

Sermon May 8, 2016 - Easter 7 – Mother's Day

Seeds a Mother Plants

2 Timothy 1:1-7



Dear Friends in Christ

Once again, Happy Mother's Day to all Moms here gathered today. It is an honor to congratulate on your special day, and as we honor you we do give thanks to God for His gift of mothers. In the Scriptures we read that motherhood is a special vocation as we are given a record of mothers and grandmothers who played an important role in the lives of their children, their families and Church, and our epistle reading for today gives an example of that, and which is the basis for our meditation this morning.

Now, today, when you celebrate Mother's day, what is that special thing in your mother that evokes joy and thanks giving in your heart?

For some will be memories that time, distance, and even death itself cannot erase, evoking emotions that brings warmth and joy. When we think of Mother, images rush to fill our mental screen: rocking-chair laps, storybook mornings, cookies fresh out of the oven. We recall how she doted over us when we were sick, serving special soups and teas, and pampering us with freshly washed sheets, smelling of sunshine. Of course, not all childhood memories are pleasant. But of those that are, many probably revolve around a woman who had a way of softening the sharp corners of life—a woman who was many things to many people, but to you she was she is "Mom" shedding so many seeds that will later flourish in her children and even grandchildren.

Those are good seed indeed but the Scriptures, God's word, tell us that there other seeds that of greater importance that you would want to consider and plant them in your children or grandchildren as the primary bases of their entirely lives, and 2 Timothy helps us to see what those seeds are, as we explore a little bit about two other women, Timothy's mother Eunice and Grandmother Lois.

I. An Example in 2 Timothy

The letter of second Timothy was written by Paul at the end of his life. At this point in his life he was in prison, shackled in a dark, stone-cold prison for the sake of the Gospel. Now, imagine what would that be like, a stuffy and repugnant prison cell, with fetid odors, stinking with the ominous scent of his impending death. Yet, it is in that cell that Paul writes his letter, and a warm and personal letter as we see in the opening verses: "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God according to the promise of the life that is in Christ Jesus, ²To Timothy, my beloved child: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. ³I thank God whom I serve, as did my ancestors, with a clear conscience, as I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day." (1:1-3)

Timothy was the son of a Jewish woman and of a Greek man who probably was not a believer. (Acts 16:1) But as Paul nurtured and disciplined him in the faith Timothy become his spiritual son, his "beloved child" (v.2) in the faith. So special was this "child"

to Paul that that even in his last days, he remembered Timothy in his prayers *night and day* (v. 3).

II. Seeds Planted by Timothy's Mother

But what made him so special are really the seeds that were planted in him, seeds that mothers today can also plant in their children. And as we give thanks to God for mothers, we meditate on 5 qualities or seeds that we see in this epistle reading.

The First one is a transparent tenderness.

One quality or seed in Timothy that Paul recalls as he's writing is the young man's tenderness: in verse 4 we read: "As I remember your tears, I long to see you that I may be filled with joy." (1:4)

Timothy was not afraid to show emotion, and apparently such emotion as made an indelible imprint on Paul's memory. Tenderness like this is cultivated by example rather than by command. And, most often, due to cultural influences, it is the example of the mother, as opposed to the father, that produces tenderness in a child.

Our culture is constantly sending the message that *big boys don't cry*; they are to *be tough, not tender*. The mistake our culture makes is seeing toughness and tenderness as mutually exclusive qualities, women cry but men don't. Yet in the Scripture we see various examples of tough men who showed emotions, Jesus himself did, he displayed moments of great tenderness, he wept over the death of his friend Lazarus (John 11:35) and over the unrepentant city of Jerusalem (Luke 19:41). How often do your children see you being vulnerable and tender? If they don't see those qualities in you, where will they learn them?

Authentic Christianity.

A second seed that Timothy's mother planted in him was genuine faith, Paul writes: "I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well." (2 Tim. 1:5)

The word *sincere* is from the Greek word *anupokritos*, meaning "unhypocritical" which tells us that his faith had an authentic quality to it—a quality that was first modeled for him by his grandmother and then by his mother. In chapter 3 of the same book, Paul reminds Timothy that he is surrounded by fakes, impostors, and charlatans. This is what he says: "... evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived." (v. 13)

But Paul goes on to exhort the young Timothy to continue in the faith which he learned in his childhood: "But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it ¹⁵ and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus." (vs. 14-15)

In our fast-food, hurry-up world, we try to produce authentic faith overnight through weekend retreats and seminars. But the type of genuine faith Timothy had did not spring up overnight. It was cultivated over the years—and it was at home.

