

## Love One Another

**Grace and peace to you from our Lord Jesus Christ...**

Once again, Happy Mother's Day (to all of our mothers) and it's my sincere prayer that your hearts are blessed on this day... and, of course, thank you for the many ways that you let the love of God live in your heart as well...

I am also aware that Mother's Day can be very a difficult day for so many people (in so many different ways) and (if that's you) I also hope that however you find it on this day - that peace comes to you quickly (and that God's love shines upon you)...

Having said that, I do want to share something with you that a very honest mother (that I met along the way) said to me a few weeks ago (as she was reflecting on the challenges of what it means to be a mother in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century)...

and she said, "*As much as I can find reasons to celebrate being a mother I also find it very difficult at times*"... she went on to say, "*To be honest, a lot of the time I feel underappreciated, invisible, and so often ignored even when I am giving my best... but the thing I often struggle with the most in being a mother is whether or not I'm making any sort of difference in this world*"...

And so today, as we celebrate and think about the challenges of being a mother - I want to turn it back around to our faith and ask another question - and the question is - as a person of faith (what difference are you making in this world)? - and what will be remembered about your witness to the love of God (when you're gone?)...

To be honest with you - I don't think those are questions that *average people ask themselves* - but according to religious scholar (and author of the now infamous book titled, 'The World's Religions') - Huston Smith says they are questions that deeply spiritual people will ask on their own journey through life (especially as they seek to understand God - and life - and family - and what he refers to as the '*Eternal Places of Time*')...

In fact, one of these '*deeply spiritual people*' who saw her own life as important in accomplishing God's work here on earth - and a woman who many people look to even today as an inspiring model of what the Christian life can look like (when being led by the Spirit of God) - would undoubtedly be Mother Theresa (a role model not only for women around the world - but for every Christian striving to be a faithful witness)...

From what I've read – Mother Theresa understood from a very early age that when the seed of faith is planted in the heart of a believer – the fruit of spiritual maturity does not rest in the spoken word (or what we say we'd like to do) – but rather in what she called, *'the acts of humble service'* ... a term that mothers around the world are familiar with...

and if you know anything about Mother Theresa you probably know that her own life reflected this belief in that she gave away her own comfortable life in Albania so that she could bring comfort, compassion, and the love of Christ to the most vulnerable people (in one of the poorest places on earth) – Calcutta, India...

And listen to a prayer that she wrote for herself (and would say every day upon waking) as a reminder to herself – that her life mattered... it says, *"Hungry for love, He looks at you... Thirsty for kindness, He begs of you... Naked for loyalty, He hopes in you... Homeless for shelter in your heart, He asks of you"*...

And then it finishes by asking a great question... it asks, *"And will you be that one - to answer Him?"*... (the pronoun Him being an obvious reference to God) but could certainly be said by a mother raising a child...

Now I guess we could all make people like Mother Theresa, St. Augustine, Billy Graham – or even Martin Luther into larger than life personalities – but I like what someone once said in Christian Century magazine many years ago... he said, *"some of the giant names in matters of religion and spirituality had very humble images of themselves... but what made them live such meaningful lives was the ever present belief that God's eyes were upon them"*...

In other words, how would your own life look if you believed that right now (on this day – in this place) God was looking to use you to make a difference in the world that He loves?... how would your life be expressed if you began to understand (not just in your mind – but in your heart) that to know Jesus is to serve Him (and you also understood – that to serve the Lord was to serve your neighbor) as selflessly as a mother loves a child?... what would the world look like if YOU put your faith into practice (and above every other endeavor in life) - you put God first and truly believed that God's eyes were upon YOU right now?... and what makes you so confident to believe that they're not?...

In our reading this morning from the 15<sup>th</sup> chapter of John's Gospel we read some of the last words Jesus ever spoke to his disciples (that would help them know what to do if they too wanted to serve the Lord)... in fact, he says in verse 12, *"This is my commandment – that you love one another as I have loved you"*...

