

Mother's Prayer **John 17:6-19**

Intro Mother's Day

Today is Mother's Day. In my previous church in Boston, when Mother's Day approached, the men's group were always busy. They normally prepared a nice full-course meal and served all the mothers and women with a fellowship lunch at the church. They gathered around 7 a.m., set the tables and decorated the fellowship hall like a nice restaurant. Then, they spent hours preparing the food. During lunch, they wore bow ties and served their wives like waiters. They finished off the lunch by cleaning all the dishes and bowls as the women enjoyed their coffee and dessert. Does this seem like a good plan for a Mother's Day luncheon at Asbury next year? I see that only women are nodding.

The same year, when Father's Day approached, the women's group did not seem as enthusiastic as the men's group had been, and we soon found out why. On Father's Day, the women's group gave all the men a bottle of energy drink with a nice ribbon on it. That was all!! But no one dared to complain about it because everyone knew their wives did a lot of work for their families.

Mother's Love

Some say, "Life began waking up and loving my mother's face." Through a mother and her love, we can glimpse God's unconditional and sacrificial love. Several years ago, a South Korean ferry sank while carrying 476 people. A security camera caught a woman holding a life-jacket. She didn't put it on even when the ship started to sink. Later, when she was asked by a reporter why she did not put on the life jacket, she replied that she was separated from her young son and didn't know whether or not her son had a life jacket on. So she just kept the life jacket for her son. Even in the middle of this life threatening situation, the mother first cared for her child.. Because of the sacrificial love of mothers, we are able to love our children.

George Bernard says, "being a mother means that your heart is no longer yours: it wanders wherever your children do." Your heart walks outside of your body. And these very children who grew up receiving their mother's love eventually become parents, passing this love forward to their own children. And their life continues. So thanks to all mothers for your love and dedication for your families and for our church family.

Jesus' prayer, a mother's prayer

The theme of Mother's Day is clear. Honor and love your mothers and give thanks to them. What else can I say? Ephesians 6:1-3 says,

"1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 "Honor your father and mother"—this is the first commandment with a promise: 3 "so that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth."(Ephesians 6:1-3)

Do you think this is a fitting text for a Mother's Day sermon? Yes. It is. But as I thought about this text, I felt that this biblical text was not appropriate for our church because this text was geared more toward your children or grandchildren to hear. So next year, please make sure that you bring your children and grandchildren to church for Mother's Day worship service.

Then, I can tell them “obey your parents in the Lord”. This is word of God for the people of God.

As I struggled to find today’s biblical text for preaching, I read John 17:6-19 and realized that Jesus’ prayer in this text is like a mother’s prayer for her beloved children. I have read this text many times before, but this was my first time reading it as a mother’s sincere prayer for her children.

Today’s scripture is a part of Jesus’ final prayer during the last supper. Before he was betrayed and crucified, “Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father.” (John 13:1) Having loved his disciples who were in the world, he loved them to the end. Jesus washed their feet, gave them a final teaching, and prayed to God for his disciples who would remain in the world after his departure.

Jesus prayed, “I’m praying for them, [disciples here]... I’m no longer in the world, but they are in the world, even as I’m coming to you. Holy Father, watch over them in your name, the name you gave me, that they will be one just as we are one.” (John 17:11-12) Jesus’ prayer sounds very much like a mother’s prayer... a mother who had to leave her beloved children behind. Do you remember when you first dropped off your children at college or another distance place? Do you remember when your children first left your house for college or for work? I know it must have been a very long-long time ago. But I’m sure you remember those moments. Don’t you? How was it? How did you feel?

In Korea, a family generally lives together until their children get married. So I lived with my parents even after I entered college. Departing for military service was my first time leaving my home for years. As my enlistment day approached, I didn’t want to waste a single minute of my free time. So I met my friends almost every day and hung out with them from sunrise to sundown. Even before my enlistment day, my friends came to my house and we spent the whole night, talking, eating and playing computer games. I didn’t really think about how my mother was feeling. My mother did not weep even on my enlistment day, so I just assumed that she was o.k. After I was discharged, was the first I heard that my mother had cried during every meal for the first several weeks I was gone. On the first day of my enlistment, my mother unconsciously put my tableware on the dinner table. At that moment she truly felt my absence and broke into tears. I never knew it and I never thought about it. But my mother prayed for me with tears until I came back to home. Children may not remember their mother’s prayers for them but it is a mother’s prayer that protects, nurtures and changes their children. Dennis Edwards, a musician, said, “I had a mother who prayed for me, and that prayer changed everything.”

What is Your Prayer for Your Children?

You may not feel the power of prayer. You may not feel that your words and prayers for your children and grandchildren work. But your prayers are never in vain.

A young woman who was a freshman at college visited a chaplain. She said, “I was a failure in my classes; I wasn’t having any dates; and I didn’t have as much money as the other students. I was so lonely and depressed and homesick and just not succeeding.

“One Sunday afternoon,” she said, “I went to the river near the campus. I had climbed up on the rail and was looking into the dark water below. For some reason or another I thought of the line, “Cast all your cares upon him for he cares for you.” (1 Peter 5:7) She said, “I stepped back, and here I am.”

The chaplain said, “Where did you learn that line?”

She said, "I don't know"

The chaplain asked, "Do you go to church?"

"No... Well, when I visited my grandmother in the summers we went to Sunday school and church."

The chaplain said, "Ah..."

You may not feel any instant and significant changes in your children or grandchildren, but the seed of the gospel you have planted in the hearts of your family is never in vain. Your sincere prayers with tears for your children and grandchildren will be surely answered.

So, what is your prayer for your children and grandchildren? If you could offer one last prayer for your children to God, what would you like to pray? What prayer do you want your children and grandchildren to remember?

Can Jesus' prayer for his disciples be our last prayer for our children? Jesus said, "Now I'm coming to you and I say these things while I'm in the world so that they can share my complete joy. I gave your word to them... I'm not asking that you take them out of this world but that you keep them safe from the evil one... Make them holy in the truth."

What legacy do you want to hand down to your children and family? I hope that you will have a wonderful dinner with your family today.. Before you have your meal, put your hands on your children and grandchildren and pray for them and bless them.

As our heavenly mother, the Holy Spirit, continues to pray for us, let us continue to offer our prayers, a mother's prayer and a father's prayer for our children. God will hear your sincere prayers and will answer your prayers for you. Amen.