

A Mom's Appeal Mt. 20: 20-23

Someone wrote, "Mother's Day is traditionally the day when children give something back to their mothers for all the spit they produce to wash dirty faces, all the old gum they held in their hands, all the noses they wiped, & all the bloody knees they 'made well' with their kisses.

"This is the day mothers are rewarded driving kids to school when they missed the bus, & enduring all those football & soccer games in the rain. It's a day of appreciation for making your children finish something they said they couldn't do, not believing them when they said, 'I hate you,' & sharing their good times & their bad."

What are mothers? Let me share a few: teachers, disciplinarians, cleaning ladies, nurses, doctors, psychologists, counselors, chauffeurs, coaches, developers of personalities, molders of vocabularies, & shapers of attitudes. Mothers are soft voices saying, "I love you."

And mothers are a link to God, a child's first impression of God's love. Mothers are all these things & much, much more.

One of my favorite columns by Erma Bombeck tells of God in the act of creating mothers. LET ME READ IT TO YOU...

On the day God created mothers He had already worked long overtime. And an angel said to Him, "Lord, you sure are spending a lot of time on this one."

The Lord turned & said, "Have you read the specs on this model? She is supposed to be completely washable, but not plastic. She is to have 180 moving parts, all of them replaceable. She is to have a kiss that will heal everything from a broken leg to a broken heart.

"She is to have a lap that will disappear whenever she stands up. She is to be able to function on black coffee & leftovers. And she is supposed to have six pairs of hands."

"Six pairs of hands," said the angel, "that's impossible." "It's not the six pairs of hands that bother me," said the Lord, "It's the three pairs of eyes. She is supposed to have one pair that sees through closed doors so that whenever she says, 'What are you kids doing in there?' she already knows what they're doing in there."

"She has another pair in the back of her head to see all the things she is not supposed to see but must see. And then she has one pair right in front that can look at a child that just goofed & communicate love & understanding without saying a word."

"That's too much." said the angel, "You can't put that much in one model. Why don't you rest for a while & resume your creating tomorrow?"

"No, I can't," said the Lord. "I'm close to creating someone very much like myself. I've already come up with a model who can heal herself when she is sick who can feed a family of six with one pound of hamburger & who can persuade a nine year old to take a shower."

Then the angel looked at the model of motherhood a little more closely & said, "She's too soft." "Oh, but she is tough," said the Lord. "You'd be surprised at how much this mother can do."

"Can she think?" asked the angel. "Not only can she think," said the Lord, "but she can reason & compromise & persuade."

Then the angel reached over & touched her cheek. "This one has a leak," he said. "I told you that you couldn't put that much in one model." "That's not a leak," said the Lord. "That's a tear."

"What's a tear for?" asked the angel. "Well it's for joy, for sadness, for sorrow, for disappointment, for pride." "You're a genius," said the angel. And the Lord said, "Oh, but I didn't put it there."

Maybe with this in mind we can better understand Mrs. Zebedee, the mother of James & John. Turn with me to **Matthew 20: 20-23**... please listen as **I read**.

Mrs. Zebedee was aware of the teachings of Jesus about His kingdom. She was also very aware of the fact that her sons, James & John, were close to Him. They were two thirds of the inner circle of Peter, James, & John.

So she was certain that when the Lord formed His kingdom that they would have positions of responsibility & authority. But in the first part of this same chapter, Jesus tells a story that must have disturbed her.

It was a story about a landowner who went out to find laborers early in the morning. They agreed upon a fair day's wage & started working. Then at noon he went out & found some more, & they started working. Then towards evening he went out & found some more & they started working. Yet, when the Lord paid them off at the end of the day they all received the same wage.

Maybe Mrs. Zebedee wondered, **"Will my sons really have positions of authority in the Lord's new kingdom?"**

So when the opportunity presented itself she came to the Lord. Matthew says that she bowed before Him & made this request, **"When you establish your kingdom, please let my sons sit in places of authority & honor on your right & left hand."**

We might very well criticize Mrs. Zebedee for her presumption. But since today is Mother's Day, maybe we ought to think for a few moments concerning some positive things about Mrs. Zebedee.

We need also to recognize that when she came to Jesus, while Jesus did not grant her request, neither did he deny it. He simply reminded her of the cost of being seated on the right or left & told her that it is the Father who determines who will be seated there.

