

God's Motherly Love

Rev. Taek Kim

Scripture: Matthew 23:37 (Good News Translation)

³⁷Jerusalem, Jerusalem! You kill the prophets and stone the messengers God has sent you! How many times I wanted to put my arms around all your people, just as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you would not let me!

Let us pray. Gracious and loving God, bless these words that are Your Words. May they feed us not only mentally and emotionally, but also spiritually. May they also empower us to live more faithfully, effectively, and lovingly for you! And speak through me, transforming the words that come from my lips to be received as your message for all who hear. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

Before I get into today's message, I want to talk about a few things.

First of all, I want to say how I thank God for each of you, for your faithfulness in prayer, in reaching out to one another as you are able, for doing your part as members of the body of Christ and our church, for the ways in which you have also been faithful in giving and supporting the ministries of God through our church. Thank you. Because of your faithful giving through mailing your tithes and offerings, we are able to weather these times better than otherwise.

I also want to give thanks to God for our church leaders and those who support the church, especially during these uncertain and challenging times. Tim Bodenmiller, our Church Council Chair, Jim Marlow our Trustee Chair, Karyn Vaughn our Christian Education Chair, Dan Gardetto our Finance Chair, Bill Vallie our Finance Secretary, Jamie Kim our Youth Leader, Evangelism Chair Nancy Stone and right-hand-helper Julie Riggs, Dave and Tracey Drouillard and the Impact Band, and there are others...including our staff who have continued working who include Aaron Vallie our custodian and Kathy LaFlure our administrative assistant.

We absolutely cannot do what we do as well as we do without each other. And yes, there are many more of you who I did not name, but trust you know thank each of you and God knows all that you have done and continue to do.

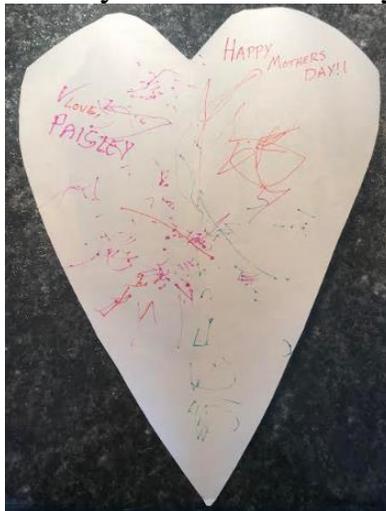
Though we are doing our best to support each other, no doubt this has been a tough time for us and many individuals, families, businesses, and churches. And how we journey through these times better is staying connected to Christ first, and then staying connected to each other through the love and spirit of Jesus Christ too.

Though we may feel discouraged and frustrated at times, even hopeless, please know that what you do for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is never in vain. May you always remember that, whether it is getting up and thanking God or helping someone in need, when you do it all for the Lord, it is worthy and surely noticed and blessed by God.

Now, for this Sunday's message.

In preparing for this Sunday, which is Mother's Day, I asked a few people to help me express our love and gratitude for our mothers. I start with one now and then will end with several more.

I want to show you what one of the most adorable children of our church drew. This was created by 1-year-old Paisley Bodenmiller. It's a heart filled with many colors to express her love for her mommy, Stacey, on this Mother's Day. Thanks to dad, Cale, for asking and helping little Paisley to create this Mother's Day card for her mom, and for allowing me to share it with all of you. Though some of you may think it's just a bunch of scribble marks, and what could a 1-year-old be thinking. Know that we sometimes express our love to God and it comes out like this. And God loves, understands, and cherishes it all the same. Well done, Paisley! I know your mom will absolutely love and cherish your special Mother's Day gift.



Again, later on in my message there will be more expressions of love for moms from our congregation that will be with more words than pictures because of their various ages, a bit older than Paisley, but equaling loving and touching.

While preparing for today's message, and focusing mainly on the portion of Scripture for today on Jesus comparing himself to a hen, I came across a story from Christian author Kathleen Schwab that is most fitting. This is what she wrote:

When I think about Jesus carrying these strong, protective instincts towards us, the instincts of a mother hen, I think of a story one of my students recently told me about one of her chickens. My student keeps a flock as a business, and uses the eggs for her family and also to sell. At one point, one of her chickens disappeared from the coop, and was gone long enough that my student thought this particular bird must be gone for good.

