**SERMON**

**By: Gail Fricker**

**One Family** May 14th, 2017

John 17: 6-13 and 20-23

When I was writing this sermon, I came across a book that I had given to my Mum, back in 1989. There’s even an inscription in it that reads “To Mum, from your ‘little girl’.” The book is full of ways that children describe their Mothers, and all the things that they do for them. Let me share a few with you:

Aishling, age 9: *“A mum likes to buy you sweets, and when you have fillings at the dentist she blames you.”*

Paul, age 8: *“My Mum is nice to sit on. She’s nice and soft and bouncy.”*

Carmen, age 11*: “My Mother is medium sized, brown in colour and as cool as a cucumber. Her hair is red and thick. She has a proud walk, and she is as tender as a chicken.”*

Patricia, age 13, *“Mum is the person you can come to for comfort, when all hope is lost – she’s like an old teddy bear with one ear and half an eye.”*

And the book is also full of great children’s drawings showing how they picture their mom’s: (show pictures of Moms)

And I love this one from Marcia and Claire, both age 9: “Mums have a heart with a key; they open it and love pours out.”

It’s clear from all the children’s descriptions, that a mother’s role is important. We all need someone who will care and love us despite what we may do; someone we can turn to for help when we’re scared; someone who will comfort us when we are sad; someone who will guide us, nurture us, and even discipline us to put us on the right path.

But, in some families, that ‘someone’ may not be our mothers. We should not forget, that some children grow up with hurt and disappointments regarding their mothers. Some children feel abandoned, neglected, even abused. Some children never know their mothers. For some, it is a neighbor or a family friend that fills the role of mother for us – because Mom’s role is precious and needed.

Jesus realized how important is was to always have the constant presence of a mothering love. In his prayer to God in John 17, Jesus talks about the disciples, like a mother would pray for her children. He begins by recognizing that we are all God’s children. In verse 6:

 *“They were yours; you gave them to me”* (john 17:6)

-Jesus is like a mother thanking God for her children. In the time that Jesus spent with his disciples, he nurtured them and guided them, just like you will with Mateo and Charlotte as they grow up. In verse 8 Jesus tells us that, like a parent, he has taught his disciples everything they need to know:

“*For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them.”* (John 17:8)

And now, like a parent, Jesus is sending the disciples out into the world. He knows that it is time for “his children” to be on their own, just like one day, it will be time for Mateo and Charlotte to be their own. And, we hear Jesus praying with the same concerns and worries of a parent when the time comes for us to let our children leave the home. In verse 11, Jesus prays for their protection, and it could be the words that any loving parent may say at night for their children:

 *“Holy Father, protect them by the power ofyour name,”* (John 17:11)

But, Jesus also know that they will be not be alone as they go out into the world. Earlier in John’s gospel, Jesus promised that he would “not leave them as orphans” (John 14: 18). He promises them that they will always have the Holy Spirit as a comforter, counsellor, guide, friend. In other words, a mother and a parent.

The role of a mothering love in scripture is not new. Julian of Norwich, a respected and well-educated theologian, wrote in the 14th century words that have now become a hymn – her words’ echo Jesus’ prayer in John 14, and can be found in 320 of our Voices United:

“Mothering God, you gave me birth … Mothering Christ, you took my form …. Mothering Spirit, nurturing one.”

And Jesus also knew that his disciples would not be alone because they had each other, to support each other, love each other, and grow in unity together. His prayer is not just for his immediate disciples, but for us as believers today. In verse 20 he prays:

 “*My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me …**that all of them may be one.”*(John 17:20)

Jesus prays that we as a Church, we as a family, we will come together as one to support each other with the mothering love that we celebrate today.

Today we have made a promise to Mateo, Charlotte and their families, that we will support them, walk with them, grow with them, uphold them in prayer, and encourage them. And it’s funny – if you read through this book written by children– all those verbs are also used to describe Moms. That is why we are Mother Church, and that is why we at Knox, are One Family.

Amen.