

McCabe United Methodist Church

May 9, 2010

John 20:19-23

“Just Like Moms”

By: Rev. Gary Walters

On the evening of that first day of the week when the disciples were together with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said “Peace be with you.”, and after he said this he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord and again Jesus said “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” and with that he breathed on them and said “receive the Holy Spirit.” The word of God for the people of God, thanks be to God.

There is a phrase that is high honor. It means that something is really, really good. It brings us back to the days of our childhood when we are sitting down at our mother’s table and we put that food to our lips and it is like “Wow, this is amazing!” and so we might say, “This is as good as mom’s.”. It’s a high compliment. Although, I have to admit and Walters kids, you cannot tell Grandma Walters this, but there are a couple of things that your mom, that Laura makes better than Grandma. It’s true, Grandma Walters doesn’t make really great cookies and Mom’s oatmeal cookies are amazing! Also, Laura makes better potato soup than mom and that’s a big deal because it is a multigenerational, Walters tradition, that potato soup is, but Laura’s soup is really, really good. And then, Laura’s pumpkin pie is amazing. But, other than that, it really is true, most everything that comes out of my mom’s kitchen is unbelievable, her sweet rolls, her dinner rolls, are amazing. And, her pie crusts are just absolutely melt in your mouth. Then her fried chicken, uhhn, mmmmm, man, I can’t wait. That’s just the tip of the iceberg. The list can go on and on and on.

But, when I think of that phrase, “as good as mom’s”, it’s not just the food and all those wonderful treats that flow out of her kitchen that make me think that. I really had to grow up and have kids of my own before I truly appreciated some of the other parts of that. Well, I was around when Laura was pregnant and just seeing all of the trials and the toils that go with pregnancy and then labor and delivery, I can only imagine and I’m glad I only get to imagine. That is just the tip of the iceberg because then it’s the middle of the night feedings and sure I can go get the

kids and bring them in, but Mom is kind of the biggest part of that. It doesn't stop there, I think of all of the sleepless nights or interrupted nights when I should have known better, that I inflicted on my mother in adolescence and how amazingly ungrateful I was that somehow this pile of dirty laundry in the middle of my room miraculously cleaned itself and put itself away back in my drawers, or that the refrigerator was always full or that when I showed up at mealtimes there was food on the table. Amazing! So, thank you to all of you who are moms. I know those are all stereotype ideas of what mom's do but it generally, for the most part, I know that Dad's, we have a part in that, but mom's definitely take the lion's share and so I thank you all, on behalf of one converted ingrate.

As it turns out, quite a few of you are moms. The last census (of course the numbers from the newest one are not out yet), 71% of the women over 15 years of age are moms. That is a bunch. Then, on average, have 2.7 children (I'm not sure about that 0.7 child, but....) and Mother's Day, as we celebrate it today, actually started with a woman named Anna Jarvis. She was never a mother herself but spent most of her adult life taking care of her mom. She was a good Methodist and had a concern for her mother's peers, who she saw, that weren't being taken care of by their children, or just didn't have care in general. She wanted to raise the awareness and so she had this idea of a day that would remind people of all that their mother's have done and the duty that we owe to care for them. Well, her church celebrated the first Mother's Day in 1905 and at the next general conference, at that time it was the Methodist Episcopal Church, took up the cause and instituted a Mother's Day within the Methodist Church. Through their petition and work then that Anna Jarvis had started, Congress had a declaration and it was signed into law by Woodrow Wilson in 1914. Just a little history on Mother's Day.

I'm going to change gear for a second, but I will come back to that, I promise. Because today's scripture passage has some really great stuff in it. It often falls in this time of somewhere between Pentecost and Easter. It's kind of a precursor or a promise or a taste of things to come with the day of Pentecost. The disciples are locked up in the Upper Room and it says "for fear of the Jews." Though, I imagine there were more than a few long, guilty silences in the tension in that room, for fresh in their minds and the minds of the disciples would be the fact that Peter had denied Christ and the others had deserted him. So, they are locked up in this room in their fear and in their guilt.

Into the midst of that Jesus shows up miraculously. Though he has a physical body, things like locked doors are not an issue for him any more and he says “Peace be with you.” I suspect that is not what the disciples expected to hear. They might have expected condemnation they might have expected that accusing glance from Jesus’ eye, but what they received was peace. “Peace be with you.”

