

FIVE FORKS BRETHREN IN CHRIST CHURCH

www.ffbic.org

SERMON: *The Mother Heart of God*
SERIES: *Stand Alone*
SCRIPTURES: *Genesis 1:27; Isaiah 49:15-16; John 15*
SPEAKER: *Shaun Kipe*
DATE: *5 - 10 - 2020*

**Credit to Rebecca Mclaughlin; Heather Farrell; John & Nancy Ortberg for valuable insights/resources for this sermon.*

Well good morning, it so great to worship with you.

We've been really focusing as a church this year on our community life, how build community as a church...together. Eat, Play, Work, Pray. It was just really neat having some many folks participate in our 24 hours of prayer this past Thursday. So thank you.

And the last couple of weeks, we've been highlighting some of the different groups that make up our community life. We want to be an intergenerational church. Our teens, student ministry, young adults...you are important, you matter...we need you at Five Forks. And I was honored to have Brady Smith our Student Ministry director sharing his expertise on students with us. So thank you to Brady and to all of our student ministry volunteers.

Then last week, just want to say a huge thank you to Chris Philipps. Joined our staff a little less than a year ago, but just a real heart and passion for the youngest generations in our midst. Our children's ministry so important to our community life. So you thank you Chris and thank you to all of our children's ministry workers.

This morning we want to say thank you to another group of people. Real hero's in life. This morning we want to say thank you to our mom's **(SERMON GRAPHIC)** and all of the mother figures that have impacted our lives.

Truth is, the life we have, the breath we breathe only possible because of our mom's. And I'm fortunate to have another expert with me for this morning's message.

As much as I'd like to think I'm an expert, I know that there's someone in my life who is more of an expert on motherhood than I am. Turns out I was somewhat naïve when it comes to motherhood.

I remember when Jenny and I had Landon and Jenny had chosen to give up working to be at home with Landon. I thought man, she's so lucky, she doesn't have to work anymore. I kind of pictured her sitting quietly at home, rocking little Landon to sleep, taking naps all day. Landon napping silently in her arms. Watching tv, while while Landon gladly ate all the different varieties of baby food.

I remember I came one day and said to her, *"Jenny you look tired. Should you be all-rested up being home all day with Landon."* Like I said, turns out I was somewhat naïve when it comes to motherhood. Jenny said, *"You have no idea what it's like to have somebody you constantly have to clean up after, who you're always having to feed, where you're non-stop at their beck and call. And now in addition to you, I have this baby. It's exhausting."* (Ortberg adapted)

I'm just kidding. This whole parenthood thing has been an exciting journey for Jenny and I, a shared endeavor and responsibility and we have learned a lot together. But if we're going to talk about the mother heart of God. It's best to have an expert involved.

I am truly honored to have my wife Jenny with me for today's message.

And I know you see I'm way over here and Jenny is way over there. And your first thought probably is, that's because, "they're trying to honor the social distancing guidelines." But the truth is we've spent so much time together in close proximity over the past several weeks, we just need some separation☺

JENNY: Well good morning Five Forks church. A few weeks ago, Shaun asked me if I would consider team-teaching with him on this message. And I'll confess to you, I really had to think about it. Because while I'm a High school teacher and get up in front of students almost every day, this is a very different setting and I'm not as comfortable up here.

BUT...if you're a regular at Five Forks you know...that Shaun has shared stories about the Kipe family. Many a Sunday morning I have arrived at church only to have one of you ask me about some recent, embarrassing, exaggerated event in the Kipe household which Shaun must have shared across the pulpit. And in the back of my mind I've thought...you know I'd just love, one opportunity to get up there and repay the favor.

So Five Forks, you have no idea, how long I've been waiting for this opportunity to tell you the real truth about Pastor Shaun! So Shaun, I ran this by the staff already, you can go have a seat, I'm taking care of the rest of this message without you.

SHAUN: Our intention with today's message is this: On this Mother's Day, we want to honor and celebrate the mother figures that have impacted all of our lives, because we believe motherhood is a reflection of God's heart.

Genesis 1:27 - So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

This is just so important, notice both male and female are created to reflect God's heart.

The best of what it means to be male or female is a reflection of God.

Job 38:28-29 - ²⁸ Does the rain have a father? Who fathers the drops of dew?

(male imagery) **²⁹ From whose womb comes the ice? Who gives birth to the frost from the heavens?** (female imagery)

And so today, we're going to look at two character traits, that are often, most clearly seen in the mother figures in our lives, that are a reflection of God's heart. "The Mother Heart of God" **(SERMON GRAPHIC)**

JENNY: But first, before we take a look at these two character traits, we actually need to begin with a few

I. Qualifying statements.

First, we want to acknowledge right at the start that Mother's Day is...

A. A Sensitive Topic

There are some, for whom mother's day is a simple and joyous occasion and celebration.

But we want to acknowledge that for others, maybe many, that is not the case.