Then, after some time, the missing chicken reappeared. She marched out of the woods, leading a little row of chicks behind her. Turns out, she was tired of having her eggs taken away every day, she wanted a family, and so she left, laid her eggs and hatched them, then brought them back to the safety of home.

Leaving the flock was not a safe thing to do. My student lives in the Santa Cruz mountains, an area that is anything but ideal for a flightless bird. It is home to coyote packs, foxes, and even a small mountain lion population. Anyone who has spent time in these mountains knows that birds of prey are always on patrol: eagles, falcons, and hawks soar over head during the day, and owls rule the night.

I enjoyed the story as a wonderful tale of determination and chutzpah. You have to get a kick out of the hen taking off into the wild woods, then marching her little family back to coop. You can imagine her strutting in as if to say, "I'm back. Deal with it."

With having heard that story and the insightful comments, think of Jesus having said "How many times I wanted to put my arms around all your people, just as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings..."

Though we often put certain traits or acts in categories, like that is masculine, feminine or like a dad or mom, we cannot box certain traits and feelings that we all need to express, such a love like a mother. Definitely for single parents, and though they can't be two people, can definitely possess and share such love that is expressed like our heavenly parent who shows love of all kinds regardless of how we would assign it to gender.

So God's motherly love has been and continues to be shown in how parents not only lovingly take care of, provide, nurture, teach, guide, and lead them, but also in how they correct, discipline, warn, train, and motivate them when they rather not do what is needed, best, or avoids harm for the present and the future. And of course, a godly and motherly love nurtures a relationship with God through Jesus Christ with his loving, grace-filled, and saving grace.

God's motherly love is no doubt sacrificial. So many times God sacrificed and sacrificed. And though we don't expect anyone, especially mothers, to do what Christ did for us in actually dying on the cross so our sins could be paid and forgiven, we surely know that regular sacrifices are made lovingly and perseveringly.

God's motherly love is one that listens, understands, and is present.

God's motherly love forgives.

God's motherly love encourages and gives hope.

God's motherly love is the example for all of us, not only for mothers. For though called motherly, there are times when we all are to show such caring motherly love, since we not only learned it from our mothers but also from God.

And let me stress how important that we don't expect perfection from mothers, nor from ourselves, whether we are mothers or not.

A godly motherly love is one that is able to show such grace to self as shown to others over and over again. And that is the kind of grace God wants each mother and each of us as Christ's hen to show ourselves.

It's a wonderful image that Jesus compared himself to a mother hen. Jesus did not have to come to earth, but he did. He did not have to die on the cross, but he did. Jesus did not have to do anything. But he chose to do the will of God the Father, and also because he loved us and wanted to save us. He sacrificed so much, including his own self, for us.

Jesus often used the seemingly simple or even small or weak to show how great the worth and power of love is. Jesus compared faith to that of a mustard seed, which when placed in him grows incredibly. Jesus explained how the widows 2 mites were more than the money the wealthy gave though much more in dollar amount was not equal to the fact that the widow gave of all she had. Jesus rode a donkey rather than a stallion on Palm Sunday. Jesus was born in a manger and not in some castle or palace birthing room. Jesus said the first shall be last and the last shall be first. Jesus said the greatest among us are not the masters or leaders or powerful but rather the servants, who serve in his name. And how true that is during this pandemic, right?

So, again in the same way, Jesus compares himself to a hen rather than a momma bear who would just attack and crush anything or anyone without discretion if felt threatened, even if they weren't threatened or there was no provocation. Nor Jesus does compare himself to an animal such as a lioness. But rather a hen who is weak to predators, as any owner of chickens knows of.

Jesus purposely chooses a hen to show how he willing he was to be vulnerable, like one of us, his creation, to allow himself to be treated as he was so poorly and cruelly treated, even though he was and is God! He allowed himself to be killed, even though he was and is the Word through whom all things were created. He allowed for all that happened to so that he could care for all of us spiritually, which was most important. He put his spiritual wings around us, and still does today. For our lives and bodies will one day end, but our spirits live on forever. Christ came to make sure we would be taken care of and marched back into God's heavenly coop one day.

And our job as little chicks, if you want to say, is to follow in Christ's steps, to grow in faith and love, and to follow Christ by sharing his saving love, grace and gospel that he gifted to us. We are loving Christ back by following in that same kind of godly and motherly love.