I. **SHE PRAYED THAT HER SONS MIGHT BE A PART OF HIS KINGDOM**

Now, what are some of the good things about Mrs. Zebedee? First of all, she came to the Lord, praying that her sons might be a part of His Kingdom. I can think of no more important task of motherhood than that to seek to ensure that your children are a **part of the Kingdom of God**.

I know that many mothers pray. Sometimes they pray out of necessity. Sometimes they pray because motherhood is not easy and extremely difficult.

Being a parent is not easy. Sometimes you're filled with joy & sometimes with sadness. Sometimes your children make you so proud you want to pop your buttons. At other times you can't find enough handkerchiefs to dry your tears.

I can understand the feelings of the mother with 5 children who was asked, "If you had it all to do over again, would you have children?" "Yes," she replied, "but not the same ones."

Being a parent is not easy. It is difficult. But Mrs. Zebedee gives us a valuable example, for she prayed earnestly that her sons would be a part of His kingdom.

We need that same concern for our children. What good is it if our children are successful in making money, driving fine automobiles, & living in good neighborhoods, but they don't know God? What does it matter if they gain the whole world, but lose their souls?

II. **SHE PRAYED THAT HER SONS WOULD BE ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN THE WORK OF HIS KINGDOM**

Not only did Mrs. Zebedee pray that her children would be a part of His kingdom, but she prayed that they would be actively involved in the work of His kingdom.

Churches are full of people content just to fill a pew on Sunday mornings. There are plenty of people willing to sit back & receive the blessings, but seldom do they get involved in doing any of the real work of the church.

But where does the spirit of service begin? It begins at home, with mothers & fathers setting the example & praying that their sons & daughters might be involved in the work of the kingdom as teachers & leaders, that they might be the ones to go out into the world & find the lost to see that the church continues on until Jesus comes again.

Mrs. Zebedee prayed that her children would be actively involved in the work of His kingdom. And we need to walk in her footsteps, too.

III. SHE HAD BIG EXPECTATIONS Mrs. Zebedee had big expectations. When you're working in a kingdom, there are no higher positions than those on the right & left of the King himself, & that's what she wanted for her sons. She didn't just pray that her children would be doorkeepers. She wanted them on the right & left hand of Jesus.

We may consider Mrs. Zebedee brash & presumptuous. But I admire her boldness. Too often people have settled for mediocrity in the church. For too long some have been content with just barely making it through the door. For too long they have been content to sit back & let things happen.

It is time to strive for excellence to reach for the very best there is. The Lord calls us to be His disciples, & to be effective laborers in His kingdom. Do you remember? Erma Bombeck had God saying as He was creating a mother, "*I am close to creating something very much like myself.*"

I suppose that is why today is special because we recognize that a mother's love is probably the closest example we have to **God's love**. It is a love that sacrifices itself over & over again, & would even dare to lay down her life for her own offspring.

The story is told - out of WW 2 & the holocaust that took the lives of millions of people - of Solomon Rosenberg & his family. It is a true story.

Solomon Rosenberg & his wife & their 2 sons & his mother & father were arrested & placed in a Nazi concentration camp. It was a labor camp, & the rules were simple. "As long as you can do your work, you are permitted to live. When you become too weak to do your work, then you are exterminated."

Rosenberg watched his mother & father marched off to their deaths, & he knew that next would be his youngest son, David, because David had always been a frail child.

Every evening Rosenberg came back into the barracks after his hours of labor & searched for the faces of his family. When he found them they would huddle together, embrace one another, & thank God for another day of life.

One day Rosenberg came back & didn't see those familiar faces. He finally discovered his oldest son, Joshua, in a corner, huddled, weeping, & praying. He said, "Josh, tell me it's not true." Joshua turned & said, "It is true, poppa. Today David was not strong enough to do his work. So they came for him."

"But where is your mother?" asked Mr. Rosenberg. "Oh poppa," he said, "When they came for David, he was afraid & he cried. Momma said, 'There is nothing to be afraid of, David,' & she took his hand & went with him."

That is motherhood. Mothers, may God bless you in it. And I pray that if there is someone here who has never experienced the love of God that is so close to the love of a mother, that this will be your time to make that decision.