

What makes mom change the dirty diaper for the 10th time that day? What brings mom to the softball practice field at 8:00 at night when she knows she's getting up early the next morning? What has mom crying at her son's graduation from high school? The country takes a day to celebrate moms, but I always figured that wasn't enough. Not for what a mom does. Not for the effort, the discipline, and the energy moms put out on a daily basis. There's really only one reason moms do it. Love.

Commercials for the last two weeks have all urged people not to forget Mother's Day today. Flowers, chocolate covered strawberries, and jewelry all were on the list of things mom deserves. If you forgot then I guess the message you send is I don't care. That's probably not true because you do care about mom. Did you get God flowers or strawberries today? You forgot. The sinful world always forgets because God doesn't matter to them. The world has a relationship with mom that's natural. No such natural relationship exists with God. There's no love.

Following last week's gospel where Jesus spoke about the vine and the branches we continue in John's gospel account. Without a relationship with Jesus as the vine the branches stand no chance of bearing fruit. Without some connection a person cannot do the things God desires and bear the fruit of good works. It's impossible. But Jesus continues to show us what really provides us the link as branches connected to the vine...

Love is what it's all about
Focus of our faith
Meaning of our life

Many of you met my parents when they've been here in the past, most recently two weeks ago. If you would ask my mom what kind of son I was she would undoubtedly say a great son. Well, I can't guarantee great, but I hope she remembers good things. Moms have a way of doing that, remembering the good things and forgetting the bad things. Moms love and love covers over many bad things. Jesus was his Father's only son and was without doubt the perfect son. No bad things to overlook. God could say over and over this was his son whom he loved and he was well pleased with him.

Jesus was here to do what his Father sent him to do. At the center of that mission was love. Love was what it was all about. **"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love."** The Father's love meant he sent his Son into the world. Love meant his son was the sacrifice. The Son loved the Father and more than that he loved you and me. The Father loved the one who was coming to carry out the mission; the Son loved those whom the mission was for. Through Jesus God loves us.

Loving your mom is probably simple. The one who cares for you and changed you when you were younger is easy to love. But she's also the one who disciplines you. She's the one who gets on you when you aren't polite or when you don't get your homework done. She's the one that even as an adult gives you words you need to hear even if you don't want to hear them. The command from Jesus is to love. **"My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you."** Sounds easy right? But once you think about it, it's really challenging. It's difficult because Jesus set the bar so high. I water down what love has to be like so I can achieve it. Love means only loving those who love me. Love means listening after the third time. It means being loved but not always working on being loving. That's not what God demands. When we show less than perfect love it's really lack of love towards God. It demonstrates weak faith or no faith at all.

What God wants takes more than we have. The solution isn't us. The solution is Jesus. **"Remain in my love. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love."** The command God the Father gave God the Son was to save the world from sin. Jesus loved the Father so it was also his will to go and do just that. He obeyed because love and obedience go together. Jesus loved the Father and obeyed him for us so we might be set free from sin. Every watering down we did of the command to love was cleared and made perfect in Christ. Jesus loved so we might believe in his love. Believing is faith and the focus of our faith is love, what it's all about.

Like gasoline powers an engine love powers our faith. Through the Means of Grace, the Word of God and the sacraments of Christ, we are empowered to love. Love means obedience. So we remain in Christ when we obey Christ. Living as a Christian is a loving thing not slavery. It's not painful or torture to live as Christ wants us to live. Rather it's joyful. Obedience will never bring failure because in Christ our obedience is made perfect. Jesus did not plan for us to fail. Joy flows naturally when we obey and done in love we realize our life has meaning.

Mothers everywhere just want their children to grow up to be successful, well mannered, loving adults. If they choose to get married, mothers hope they find a loving spouse. If God blesses the couple with children, mothers hope to have healthy grandchildren. But ultimately mothers want a child they can love who is happy. That gives a mother's life meaning. Jesus loved us deeper. It's the greatest of loves. **"Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends."** To lay down your life for friends says something. To lay down your life for people who aren't yet your friends, that says something even more. We weren't friends when Jesus laid down his life for us. His death caused him to call us friends.

We were born enemies of God. Being friends was completely out of the question. He wanted to destroy us. **“The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness.”** That’s not words towards someone who is obedient. That’s not a branch connected to the vine. It describes people who would rather take advantage of God’s good will and think he already calls us friends so we can do whatever. Then we can call on him and he’ll make it okay. Isn’t that what friends do? We’ve been surprised when this supposed friend doesn’t show up when we need him the most. We called but he didn’t listen. It’s God who is not the good friend.

Jesus changes the relationship. We’re not exactly made equal, but we’re not slaves with a master either. We’re not enemies anymore. Being God’s friend means we’re in the know. We have God’s affection, caring, and love. Our lives are changed. If we were down here God was up here, but being friends means he reaches down and brings us up. A friend of Jesus is one who believes in him for eternal life. We didn’t mutually agree to become friends. We didn’t agree to hang out and get to know each other. **“You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last.”** We are chosen with a purpose. Go out in the love of Christ and show others that love. Show them that love which provides meaning for life.

I pray you had a great relationship with your mother and that growing up she became someone you could go to again and again for solid advice and for comfort in rough times. You will never have another mom. The one who sacrificed for you is one who can’t be duplicated. Jesus can’t be duplicated either. Don’t duplicate him but copy his love, his self sacrificing love. Know the plan to save sinners and then apply that so others see it too. Be excited about what you hear from God. Talk about it. Mention devotions and sermons that touch you to friends. Love your church and show it during the week. Jesus made you a friend and changed your life. He’ll always be a friend who’s with you, a friend who completely knows and understands, and a friend who never fails to give the right advice through his Word. Eventually your friend will receive you into his heavenly home. And it’s all based on love. Love is the focus of your faith and love is what gives meaning to your life. Love is what it’s all about.