

SERMON
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“Lessons Learned”

May 13, 2018

Luke 24:44-53

It is interesting that Mother’s Day this year falls on the same Sunday when the Christian church celebrates the Ascension of Christ. It is always 40 days after Easter. It is the moment when Jesus is “carried up” to heaven, and it was most certainly a dramatic event for the disciples. There are various descriptions of the Ascension, but the one in the beginning of Acts tells us that:

Jesus was taken up before their very eyes, and huge cloud hid him from their sight....(then) suddenly two angels appeared

You can’t get much more dramatic than that!

Yet, despite all its drama, the Ascension story does not play a big role in the United Church. In many parts of Europe, it is considered such a significant event in the Christian calendar, that it is actually a public holiday. But the *Song of Faith*, the United Church’s most recent faith statement, does not even mention Ascension. So why not?

I remember as a child, listening to the story of Ascension in the Anglican tradition, and thinking it was a bit like “*Beam me up*” from the popular show Star Trek. That Jesus was “Beamed Up” to somewhere up there. (Indicate) And maybe that is the problem. We don’t like to think of Jesus ‘up there’ on a heavenly throne. In the United Church we are more comfortable with focusing on Jesus here, among us, laughing with children, struggling with us for justice. But whether we like it or not, the Ascension is part of our Christian faith. So, what is it saying to us today?

I believe that the story is particularly important to us today, on Mother’s Day, because it teaches us how Jesus recognized that his disciples were ready. He recognized that his time of teaching them had come to an end, and that his disciples were now ready to go out on their own.

In the passage that we read, we hear Jesus say:

“I told you this while I was (still) with you” (v 44)

And he “opened their minds so they could understand” (v 45)

And then he instructs them to “Stay in the city” (v 49)

Before he “blessed them” (v 50) and then “left them.” (v 51)

So, let me ask the children - who does that remind you of? Who tells you things? Who helps you understand things? Who gives you instructions on what to do and where to go? Who blesses you and loves you?

Mom!

Moms are full of words of wisdom, helping us to understand, teaching us things helping us to get ready to be able to live on our own.

We learn so much from our Moms.

The last couple of weeks I asked the congregation to let me know some things that they learned from their Moms –I've written down some of the suggestions, and I need some helpers to read them out for me. (get helpers)

So, as they read, put your hand up if you recognize the words as something that your mother would say, and even if you didn't give me the suggestion, you might recognize these words of wisdom as something your mother said to you:

If you can't say something nice to someone, don't say anything at all.

Treat others the way that you would like to be treated.

Never let the sun set on your anger

Make sure you always make time for your friends

Anything is possible if you put your mind to it

Believe in yourself, no-one is better than you

Once you say a word or throw a stone, you can't take it back

Be sure to always forgive others 70 x 7 times

Babies don't come with instructions

Always look both ways

Appreciate good things ... like cup cakes

Remember that you are loved

It's always the darkest before the dawn

Wow, Mom's sure have a lot of wisdom don't they! Thank you for sharing those lessons learned. I also enjoyed reading your stories about quilting, puzzles, playing scrabble, euchre games, gardening, and home-made lemon pies. And, I hope that you enjoyed reflecting on the lessons that you learned from your moms. It's very healing to reflect, and it makes us really appreciate our Mothers.

But where did Mom get all her wisdom from?

It's amazing how close those Mothers' words of wisdom are to scripture. Here are just a few examples:

Proverbs 15:4 - Kind words heal and help; cutting words wound and maim.

Luke 6:31 - Do to others as you would have them do to you.

Ephesians 4:31- Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger

Matthew 19:26 - with God all things are possible.

Matthew 7:1 - If you judge others, you will be judged the same way you judge them. God will treat you the same way you treat others.

Matthew 8:21-22 - forgive your brother or sister not seven times, but seventy-seven times.

Romans 8:39 – Nothing separates you from the love of God

... And I'm sure you can think of other passages of scripture that also sound like words of wisdom that your Mother would say.

And, in our Ascension story, when Jesus tells his disciples that he has taught them all that they need to know, and that he is now leaving them – it is a bit like our mothers teaching us our life lessons, and then letting us go out into the world. Jesus has confidence that his disciples are ready to live out the mission that he has given them. Just like our mothers take care of us until we are ready to go and live on our own.

So, on this Mother's Day, as we appreciate all that our mothers have taught us, let us also remember to live out those lessons that our Mothers taught us. And, as Christians, let us remember to always live the lessons that Jesus taught us. And on this Mother's Day, take some time to reflect on the unconditional love, the words of wisdom and teaching, and the blessings that we receive from our Moms – and as Children of God, remember that we also receive such love and blessings from God – our creator, our parent, and the one who gave birth to us all.

Happy Mother's Day.