The word Jesus is using for love is ‘agape’ (and in some ways, you could argue that it’s like the love of a mother)... and I say that because agape is a selfless type of love – it’s not motivated by your own self-interests – it doesn’t expect anything in return – and it’s doing for someone who can’t do for themselves... but where agape differs from a mother’s love is that it focuses its attention on the poor, the needy, the marginalized, and the weakest among us (often giving voice to those who have no voice of their own)

In fact, if you remember the Sermon on the Mount – you’ll remember that these are the ones (precious to God – ‘*Blessed are the poor*’ our Lord teaches) and they are the people that Jesus came to show love, and compassion, and mercy to (because no one else would)...

And yes, in this passage Jesus was speaking to his disciples (those closest to him) – teaching them what the heart of God looks like (and the message they were to bring with them if they wanted to make a difference in this world)...

But most importantly – Jesus is also speaking to us... reminding us even today of where to look if we too want to find God (and live out our baptismal calling)... it’s not in the Ivory Towers – but in the places where there is pain, and struggle, and a need for change... the places where we can make a difference – and be the voice for those who have none... and like a mother’s love (it’s the highest most honorable form of love)...

And of course, you remember how even the disciples themselves were confused by this message... when they say in Matthew 25:41, “*Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink?... And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing?... And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?*”

And what does Jesus say?... he says “*Just as you did it to one of the least of these (who are members of my family), you did it to me.*”

And I love what lead singer for the rock band U2, Bono, once added to this conversation – when he said, “*I do believe that God is in the slums... God is in the cardboard boxes where some in our world call home.... God is in the silence of a mother who has infected her child with a virus that will end both their lives.... God is in the cries heard under the rubble of war... God is in the debris of wasted opportunity and lives, - and God is with us - if we are with them.*”

Now you can debate the theology of that statement all you want – but what I am trying to get you to see this morning is that your faith is more than a ticket to get you into Heaven... your faith isn't about being good (so that the people around you will say nice things or make you feel good about yourself)... your faith is a gift from God... it's a treasure... and if you use it (to make a difference in this world) who knows what you can do...

But the question is – (like Mother Theresa asked herself every morning) - will you be the one to answer His call?....

Let me close with something that I find very interesting...it's a story that goes back a few years (to July of 2011) where a huge treasure was found in the southern state of Kerala, India... it had been hidden in the sealed vaults of a Hindu temple in that area for thousands of years...

What's interesting about the story is that all of the locals knew that there was a treasure in the temple (but no one ever knew how much was inside)... and I know this is going to sound like an exaggeration but according to what I've read – preliminary inventory in 5 of the 6 vaults has already revealed over a ton of gold, sacks of diamonds and precious stones each weighing more than 200 lbs, gold necklaces over three meters long and weighing over 2.5 kilograms, gold crowns, thousands of pieces of antique jewelry, idols, and artifacts studded with diamonds and emeralds....

Now don't take my word for it – look it up at some point today on your phone – but initial conservative estimates put the treasure's value at \$35 billion dollars (which easily surpasses the Vatican – which is estimated to own about \$15 billion in wealth)... and some believe that this treasure from India should be valued at much more than \$300 billion dollars...

And what I find absolutely amazing about this story is that all of this wealth and treasure (was not only forgotten about and ignored) but was sitting right in the middle of one of the poorest places on earth – where children routinely starved to death and lived with disease... and yet, there was more than enough wealth just a few feet away to help with the lives of millions and millions of people...

And so what does that have to do with us?...

Well, I think the same is true of our faith... our faith is a treasure from God – a treasure that can change the world – (can help to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, give hope to the ones in despair, love to the ones who are forgotten and ignored,

5

peace to those who are at war with themselves and with others)... and like a mother who devotes herself to raising a child – even when it’s a difficult path to travel (our faith can bring so much goodness and hope into the world – when we let Jesus into our hearts to order our steps and direct our path)...

And yes, we too can go through life ignoring this treasure – like most people do - letting it collect dust – we can keep it hidden – or even throw it away...

But again I wonder – what would the world look like if YOU took another road – and lived out your faith (took it out of the vault – and shared it – so that this world might become a better place because of your witness?...

How then would your life make a difference?... *“for where your treasure is,” Jesus once said, “there your heart will be also”...*

where is your treasure?...

May your heart be touched by the Word of God to love your neighbor... may His eyes and His favor always be upon you... and May you find your own blessings in this world (and in the world to come)...

In Jesus name we pray...

**Amen!**