

Kuhn Memorial Presbyterian Church
Barboursville, West Virginia
May 10, 2020
Seventh Sunday of Easter
Mother's Day

Call to Worship

And Jesus said, "Come!"

To all mothers and children, he said, "Come!"

To the motherless and the childless, he said, "Come!"

To all who longed to be mothered, he said, "Come!"

"Come unto me all you who are heavy-laden,
and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you and learn from me,
for I am gentle and humble of heart
and you will find rest for your souls."

Prayer of the Day

Holy God,

We come together this day celebrating the role that mothers have played in our lives. We thank you for both the present love and the memories of our mothers, grandmothers, aunts, sisters, and all those who have been like mothers to us. Keep us mindful of those for whom this day brings grief. May we be prompt to extend Christian fellowship to any who are hurting or are in need. We pray, strengthened by the example of Jesus, who honored his mother, Mary, from the cross. Amen.

Special Music

Scripture Philippians 1:1-11

Here we have one of Paul's letters. His letters, or epistles, play a significant role in how we understand the Christian faith. His letters inform our theology and doctrine.

For many people, Philippians is the loveliest letter Paul wrote. It has been known by two titles: *The Epistle of Excellent Things* and *The Epistle of Joy*. We will hear in this letter Paul speaking of the need to rejoice at all times and in all circumstances. The world can turn ugly. Life is unpredictable. We all experience loss, frustration, brokenness. Paul tells his friends to direct their hearts toward joy-to the joy that no one can take from us.

At the time of this writing, Paul is in prison in Rome. He has a short list of purposes for his letter:

It is a letter of thanks. Paul was persecuted in Philippi and unjustly imprisoned. Behind him he left a community of faith. He says he thanks God every time he thinks of them. Their faith is growing stronger, even while Paul is in prison for his faith. They have become his companions in Christ, sharing in the gift of grace and witnessing to the gospel.

A second purpose for this letter is to explain why Epaphroditus was returning to Philippi. Epaphroditus had been sent by the Philippians to Paul as his personal servant. But Epaphroditus grows sick and must return home. Paul instructs the church to treat him with welcome and mercy. Not to shame him.

Another purpose is to encourage the Philippians in his absence, as they, too, endure persecution. In spite of the trials they all face, Paul is fully confident about their future, declaring that “he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”

The final purpose of this letter is an appeal for unity. Later in the Epistle, Paul addresses the selfless humanity of Jesus (2:1-11). He exhorts the church to model the life of Jesus. All they do in thought, word, and deed, should point to the life of Jesus Christ. Arguments among the church members had erupted and according to Paul, there were false teachers in their midst who were trying to coax them away from the true path, the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In this age of electronic devices, we are in contact with people all the time. It is the way we communicate now and usually our technology keeps us informed and connected. But when our courage fails, when our bodies or spirits are troubled, when someone we love asks for our wisdom and help, a personal note, card, or letter is invaluable. Maybe you have a collection of such things, personal messages with which we cannot part. I know I do.

Maybe some of those messages are from our mothers or fathers, or the one who was like a parent to us. Think of a time when you needed support, or when there was something to be celebrated, or someone to be mourned...who was there for you? Think of a time when you assumed a new role, took on greater responsibility. Was there someone to be your best cheerleader, reminding you of your gifts and strengths? Have you ever received a warning from someone who was concerned for your well-being? If you do, then you have something in common with the Christians at Philippi.

Putting the shoe on the other foot, when have you written a note to express your thanks, or to encourage, or to say, “I’m sorry?”

Mother’s Day is one of those occasions that calls for special, personal messages between family members. Who is waiting to hear from you?

Hymn For the Beauty of the Earth

Text: Folliot Sanford Pierpoint; Music: Conrad Kocher

For the beauty of the earth, for the glory of the skies,
for the love which from our birth, over and around us lies:
Lord of all, to thee we raise, this our hymn of grateful praise.

For the wonder of each hour, of the day and of the night,
hill and vale and tree and flower,
sun and moon and stars of light.
Lord, of all, to thee we raise this our hymn of grateful praise.

For the joy of ear and eye, for the heart and mind's delight,
for the mystic harmony linking sense to sound and sight:
Lord of all, to thee we raise this our hymn of grateful praise.

For the joy of human love, brother, sister, parent, child,
friends on earth and friends above, for all gentle thoughts and mild:
Lord of all, to thee we raise, this our hymn of grateful praise.

For thyself, best gift divine to the world so freely given,
for that great, great love of thine, peace on earth and joy in heaven:
Lord of all, to thee we raise, this our hymn of grateful praise.

Pastoral Prayer and the Lord's Prayer

Lord, we thank you for the gift of motherhood. We thank you for the many examples of faithful mothers in scripture: Sarah, Hannah, Elizabeth, and Lois among them. We thank you for those who embraced the role of mother as a high calling. We pray for all who longed for children and children did not come; for those who parented poorly; for those who have mistreated their own parents. In this moment, we let go of any offenses that interfere with a wholesome and joy-filled family life and ask that you help us make our homes a place of peace and welcome.

Hear now the names of other women who have inspired, encouraged, taught, and sacrificed for their loved ones...

We are mindful this day of Mary, the mother of our Lord Jesus, who had the courage to say "Yes" to your calling. May we, men and women, likewise have the courage to answer "Yes" to your call on our lives. Help us all to live more fully into your purpose.

Whether we are parents or not, we are your disciples, and followers of your way, truth, and life. We lift to you all others on our minds and hearts this day...

Bring hope and healing to the weary, worn, and sick; peace to all the troubled; and needs supplied to those who have little in a world that demands so much.

We pray as Jesus, our brother, taught us, saying, Our Father...Amen.

Blessing

Go into this week knowing that you are embraced by the love of God,
a love that is both tender and strong, like the arms of a mother around her child. **Amen.**