There are those who did not have a positive mother or mother figure in their lives and rather than feelings of love, compassion and warmth, Mother's Day brings up images of a cold, non-existent, painful, even abusive experience.

There are others who recently lost their mother's and this day is painful reminder that mom is not around.

There are some, who have lost children or who have become estranged and separated from children and this day is a painful reminder of that separation.

And there are others, who desire to be mother's...and who would make wonderful mother's...but are not able to be.

There is much pain surrounding this holiday and so we just want to acknowledge that pain today and admit we do not have good answers as to why God would allow that kind of deep hurt in our lives. Nor do we believe it would be God's desire and intention for anyone to experience that kind of pain.

But we do believe He knows, He hurts, He cares, He even cries.

SHAUN: Second, we need to address two

B. Unfair Expectations

in our culture related to women/motherhood which contributes to some of the pain surrounding this holiday.

1. "Every female desires to be a mom."

Cultural expectations are very powerful influencers. I just give you some examples...

I remember back in High school, beginning to feel the pressure related to expectations.

We (our culture) has this expectation that every high school student wants to go to college. We'll ask **"Where are you going to college?"** And while college is good and in today's world often is the norm...not every high school student is interested in college. And that's ok. Our expectation, asking that question, puts unfair pressure on high school students and has hurt many high school students.

I, then, remember in college and moving towards graduation, the next expectation our culture places on young adults is **“When are you getting married?”** It’s an unfair expectation. There are a lot of young adults living under the pressures of this expectation.

Then, I remember shortly after we (Jenny and I) got married. You know what the next expectation we have in our world is **“When are you having children?”** It’s an unfair expectation.

Lot of young married couples out there that have been hurt by this question.

There are some women, who are not interested in being mom’s. Or whose primary focus is of a professional nature. At that’s ok.

There are some couples not interested in having children.

And there are some couples who would love to have children and are not able to.

And our insensitive questions/assumptions, our lack of awareness is crushing.

JENNY: There is a second unfair expectation. Though we may not always say it in plain words, it’s often the case we expect that...

2. “Mom’s can do everything!”

Motherhood in our world often includes: working a full-time job, cooking meals, grocery shopping, dishes, laundry, taking kids to the dentist, what spirit day is it on Monday, who needs toothpaste, what size shoes does everyone wear, when is the PTA fundraiser due, who’s turn is it for zoom meeting...and while you’re at it write and present your husband’s sermon for him.

Be the perfect mom. Do it all mom. This idealistic standard and cultural expectation drowns our mom's and women, in an ocean of perfection they can never live up to.

One new mother said it like this, "we beat ourselves up when we can't have normal devotional times and attend church events while at the same time completely ignoring the fact that we are keeping a human alive. I think most mom's know we can't do everything and yet we want to be good mom's so we try and do it all anyway."

It's perhaps why one author has noticed that... "In Scripture men often go to the mountains to meet with God, but God often comes and meets women where they are...when they are doing their ordinary everyday work. He meets them at the wells where they draw water for their families, in their homes, in their kitchens, in their gardens. As they sit beside sickbeds, as they give birth, care for the elderly and perform necessary mourning and burial rites. In these seemingly mundane and ordinary tasks, these women of the Scriptures found themselves face to face with divinity." (Heather Farrell)

As a culture and as a church, we need to become far more aware of how our expectations impact the people around us.

We can do better, we want to do better on these kinds of issues.

SHAUN: Alright, let's turn our attention now and look at...

II. The Mother Heart of God

Though often not recognized, throughout Scripture, the imagery of God's relationship and interactions with his people is often motherhood imagery.

Deuteronomy 23:18 - ¹⁸ You were unmindful of the Rock that bore you;^[a] you forgot the God who gave you birth.

Isaiah 66:13 - ¹³As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you; you shall be comforted in Jerusalem.

In fact, have you thought about this before...when we talk about “becoming a Christian”, what is one of the most common phrases we use...we say that you are **“born again”**.

We speak of becoming a Christian using motherhood imagery.

So let’s look at these two, two character traits in particular, that we often see in our mom’s but that are ultimately a reflection of God’s heart. The first one is...

A. Compassion

When you can’t sleep and you need someone sing you lullabies. It’s usually mom.
When you’re hurting and you just need a hug, there’s no hug like mom’s.
When you’re sick and you need some homemade chicken noodle soup, nobody’s tastes as good as mom’s.

The prophet Isaiah uses the image of a mother’s compassion to express God’s heart for his people... **Isaiah 49:15**

¹⁵“Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you!”

Don’t you love this imagery? Isaiah compares God’s compassionate care for his people, to that of a mother and her new born baby. In fact the root word for compassion is a female womb. It is the feeling a mother has toward her infant child.

Are you able to picture this? A mother’s compassionate heart for her child.