Although that was the normal greeting of that day and age, I think we need to read more into it than just a normal greeting. Jesus repeats it twice to give emphasis that alone should tell us something. But, considering all that had just happened and that Jesus now shows up in their midst, peace be with you, because I am alive. Peace be with you, do not fear the Jews, because I have overcome death. Peace be with you. Peace be with you because I am alive, you do not stand condemned. Because I am alive you need not fear the grave. Peace be with you. That’s good news!

Then he gives them this most incredible charge. He says, “As the father has sent me, I am sending you. Well, glad the job description is not big. Jesus, who walked on water, who raised the dead, who healed the blind, who made the lame to walk and the blind to see, as I was sent by the Father so now I send you. Teaching and preaching and healing and serving and loving. As I was sent, now I am sending you. Yikes!

When in the gospels Jesus is talking to the disciples, just a clue, it basically always means that this is instructions and words for the church. The disciples represent the believers as a whole. So this is basically the charter or the charge that Jesus has given to the church. As I was sent by the Father, so now I send you. Gosh, I think holy smokes, where do you even start with that. But, as I stop and think about that carefully, you know, it’s not the miracles that I find so daunting; although I don’t think I am ever going to walk on water or raise the dead, let alone heal the blind or the lame or the sick, it’s not even his teaching. I say that because if it’s just a matter of serving those in need and teaching people what Jesus said, you know, I think I could manage that; but Jesus said as I was sent by the Father so I am sending you and what I see that is so daunting is the heart and the mind of Christ.

Let me give you some examples. Imagine the scene, Jesus is at the height of his popularity, his ministry is really at its crescendo. It’s kind of day and night of people pushing in upon Jesus and the disciples, looking for a word of

encouragement, looking for healing, looking for Christ. The disciples and Jesus have been at it day and night, day and night, for weeks on end. They are out in that area of Galilee teaching and healing. The disciples are absolutely exhausted and Jesus sees this and he says “Let’s go over to the other side of the lake to get a break.” Of course, we know what happens, don’t we. The crowds see where they are going and it’s like they think, “Well probably they are going to end up at...” And they run around the lake and meet Jesus, before he even gets there they are waiting on the shore. I can imagine the disciples, “Jesus, get rid of them, send them away, or let’s turn the boat around and find some other spot, anything but more crowds. But Jesus looks upon those crowds and he has compassion. He says “They are like sheep without a shepherd.” They pull up to shore and they start healing and teaching and feeding and they continue giving even in their state of being so tired and being so worn out. I think wow! That’s where it gets tough.

Another example, Jesus heals the ten lepers. In Jesus day and age Leprosy was a horrible disease but it wasn’t just the disease that was so difficult with the leprosy, but because of that disease, individuals were ostracized from society. They could have no contact with other people. It was practically a death sentence. They were left on the very margins, the very edge of society until they died. Jesus heals these ten men from this terrible disease and that terrible alienation and one, only one comes back to say thank you. Where were the other nine?

It sounds a lot like a mom to me. At least I think in our mother’s that kind of selfless care that we often receive from our moms, at least in that ideal picture, we see something of the heart and mind of Christ. I’m amazed that Jesus gives us this command “As I was sent by the Father so now I send you” and then he seals the deal when on the cross, looking down upon the very people who put him there, he says “Father forgive them for they know not what they do” and then he dies, to bring salvation to the world, including those very people who had put him there. Wow! “As I was sent by the Father, so now I am sending you.”

Well, my mom did pretty well. I think of the encouragement that she gave when I was dejected and at some of my lowest points, the firm hand she had on those occasions when I was wayward, how she celebrated with me and my accomplishments, how she pushed me to be more than I thought I could be and that work of faith and that labor of love that mother’s toil in and kind of that hope that is driven by the possibility that their children could be, will be, will live to their full potential. So I think we see in that ideal picture of motherhood, something of

what it means when Christ says “As I have been sent by the Father so now I send you.” Well, the miracles and the teaching are one thing, but what I really pray for is that I might have a heart like moms, a heart like Christ, when I look upon those people that God puts in my path, that somehow and in some way I might reflect that kind of selfless love and service to those around me, starting in my own home and my own church and my community and even as much as it lies with my ability, to the ends of the world. Just like moms.

Would you pray with me? Lord, we thank you for that amazing, selfless love that you pour out upon us. Lord, help us to have something of your heart and mind that we might respond to those around us likewise. It’s not an easy job, though, indeed breathe upon us your Holy Spirit, fill us with your love and presence that we might be your hands and your voice, in Christ’s name we pray, Amen.