Her name is Salome. Not to be confused with a Salome that seductively danced for Herod. And he said to her I'll give you anything you want. Up to half of the kingdom. And at the urging of her mother, she asked for the head of John the Baptist. Not that Salome...

This Salome was the wife of Zebedee. Who was Zebedee? Zebedee owned a fishing business in Galilee. It was lucrative enough that he had hired servants working for him. He had two boys. James and John. They were also in the fishing business with their father. They were in their boat working with their father when Jesus came and said follow me. They left everything to follow Jesus.

So, Salome was the mother of two of the twelve apostles. She was also a member of the group of women that followed Jesus. Matthew 27 tells

us at the cross there were many women present looking on from a distance. They had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to him. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph,^[1] and the mother of Zebedee's sons.

Her two sons were 2/3s of the inner circle of Jesus: Peter, James and John. She was a faithful follower of Jesus. She was well aware of his teachings. And she was certain when Jesus set up his kingdom there would be positions of responsibility.

Earlier in Matthew 20, Jesus had just told a parable about a land owner who went out to hire servants early in the morning. They agreed upon a fair days wage and they went to work. At midday the land owner went back out to hire servants, they agreed upon a fair wage and they too went to work. In the evening He went out again and hired more workers. At the end of the day, all the hired workers received the same wage.

Perhaps that parable caused Salome to wonder what would happen to my boys. After all, they left everything to follow Jesus from the very beginning. But now others are going to come and receive the same thing?

The opportunity presented itself, and Matthew says she knelt down before Jesus and she made this request: when you establish your kingdom can you have my two sons sit one on your right and one on your left. It would be very easy for us to find fault in her. But since it is Mother's Day maybe we should take a few moments to reconsider the text. Keep in mind, Jesus did not grant her request, but neither did he deny it. Jesus simply reminded her of the cost of being seated on his right and left. And he told her that those choices were for the Father to make, not Him.

On Mother's Day 2023, what can we learn from Mrs. Zebedee, Salome, the mother of James and John?

I think there are several things. First, she prayed for her sons to be part of his kingdom. I cannot think of a more important task than for mothers to pray for their children that they will be part of the kingdom.

I hear this all the time, because it is a growing trend that children as they get older stop attending church. I am asked "what should I do?" Well, the Proverbs say, "Rear the child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it." That is generally true, but not a guarantee. Therefore, another thing you can do is pray earnestly for them. A perfect example is Monica the mother of Augustine. Augustine, that is saint Augustine, he was not always a saint. In his youth he lived a life of wantedness and indulged that wantedness. He considered himself an atheist, but Augustine's mother Monica prayed earnestly for Augustine.

Years later Augustine was out doors and he heard a child singing a song. The words were "Pick it up, pick it up, and read it." By the grace of God, Augustine heeded the command. He picked up the Bible. And the first passage he read was the words of Paul from the Book of Romans. It literally changed his course of life. He felt his heart had been flooded with light. Yes, that can and does happen.

In last week's Gospel lesson, Jesus had said, "You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it." In Chapter 15 Jesus would go on to speak about being "the vine" and His followers being "the branches" while the Father is the vine pruner with the goal of promoting the bearing of fruit. May your prayers (not just be about anything) but may they have a similar goal, of bearing fruit for God's kingdom.

Someone wrote this poem entitled "When I'm an old lady". "When I'm an old lady I'll live with my kids. Because I want to pay back all the joy they provided. Returning each deed they'll be so excited when I'm an old lady and I live with my kids." I'll write on the walls in red white and blue. I'll bounce on the furniture wearing my shoes. I'll drink from

the carton and then leave it out. I'll stuff all the toilets and oh they'll shout. When I'm an old lady and live with my kids. When they're on the phone and just out of reach I'll get into things like the sugar and bleach. They'll snap their fingers and shake their head. When that is done I'll hide under the bed. When I'm an old lady and live with my kids. When they cook dinner and call me to eat I'll not eat my green beans or salad or beets. I'll gag on my ochra, spill milk on the table. When they get angry I'll run as fast as I'm able. When I'm an old lady and live with my kids. I'll sit close to the TV, through the channels I'll click. I'll cross both my eyes just to see if they stick. I'll take off one of my socks and throw it away. I'll play in the mud till the end of the day. When I'm an old lady and live with my kids. Later in bed I'll lay back and sigh, thank God in prayer and then close my eyes. And my kids will look down with a smile slowly creeping and say with a groan she is so sweet when he is sleeping. When I'm an old lady and I live with my kids.

I chose to preach on the topic of mothers today because being a mother is one of the toughest jobs in the world and more often than not one of the most frustrating jobs. Sometimes your kids will make you so proud you can't stand it, but other times they will make you cover your face in a pillow in tears. Here is the question to every mom and dad... what good is it if your child becomes a successful athlete or if they become good at making money and they drive the nicest car and live in the nicest house, but they don't know God? What if they gain the whole world but lose their soul?

Being a parent is not an easy assignment but Mrs. Zebedee gives us a priceless example. She prayed for her sons to be part of the Kingdom. I hope you are praying for your children to be part of the Kingdom right now. If you haven't been praying that, there is no better time than Mother's Day. She prayed that, and more than that, she prayed her sons would be involved in the work of the Kingdom, that her sons would play

a vitally important role in the work of the kingdom. And that they would be close to Jesus. I would be willing to guarantee my parents and my aunt and uncle, and probably others, had a part in praying I would be a pastor one day and do work for the Lord's Kingdom...

Should we be content with praying simply that the church would be full of people sitting in the pews? Should we be content with them receiving blessing after blessing but not getting more involved in kingdom work?

As a church we can pray for them. But it also begins at home. Are you praying for your children to have a vitally important role in the Lord's kingdom? And if they are involved... are you thanking the Lord for that. Above all, encourage them and pray for them.

That is just a part of what Mrs. Zebedee did. She also followed Jesus herself. She follow Jesus all the way to the cross. She watched him die. And three days later, she went early in the morning to the empty tomb. Mark 16:1 says, "when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome brought spices, so that they might go and anoint Him."

So who is Salome?

A mother who prayed her sons would be part of the kingdom...

She was a mother that prayed her sons would be involved in the work of the kingdom

And, she was also a mother involved in the work of the Kingdom herself.

Do you have any idea how much your kids value your example? Consider Easter morning began with Salome. The good news of the resurrection began with at least two mothers leaving the tomb to tell their sons that Jesus had risen from the dead. What an example to follow. And they did.

Today we give thanks for mothers, for those who have given us life, and most of all, for those who have prayed for us, set an example for us to follow, and who have taught us the Gospel, the eternal life we can have in Jesus. They set an example and we will follow.

In the grace of God which surpasses all understanding, trust your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.