Jesus comparing himself to a hen is nothing new about scripture describing God as a mother. Here are a few verses that show such motherly love:

“Like an eagle teaching its young to fly, catching them safely on its spreading wings, the Lord kept Israel from falling.” (Deuteronomy 32:11)

“Can a woman forget her own baby and not love the child she bore? Even if a mother should forget her child, I will never forget you.” (Isaiah 49:15)

I will comfort you in Jerusalem, as a mother comforts her child. (Isaiah 66:13)

All that to say that a mother’s love is from God, for God created mothers and the love they can and do express.

A mother’s love provides for their child in ways that extend throughout time and into the lives of children to follow.

A mother’s love is one that combined with faith teaches the value, worth, and love that mirrors God’s love. And their children know they are loved, supported, never given up on.

I know there are times when my children ask for mom. I do not feel like chopped liver, which c’mon isn’t the worst thing in the world to be compared to, right? That was supposed to be funny. Anyway, I get it. They want what they experience in their mom that only she can give because she is their mom! I do not feel less than, devalued, or dismissed at all. I am proud of the fact my wife is a godly mother who they choose to run to when needed. And then I can just go fishing or something. Okay, enough jokes for now. But truly, on this Mother’s Day, let us appreciate our Mothers, including the mothers who have gone before us. I will have a prayer at the end of this message that speaks to the mothers who for one reason or another were not fully present or able to love as God would desire. With that in mind, know I have prepared this message for those of you who needed to hear that.

For all of us, and among the God-given traits that moms possess, we as disciples of Christ must allow for God to love and care for us at our best and at our worst. When we do, we teach all those around us what God’s motherly love looks like.

We show others what it looks like to be real with God and each other, doing so in love, not out of anger or any negativity. In being real and honest, we are being more faithful than if we tried to be something we are not. We do not want to teach others that to be a follower of Jesus is to act perfect and try to look perfect, but rather like Jesus, though he was actually perfect, did not try to even begin to act more than his humble self. And in fact, that is how we grow in love for God, others, and ourselves.

I loved that my mom loved me for who I was, at the same time pointed to Christ when I didn't see my potential, when I didn't think I could overcome certain obstacles around me and within me. My mom, and dad, were examples of giving grace to each other and themselves.

For some reason, I see that as part of God's motherly love given to us, as well as something we are to learn and live by for ourselves.

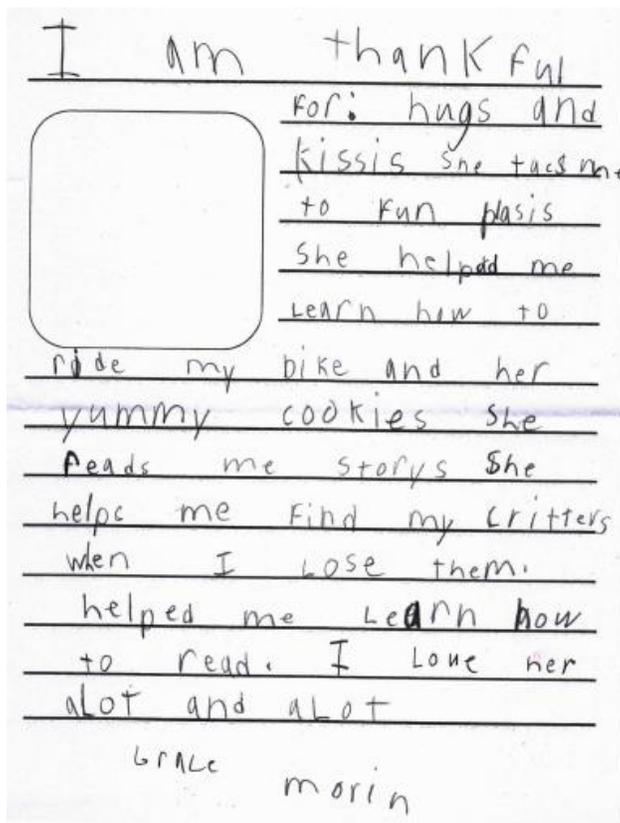
Well, though I could say much more on this as we think upon God's love which at times is compared to that of a mother's love, I now deliver on what I promised at the beginning. Here are some more words from those from our church to appreciate and express love for their mothers. Then I'll end with a Mother's Day prayer.

