



“WITH OPENED MINDS”
SERMON FOR FESTIVAL OF THE CHRISTIAN HOME
MOTHER’S DAY - ASCENSION SUNDAY
REV. BRADLEY L. DEHAVEN
ST. ANDREW’S UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS
SUNDAY, MAY 8, 2005

Luke 24:44-53

I shared with children a little earlier, that today is Mothers Day and you all probably know the history of Mothers Day, so I shan’t go into details there. It is a worthy day, a day most notable, a day that we ought set aside. Mothers Day is a special day for we honor and we recognize all that mothers and motherhood brings to life and to its fullness to joy and to happiness and we celebrate mothers and motherhood today.

But I also mentioned that today is the festival of the Christian home – another day in the Christian calendar. The festival of the Christian home is a day in which we celebrate the giving of the Holy Spirit and the centering of Christ within the family. That we take Christ from this place into our very homes and there Christ is the center of our homes and our lives. And out of that flows love and peace and goodwill.

The third day on the calendar today, it’s like we didn’t have enough to do, so we put it all on the calendar in one day. The third day that we recognize today is Ascension Sunday. This is the last Sunday in the season of Easter, the season that follows Easter itself. It is the day that tradition has given to the ascending of Jesus into Heaven and the promise of the coming Holy Spirit. That’s next Sunday. Pentecost is the birthday of the church where the Holy Spirit has been given to all those who believe. But today, today we receive the promise, the promise of the Holy Spirit. You all are looking at me like, yeh, so, what does that have to do with Mothers Day? What does that have to do with the festival of the Christian home? I believe it has everything to do with Mothers Day and everything to do with the festival of the Christian home, that the promise of the Holy Spirit to those who believe is the gift that gives life. It gives hope. It binds us together.

I’ve been doing this now since 1987. I’ve been in ministry in one shape or form since 1987. That’s eighteen years since I’ve been doing this. I know you all are thinking that I was just walking about that time when I started. But truth be known for eighteen years there are a lot of things that I have learned. In eighteen years of ministry I have come to be aware of the fact that I’m not as naïve as you all might think. I know that there are homes among us and homes that we know about that were not happy. That motherhood was not all that it was cracked up to be; that there were people who suffered; that there were children who were neglected; that there were illnesses and sicknesses; and that there were sufferings. There may even have been anger and hostility. There were addictions and there were absences. I’m not too naïve to think that, or maybe I am too naïve to think that everybody’s family is perfect and in reality after eighteen years of ministry I know better. But the hope of the Christian faith, the hope of the Gospel that we have been given is that the best that we can hope for and the best that we can strive toward is that there will not be anymore broken homes, troubled homes, sicknesses and diseases and illnesses. That homes will eventually become what God truly intends where motherhood and fatherhood are indeed blessings to those who are in those families.

The ascension that Jesus talks about that he performs in this Gospel of Luke - it begins with Jesus once again reminding the disciples. He starts out, “these are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you. Remember, remember that everything that was written about me in the Prophets and in the laws of Moses and the Psalms must be fulfilled” and then he describes what that

is supposed to be. He opened their minds to understand the scriptures. With open minds, have understanding. Jesus reminds us of that just before he ascends. And in the remembering of that, the community of believers is strengthened and we are encouraged and we find our hope and we find our peace.

