

Thank God for Mothers!

Sermon by: Pastor John Anderson
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The highest calling and the greatest privilege on earth is that of motherhood. There is truth in the adage, "The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world." A mother's influence for good, through training, discipline and prayer cannot be measured.

A mother's prayers were behind the successes of Moses, Samuel, Daniel, Timothy and other Bible heroes. Without question the prayers of Mary ascended in behalf of her miracle Child, Jesus. I know that my mother's prayers arose often for me. I agree with the statement attributed to President Abraham Lincoln, "All I owe to the prayers of my mother."

The history of honoring mothers reads something like this. In many ancient cultures, honor was given to mothers on specific days. In England for example, there was a holiday called "Mothering Sunday." In America, according to the website "mothers-day," the giving of honor to mothers was begun about 150 years ago when Anna Jarvis, a homemaker who lived in Appalachia, organized a day of awareness for those experiencing poor health conditions, a day which she believed would be best advocated by mothers. It was called, "Mother's Work Day."

Later, Julia Ward Howe, best known as author of the lyrics of "Battle Hymn of the Republic," organized a day encouraging mothers to rally for peace. In 1905, when Anna Jarvis died, her daughter, who was also named Anna, began a more formalized campaign for a Mother's Day. She began to persuade prominent businessmen and politicians, such as presidents Taft and Theodore Roosevelt, to support her efforts to set aside a special day to honor mothers. In her church in West Virginia in 1908, at one of the first services to honor her mother, Anna handed out her mother's favorite flower, the white carnation.

Five years later, the House of Representatives adopted a resolution calling for employees of the federal government to wear white carnations on Mother's Day. In 1914 all of Anna's hard work paid off when President Woodrow Wilson signed a bill establishing Mother's Day. It is reported that now on Mother's Day, the telephone lines receive more traffic, and more people dine out than on any other day. Today we wish God's blessings on all mothers, recognizing that their job requires the wisdom of Solomon, the courage of Moses and the faithfulness of Daniel, but has the capacity for rich reward as they seek to bend young minds in heaven's direction.

Just after sin entered the picture and our first parents heard the solemn pronouncements of judgment as a result of their transgression, Adam, rather than bemoaning the tragedy, did something. Here's a question: what was the

name of Adam's wife, up to this point? I know we speak of "Eve" at the tree of knowledge of good and evil, but was her name at that point in time? No, she had been called, "woman." "Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. And Adam said: 'This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man.'" Genesis 2:22, 23.

Adam, after naming all the animals and having been anesthetized for the removal of a rib for the creation of his wife, gave her a name at that time. Adam named her "woman." But when sin entered, through the deception of the serpent, through the woman offering the fruit to Adam, God declared to them their sad fate, "in the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return." Genesis 3:19. In face of the learning that the grave was their destination, it is interesting to note that Adam did something. The next verse of the narrative reads, "And Adam called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living." Genesis 3:20. He had already given her the name "woman;" he now gave her the name "Eve," the mother of all the living.

What's the message here? With the prospect of death looming large, and noting that transgression had taken place through the agency of the woman, Adam might have named her, "mother of sin," the "mother of the dead," or the "mother of the lost." Instead, clinging to the promise of hope embedded in the Lord's conversation, he chose to name her "Eve," which is translated the "mother of all living."

Eve is the mother of us all. In a literal, physiological way, each of us traces our roots back to her. We bear her likeness genetically, for she, as given and sustained by God, is the source of the life that we enjoy today. In one feature or another, to one degree or another, we all share her characteristics. One day, by God's grace, we'll have a chance to meet Eve. You can have fun in attempting to discover how many links there are between you and her; how many "greats" there have to be before "grandmother" to describe your relationship to her. By the way: there will be no accusations, no recriminations in heaven when you meet her; only boundless gratitude for God's great mercy and love.

Mother's love is used in the Bible as an illustration of God's love. I hope that you have or had a mother who accurately portrayed godly love toward you. I know that I did. I am humbled when I think back of the sacrifice, the devotion, the faithfulness and aspirations that my mother exhibited toward me. Not always, I'm sorry to say, were they appreciated. Many were given with no trumpets sounding. I can think back on the homemade whole wheat bread that was made into the sandwiches in my lunch, the humble but adequate home in which I was brought up, in square footage smaller than my garage. I can recall the sturdy dresses she made for herself, foregoing most store bought clothing, in order to save money for her children to go to church school.