Here are words from 7-year-old Grace and 6-year-old Leland Morin (18 months apart if you were wondering), written for their mom, Melissa. Thanks to Jerry, their dad, for helping make these gifts possible to include for today's message. I now read their notes:

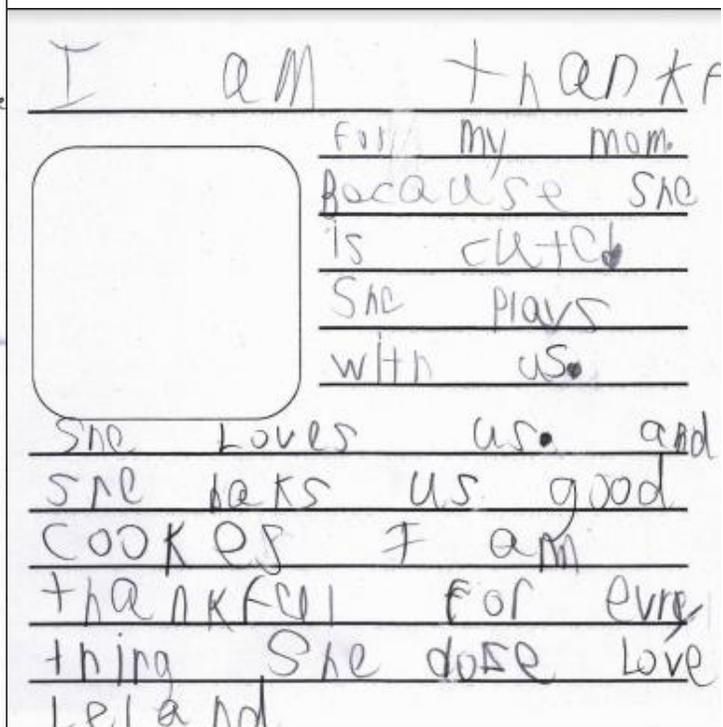
I am thankful for: hugs and kisses. She takes me to fun places. She helped me learn how to ride my bike. And her yummy cookies. She reads me stories. She helps me find my critters when I lose them. Helped me learn how to read. I love her a lot and a lot.
Grace Morin

From Leland:

I am thankful for my mom because she is cute. She plays with us. She loves us. And she bakes us good cookies. I am thankful for everything she does. Love Leland



I am thankful
for: hugs and
kisses she takes me
to fun places
she helped me
learn how to
ride my bike and her
yummy cookies she
reads me stories she
helps me find my critters
when I lose them.
helped me learn how
to read. I love her
a lot and a lot
Grace Morin