I spent five days in Virginia last week at a conference sponsored by Alban Institute, which is under the auspices, I believe, of the Episcopal Church, but it is an ecumenical organization and what they try to do is help pastors to learn how to better pastor, to be better pastors. It was a wonderful experience back in Virginia. They got trees there, by the way. I don't know if you all knew that, I mean real trees, I mean trees that were, that are six, eight, ten hundred years old. I mean really old trees. But they also have people who understand. In the course of this workshop, I learned two things. I don't know whether I should share them or not. Oh why not! WIGIAT 'Where is God in all this.' That's a good question to ask. You are probably asking that right now, but where is God in all of this. The second one was SIUGOI. SIUGOI is a difficult one to explain. Both of these came from a pastoral care and counseling professor who was trying to give some advice to his students. WIGIAT is always to ask "where is God in all this" and SIUGOI is "suck it up and get over it." So just don't worry too much about it. But I learned more than that at this conference. I learned truly that even though we have been going on at this and that we have gotten into this shape in the church, where even the truths that we know and hold dear aren't really held dear anymore in the church or in the world. Over time we have gotten to the point where everything is relative and you have heard me say this time and time again, but it bears repeating. The truth of the matter is that over 500 years we have gotten to this point. It didn't happen over night. It wasn't something that just happened in the last twenty years or so. This has been building and building for a long time. But what keeps us faithful, what keeps us going in the midst of this is the promise that Jesus gave to us, the promise that he gave to us at his ascension and he reminded us of all the things that had to happen.

Now I want to go back and I want to set the scene for this Gospel section here because I think you need to hear it. You need to know what was going on. This is post resurrection in Luke. Jesus has been resurrected from the dead. Death no longer has a hold on him and the disciples are ecstatic because he's alive. Hot dog, he's alive, we're going to have the kingdom come now. It's going to be great. And Jesus in true *RONCO* fashion, you remember *RONCO* in those late night commercials, you know. He says, "but wait, there's more. I'm leaving you, but the promise is going to come true. I'm sending upon you what my Father promised – the Holy Spirit." Now the key verse in all of this passage is the verse that is right before that. It is verse 48. When Jesus has explained to them all that has happened, all the things that had to happen according to scripture, everything that was prophesied about in the Old Testament and lived out through his lifetime up until his death and his resurrection, everything that had to happen. Jesus turns to his disciples and he says these words – "you are my witness, you saw it happen and because you saw it happen you are different now. And when you receive the Holy Spirit you are going to know just exactly how different you are." But think for a moment what would have happened if those witnesses have kept it all to themselves, that the second generation never heard, that the third generation never was, the fourth, fifth and sixth generation on down through today never happened. Because being a witness means more than just seeing it. It means more than just watching it and absorbing it and being changed yourself. It means moving into the world with that witness and bearing that witness to other people to the next generation.

That's where moms come in, and dads too, that's where dads come in too. In truth that's where we celebrate the festival of the Christian home, because it's not just here in this place where we remember and then forget it once we walk out the doors – that's not where it happens. We remember it here and we are reminded of it and remind others of it there. For the church to remember that and to be the church in the world is what brings people to Christ and it's what enables

Christian homes to take root. It's what enables sicknesses to be removed. It is what enables addictions to go away. It is what enables people with HIV to believe in God. The festival of the Christian home is the home where Christ is at the center and where we remind each other. Children remind their parents and parents remind their children and spouses and sisters and brothers, aunts and uncles and neighbors. The festival of the Christian home is where we celebrate that Christ is actually in the center of our lives, not just in this building on Sunday mornings, but every day and in every way. Part of what it means to be a disciple in the world is to take what you hear and what you know to be true here and proclaim it and live it in the world, in the workplace. People will notice. People will notice and they are going to go "how did you get to be so religious," and they aren't going to mean it in a mean way. "I want what you've got, you seem to have your act together." Yeah, right! "No you really do. What's your secret?" The festival of the Christian home begins with Christ in the center and moves out in every direction, in every location and in every way in love. Jesus opens their minds to understand. My friends with an open mind, you have an open heart and with an open heart you have an open soul and with an open soul, Christ moves in.

We celebrate mothers today for all that motherhood is, the best that motherhood could offer. We love mothers, but we also know that we love Christ, because that's where that love came from. We love because he first loved us. That's what makes these disciples so excited. It's not about going back to Jerusalem because they have seen the ascension. It is because God's promises are true. God's promises are real. We have life together in community because we have been opened to understand scripture. We have been opened to understand the gift of the Spirit. That's true love, that's true love and my friends this is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God! Amen!