

A MOTHER'S LOVE

Pastor Eddie Ildefonso

Matthew 20:20-23

This Sunday is Mother's Day! It is the third largest church attendance Sunday.

Mothers are teachers.

Mothers are disciplinarians.

Mothers are cleaning ladies.

Some mothers are gardeners and mowers of lawns.

And most mothers understand that baking cookies is more important than washing windows, too.

Mothers are nurses and doctors and psychologists and counselors and chauffeurs and coaches.

Mothers are 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 of these things and much, much more.



One of my favorite columns by Erma Bombeck tells of God in the act of creating mothers.

She says that 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 and 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 and 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 and communicate love and 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 and 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 - and who can persuade a nine year old to take a shower.

Then the **angel** looked at the model of motherhood a little more closely and 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 and compromise and persuade."

Then the **angel** reached over and touched her cheek.

"This model 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 all this in mind we can better understand Mrs. Zebedee, the mother of James and John. Turn with me to [Matthew 20:20-23](#), and please listen as I read.

20 "Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping *him*, and desiring a certain thing of him.

21 And he said unto her, **What wilt thou?** She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom.

22 But Jesus answered and said, **Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?** They say unto him, We are able.

23 And he saith unto them, **Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father."**

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

So she was certain that when the Lord formed His kingdom that they would have positions of responsibility and authority.

But in the first part of this same chapter, [Matthew 20:1-16](#) 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 and started working.

Then at noon he went out and found some more, and they started working.

Then towards evening he went out and found some more and they started working.

Yet, when the Lord paid them off at the end of the day they all received the same wage.

It must have caused Mrs. Zebedee to wonder, **"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 and made this request, **"When you establish your kingdom, I would request seats on your right and left hand for my two sons."**

We might very well criticize Mrs. Zebedee for her presumptuousness. 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 and then 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 THE 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, but extremely difficult.

ILLUSTRATION: James Dobson tells about a time he came home when his son, Ryan, was a small baby. It had been a terrible day for his wife. Ryan had been sick, and had cried all day long.

Once, as she was changing his diapers, the telephone rang and Shirley reached over to answer it before fastening up his diapers. Just then Ryan had an attack of diarrhea.

She cleaned up that mess and put him in clean, sweet-smelling clothes. Then she took him into the living room and fed him. As she was burping him he threw up all over himself, and her, and the couch, too.

Dobson writes, "When I came home I could smell the aroma of motherhood everywhere." Shirley cried out to him, "Was all of this in my contract?"

Sometimes mothers pray just out of the frustration of it all. And sometimes in the frustration of trying to teach our children we realize the difficulties of communication.

ILLUSTRATION: A friend of mine remembers very clearly the time he gave his two-year-old son, his very first responsibility. He told his son to watch his baby sister, while he stepped out of the room. He had only been gone a few moments when he heard a thump, and then the girl started crying.

He rushed back in to find that the girl had fallen from the couch and was stretched out on the floor. Meanwhile, his son sat there, looking so innocent.

My friend said, "I told you to watch her." Steve answered, "**I did.**" **He watched her fall and he watched her cry. He did exactly what he was told to do.**

Being a parent is not easy. Sometimes it is filled with joy and 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.

What good is it if our children are successful in making money, and driving fine automobiles, and living in good neighborhoods, but they don't know God?

What does it matter if they gain the whole world, but lose their souls? [Matthew 16:26](#)

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.

SUMMARY: We need that same concern for our children. I hope that in the heart of every mother & father here this morning there is a burden to go to the throne of God and to pray for your children - to pray that they will be saved, saved from eternal damnation, and saved for eternal life. That is the place to begin.

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

Secondly, 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.

Maybe it is not enough just to be saved. Churches are full of people content to just fill a pew on Sunday mornings. There are plenty of people willing to sit back and 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 and fathers setting the example and praying that their sons and daughters might be involved in the work of the kingdom - as teachers and leaders, discipling others - that they might be the ones to go out into the world and find the lost - to see that the church continues on until Jesus comes again.

SUMMARY: 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

Thirdly, **Mrs. Zebedee** had big expectations, and I like that. She didn't just pray that her children would be doorkeepers. She wanted them on the right hand and left hand of Jesus.

When you're working in a kingdom, there are no higher positions than those on the right and left of the King himself, and that's what she wanted for her sons.

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

It is time for some of us to take our positions on the right and left hand, to become leaders - molding and fashioning the outreach of the church - mobilizing to make sure the message of Christ goes into all of the world.

It is time to strive for excellence - to reach for the very best there is. The Lord calls us to be His disciples, and to be effective laborers in His kingdom.

ILLUSTRATION: 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 very special - because we recognize that mother's love is probably the closest example we have to God's love. It is a love that goes through the valley of the shadow of death to bring life into being. It is a love that sacrifices itself over and over again and would even dare to lay down its life for its own offspring.

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

Solomon Rosenberg and his wife and their 2 sons and his mother and father were arrested and placed in a Nazi concentration camp. It was a labor camp, and 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 and father marched off to their deaths, and 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 and searched for the faces of his family. When he found them they would huddle together, embrace one another, and thank God for another day of life.

One day Rosenberg came back and didn't see those familiar faces. He finally discovered his oldest son, Joshua, in a corner, huddled, weeping, and praying. He said, "Josh, tell me it's not true." Joshua turned and 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 and he cried. Momma said, 'There is nothing to be afraid of, David,' and she took his hand and went with him."

CONCLUSION: That is motherhood. Mothers, this is your day. 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 of decision.

I pray that if you have felt that you have had to walk through that valley alone so many times, that you will recognize that there is a hand reaching out to you, saying, "There is nothing to be afraid of. I'll go with you."

And I pray that you will recognize that that one has already gone through the valley of the shadow for you, and made it possible for you to live forever.

He extends His loving invitation in much the same way that a mother opens the doors of her home and invites her children to come back again, He invites you, too. I pray that you will come as we stand and sing together.