What are you cultivating in your home—authentic faith or artificial fruit? Fake fruit may be pleasing to the eye, but it lacks the taste and nourishment of real fruit, and also lacks the seeds necessary to reproduce itself. Artificial fruit may be produced overnight, but authentic faith is home-grown over a lifetime.

Inner confidence.

The third seed relates to Timothy's self-esteem: "For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, ⁷ for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control." (1:6-7)

Paul reminds a probably, somewhat intimidated Timothy, about two very important things. First, that the gift he has is "of God" and second that God has given him "a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control."

Paul exhorts Timothy to fan those possible neglected gift, God given gifts. It is clear that Timothy's spiritual gift came through Paul's ministry (v. 6), but the power, love, and self-control that were sourced in God were for sure, transmitted through Timothy's roots through the teaching him the scriptures, as Paul writes: "... and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus." (2 Tim. 3:15).

Are you equipping your children with strengths they can draw on in times of weakness, from the Scriptures, do you read God's word together as a family?

Demonstrative love.

The next seed a mother plants in her children is demonstrative love.

Hear again what the Word tells us: "for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control." (2 Tim. 1:7)

The word love in this verse is the word *agape* in the original language and carries with it the idea of unselfishness. There is in this word the demonstrative sense of reaching out and doing something for the highest good of another. And where is that type of loved learned? Where does the child see *agape* love in the flesh? In a mother who, without complaint, gets up at all hours of the night to attend to a sick child... in a mother who tirelessly bakes and cleans and sews so another may be fed and refreshed and clothed... in a mother who goes the extra mile past boredom to read for the hundredth time the child's favorite storybook with first-time enthusiasm. No one wears the fabric of selfless love quite as naturally, as purely, and as elegantly as a mother.

Self-control.

The last seed in this text is a spirit of *discipline* and *self-control*, which had been deposited in Timothy's life (2 Tim. 1:7). Self-control, the last of the fruit of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5:23, doesn't blossom in a child at maturity. It is not spontaneously generated. The seed must be planted early in life. Discipline must start young and be diligently and lovingly cultivated over the years if the child is ever to internalize that discipline and translate it into self-control.

A mother's heart is the workshop, the classroom, where the child learns the ABCs of life—where tenderness demonstrated and taught, where faith is cultivated, where confidence is read aloud, where love is played out, and where self-discipline stands as monitor. And this is why it is said that "one good mother is worth a hundred school masters."

Now, this is difficult to do, you may say. Yes it is a difficult thing to do! However, remember that the one who asks you to do this, is omnipotent and can do this things for you, when you give are in Christ. Remember that in Him, you are anew and that all things will work for your own good. Yes! This power was won by Christ, when He humbled himself to die on the cross of Calvary for us. But also remember that on the third day He arose from the death, bring to us all kinds of gifts, including, the gift of a good mother, including the gift of being a good mother, after all in Christ you are a new

creation, and in Christ you are given “us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.”

And remember that the Lord never leaves or abandons you, but in his promise he is with you, with us, in his Spirit, his word and the sacraments, there he emboldens us, especially you to plant those seeds in the heart of your children. And or if you have failed in doing so, remember that he forgives also our sins, yes even the sins of failure in planting those seeds in the heart of your children. But in his forgiveness he enables you to being to model and plant those seeds in the heart of those who look up to you, your grandchildren, your friend’s children and those who are need a mother heart to mother them.

Mother’s remember that the days in which we live today are not easy, and more we complicate them when we don’t deposit our faith solely on God. When we instead of trusting and serving our Lord and God, we do and serve our own false interests. If you have done so, today is the day, to bring all your weakness to God, all your failures, and receive His forgiveness, His tender love and care, offering you His spirit to guide you in becoming the Mother He wants you to be.

Maybe you have done your best, and planted all those good seeds, but your children, have given a different fruit, bring them to God, leave those wayward children in God’s hands, and I’m sure that He will console your hearts, and He through the power of the Holy Spirit will bring those children back to the ways you showed them, He is able to do just that. For He was able to raise His son Jesus from the dead, so He too will be able to bring them out of despair and into His marvelous light.

So Happy Mother’s Day and May God continue blessing you motherhood.
In His Name, amen.