My mother was not "perfect," but she did her best to reflect godliness and affection. She's laid to rest now, and I confidently look forward to the great resurrection when by God's grace she will stand in her lot. Not all mothers live up to the ideal. Some are downright poor examples of God's love. We read, "Zion said, 'The LORD has forsaken me, and my Lord has forgotten me.' Can a woman forget her nursing child, and not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, yet I will not forget you. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands. Your walls are continually before me." Isaiah 49:14-16.

We see a picture of mother's love in the statement made by Jesus, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!" Matthew 23:37.

God enjoins the protection and honor of motherhood. Written into the heart of the Ten Commandments, God's rules for Christian living, first among those which govern our relations with mankind, is a precept dedicated to the appreciation of parenthood. "Honor your father and your mother," God wrote with His own finger in stone, "that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you." Exodus 20:12. Today on this Sabbath, we especially give attention to the fourth (the Sabbath) and fifth commandments.

In giving honor to our mothers, we follow in the footsteps of our Lord, Who came to teach us how to live. In all things which did not conflict with His duty to His Father, he lived in compliance to His parents. We read, following His boyhood trip to the temple, "Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was *subject* to them." Luke 2:51. That word, *hypotasso*, in Greek, means to be in "obedience to, to be subordinate to." It is used of subjects being subordinate to rulers, devils being subject to the power of God, of the creation being subject to Adam in the beginning. Using this same word, James counsels us to "*submit* yourselves to God." James 4:7. Peter writes, "*submit* yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to king as supreme, or to governors." I Peter 2:13. He continues, "Younger people, *submit* yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be *submissive* to one another, and be clothed with humility." I Peter 5:5.

Jesus, as our Example, was submissive to His earthly parents. "Though He was a Son (of God), He learned obedience by the things which He suffered." Hebrews 5:8. It is amazing that He, Who gave life to all, including Mary, by the ordinance of God received life from her. He Who rules the universe was subject to His earthly mother. Jesus honored His mother as He began His ministry, His first miracle coming by her request as He changed the water into wine in Cana of Galilee. Jesus honored His mother at the close of His ministry, bequeathing her care into the hands of His disciple John. Question: did He know then that John would be the last surviving disciple?

It is fitting and appropriate; it is a part of the Christian walk that we honor and appreciate our mothers. This story is told: "A little boy came up to his mother in the kitchen one evening while she was fixing supper, and handed her a piece of paper that he had been writing on. After his mom dried her hands on an apron, she read it, and this is what it said:

For cutting the grass: **\$5.00** For cleaning up my room this week: **\$1.00**
For going to the store for you: **\$.50** Baby-sitting my kid brother while you went shopping: **\$.25** Taking out the garbage: **\$1.00** For getting a good report card: **\$5.00** For cleaning up and raking the yard: **\$2.00** Total owed: **\$14.75**

Well, his mother looked at him standing there, and the boy could see the memories flashing through her mind. She picked up the pen, turned over the paper he'd written on, and this is what she wrote:

For the nine months I carried you while you were growing inside me: No Charge

For all the nights that I've sat up with you, doctored and prayed for you:
No Charge

For all the trying times, and all the tears that you've caused through the years:

No Charge For all the nights that were filled with dread, and for the worries I knew were ahead: No Charge

For the toys, food, clothes, and even wiping your nose:
No Charge

Son, when you add it up, the cost of my love is: No Charge. When the boy finished reading what his mother had written, there were big tears in his eyes, and he looked straight at his mother and said, 'Mom, I sure do love you. And then he took the pen and in great big letters he wrote: **'PAID IN FULL.'**"

We honor and express appreciation for our mothers, and are reminded that they are but a reflection of the divine love which brought life and redemption to us. Gifts we could never pay for; love we can never measure. We thank God for our mothers and remember also that "Jerusalem above, which is free, is the mother of us all." Galatians 4:26.