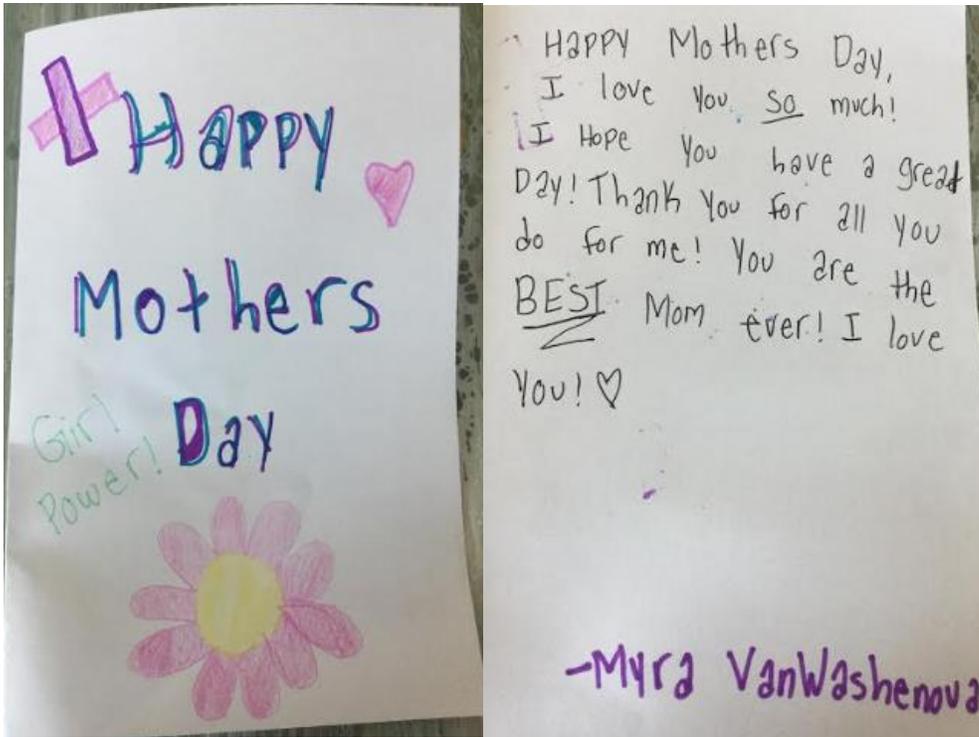


I am thankful
for my mom
because she
is cute
she plays
with us.
she loves us and
she bakes us good
cookies I am
thankful for every
thing she does love
Leland

From Myra and Max VanWashenova for their mom Angie:

11-yr-old Myra created this card and wrote:

Happy Mother's Day, I love you so much! I hope you have a great day! Thank you for all you do for me. You are the BEST mom ever! I love you!



7-year-old Max also created a card and wrote:

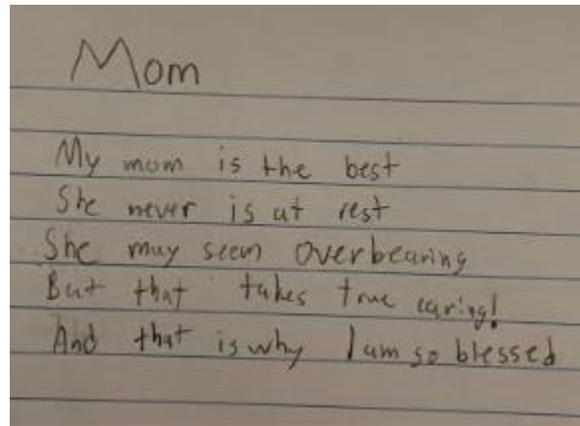
Happy Mother's Day! Love, Max.



From 14-year-old Wyatt and 10-year-old Everett Kessell, written for their mom Karen:

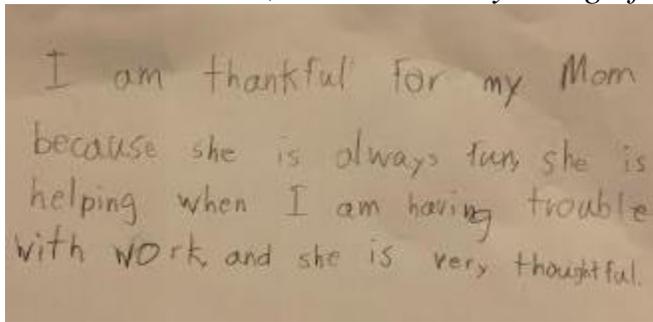
Wyatt wrote a limerick:

*Mom
My mom is the best
She never is at rest
She may seem overbearing
But that takes time caring!
And that is why I am so blessed*



Everett wrote:

I am thankful for my mom because she is always fun, she is helping when I am having trouble with work, and she is very thoughtful.



Trevor Kessell added to what his boys said about Karen:

She is diligent in making sure that our kids learn and act with compassion and kindness.

As well as for his own mom, Trevor said of Debbie Kessell:

She is generous in all parts of her life.

Yes, God's love is like a motherly love. And in keeping with today's theme, I now close with this prayer. It is the Mother's Day Prayer from the Book of Worship (BOW 438):

For our mothers, who have given us life and love, that we may show them reverence and love, we pray to the Lord.

For mothers who have lost a child through death, that their faith may give them hope, and their family and friends support and console them, we pray to the Lord.

For women, though without children of their own, who like mothers have nurtured and cared for us, we pray to the Lord.

For mothers, who have been unable to be a source of strength, who have not responded to their children, and have not sustained their families, we pray to the Lord.

Loving God, as a mother gives life and nourishment to her children, so you watch over your Church. Bless these women, that they may be strengthened as Christian mothers.

Let the example of their faith and love shine forth. Grant that we, their sons and daughters, may honor them always with a spirit of profound respect. Grant this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Blessing of Christ be upon each of you and your families. And on this day I wish all mother a very happy and blessed Mother's Day.