

## **Don't Let Your Heart's Be Troubled**

*(Preached at Footscray Baptist Church on May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020 by Cheryl Williams- 1 Peter 2:2-10 & John 14:1-14)*

Mother's Day – a day usually hijacked by commercial interests but maybe not so much this year. A day that was first suggested 150 years ago in USA as a day of peace, as a protest to war and to young men unlearning everything their mothers had taught them. It's origins then, are in a couple of religious women seeking to respond to what was happening around them and advocating peace and love. In other countries in the Northern Hemisphere, there is a similar celebration part way through Lent, called Mothering Sunday.

A wonderful day for some, who celebrate their mothers and all they have done for them. For others a difficult day as they think about mothers no longer with them, mothers from whom they are estranged or separated by distance, for those who have lost their children and those who never had the opportunity to have children.

As I think about God, who is both mother and father and more, I am reminded of the many examples in Scripture of mothers who do extraordinary things and also of the way in which God 'mothers' us.

Moses' mother had the courage to give him up so that he might live. The Canaanite woman subjected herself to insults, to being both ignored and rejected, just so her daughter might be cured. Hannah who gives up Samuel to be trained at the temple. Mary the mother of Jesus who is with him from the cradle to the grave. There are many more examples you could find and name.

And then the images – Jesus wants to gather the people like a hen gathers her chicks. Hosea speaks of God's love as love with cords of human kindness and bands of love.

These stories and images are of courage, of hope, of nurture, of protection, of putting others before self. Above all the thing they all have in common, is love – sometimes tough love, other times gentle love.

Mothering I think is not so much about biology and gender, rather it is about bringing to birth something new and then nurturing and protecting it, giving it the freedom to grow and develop. As such, that is beyond gender, and is a task for each of us and for the church.

With these images and stories and the day itself in mind, I read our passage from John in a new way.

In my Father's house are many rooms – this passage, usually read at funerals, is one that gives the grieving some comfort and assurance. My friend's mother, Pat, used to look at this passage and say – but who is going to clean all those rooms! We joked yesterday that there just seem to be more and more rooms being added everyday.

When I looked at his passage with different eyes, I found Jesus mothering his disciples. Jesus is preparing them for when he is no longer with them and is concerned for them in that situation.

Let me share with you what I saw.

- Don't be troubled – like a nurturing mother Jesus wraps his arms around them and says it will be okay.
- I go to prepare a place for you – like a nurturing mother Jesus says my hospitality knows no bounds, there is a place of shelter, of rest and of comfort for you and for all.
- I will come again and take you to myself, where I am you can also be – like a nurturing mother I will not abandon you, even if it feels like I am, I will come back for you and you can be with me, with me in a place that is safe.
- I am the way – like a nurturing mother all you need do is look at me, follow me, I will guide you through it all, through the tough times and in the times of joy, just look to me and follow, follow my example, follow all the wisdom I shared with you – that will be the way.
- If you can't take my word for it, then look at my actions, believe because of what I do – like an exasperated nurturing mother – if my words are not enough, then just look to my example, look at what I did, how I treated others, how I stood up for others, look at my actions and you will see a little of God.
- Honestly, truly, you will also do the works that I do – like a nurturing mother I have taught you, showed you how to do things, helped you see the way you should treat others, you are my child and as my child you follow me and have a little bit of me within, therefore you will do some of the same things I have done, I have left you an example, walk in my footsteps for a bit.
- Finally, If you ask me for anything, I will do it – like a nurturing mother I cannot refuse you, I want you to have all you need for abundant life, so if you ask I will do as you ask. Remember though, that I showed you, that in the asking you may be surprised by the answers. Remember also that I wanted you to ask on behalf of others so that they might also have life in abundance.

Our reading from Peter also has a mothering sense to it. Like newborns who need milk to grow, so do the believers, they have seen God and now need to allow God to help them grow into being all God has called them to be – the people of God.

Today, let us hear the nurturing voice of God, the voice of God calling us to grow from infancy to adulthood. Hear the voice of Jesus calling us to grow and to follow in his footsteps. Respond to the Spirit who continues to nurture us and is the love that binds us all together.

So, on this Mother's Day, let us celebrate our God who is both mother and father. Let us celebrate those who stirred into flame the gift of faith in our lives, in the life of the church and in society. Let us celebrate those who are our ancestors in the faith – celebrate their courage, their hope and their love. Let us celebrate the women of faith

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who lived it out and changed society down through the ages. Let us celebrate the mothers in our family of origin. Let us celebrate those women who said yes to God, who took risks for God, who with God carved out a vision of a new heaven and new earth for us all. And may we have the courage to follow in their footsteps. Amen.