JENNY: There's a popular children's book, called "Love you Forever" **(IMAGE OF BOOK COVER)** that helps us to picture this compassionate care of a mother...listen to the first couple of pages...

(PICTURE OF PAGES as we go through the story) *A mother held her new baby (this is how God relates to you) and very slowly rocked him back and forth, back and forth, back and forth. And while she held him she sang...I'll love you forever, I'll like you for always, as long as I'm living my baby you'll be.*

The baby grew. And he grew and he grew and he grew. He grew until he was two years old and he ran all around the house. He pulled all the books off the shelves. He pulled all of the food out of the refrigerator and he took his mother's watch and flushed it down the toilet. (Isn't this how we so often behave)... Sometimes his mother (our great creator...)would say, "this kid is driving me crazy"

But at night time, when the two year-old was quiet, she opened the door to his room, crawled across the floor, looked up over the side of his bed; and if he was really asleep she picked him up and rocked him back and forth, back and forth, back and forth. While she rocked him she sang: I'll love you forever, I'll like you for always, as long as I'm living my baby you'll be.

The boy grew. He grew and he grew and he grew. He grew until he was a teenager. He had strange friends. He wore strange clothes and he listened to strange music. Sometimes the mother felt like she was in a zoo.

(Oh but the compassionate heart of a mother...)

But at night time, when the teenager was quiet, she opened the door to his room, crawled across the floor, looked up over the side of his bed; and if he was really asleep she picked up that great big boy and rocked him back and forth, back and forth, back

and forth. While she rocked him she sang: I'll love you forever, I'll like you for always, as long as I'm living my baby you'll be.

SHAUN: You can picture this can't you? Such is the compassionate heart of a mother to her child. Such is the compassionate heart of God as he looks at you.

Isaiah says, **“Though she may forget, I (God) will not forget.”** In other words...Isaiah says, if even human mothers reflect this compassionate heart, how much more the perfect mother heart of God.”

In our crying, God is the One who hears and senses and wakes to dry our tears. In our brokenness and failure he crawls across the floor to pick us up and hold us and whisper to us “I'll love you forever...”

JENNY: We can think about compassion in various ways, but I have often thought that there are at least two essential components of compassion:

1. Tough love

There is a part of the human condition that does not like to admit the unpleasant realities about ourselves that need changing, fixing, removing. That's why we need mother figures in our lives.

Mom's help us to do the hard things, we wouldn't otherwise choose to do on our own, to help us become the kind of people we want to be...that's the tough love part of compassion.

In John 15 Jesus talks about the concept of tough love using the imagery of pruning.

John 15 - “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ² He cuts off

every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes^[a] so that it will be even more fruitful.

Last summer, I planted some pepper plants in our raised bed garden (**PIC OF GARDEN**). And I began reading about caring for pepper plants. What I read is that, if you cut the top off your plants, when they are young, it will be better for them in the long run. They will be more fruitful.

But it made me nervous, when I walked out to the garden and saw those small, frail plants. I had six pepper plants, but couldn't bring myself to cut the tops off of all six. But I thought, I'd go ahead and try it with three of them.

And for the first couple of weeks, as I checked on them, they were visibly smaller and more frail. I thought I had killed them. When people came to visit and I showed them our garden, I told them Shaun planted those three.

But no joke, several weeks later as they grew, they very quickly surpassed and outgrew the other three plants. They were by far the most productive pepper plants I've ever grown. It was the pruning. It just took some tough love, from a caring person to get them there.

SHAUN: Many of you know I'm a huge sports fanatic. I can live, eat, breathe sports, competition. Problem is I can be so engaged, lost in sports, it can hurt my relationships with the people around me. I give so much time to sports and miss out on people. And I don't really notice it, cause I'm locked in on my sports. Or I justify it or explain it away.

About 10 years ago, my mom noticed this was happening in my life. I remember one time, shortly after Jenny and I had Landon. Mom (**PIC OF SHAUN'S MOM**) came to me and said, "*Shaun I know you love your sports. And they're good. But your*

spending too much time with your sports. Landon won't be a little boy forever and you don't want to regret missed time."

She was right. She was gentle. I know her incredible love for me. But she was right and she needed to give me tough love, to help me become the father I want to be.

Maybe what you need to do today is just thank the mother figures in your life for some of the tough love they've shown you through the years that influenced the person you are becoming.

And then maybe, you need to pause and thank the great Creator for his tough love... Jesus is the true and best gardener, pruning us to help us become the flourishing humans he made us to be.

JENNY: But, when I think of compassion it's not just tough love, mixed in with that tough love, is an incredible knack for extravagant...

2. Grace

Grace is related to the idea that sometimes you don't get what you deserve. And the truth is, there are moments in life where what we really need is a little extra grace.

This kind of grace is found all over the stories of Jesus.

When the crowds wanted to stone an adulterous women, Jesus said, "this time I give you grace."

When the crowds wanted to reject Zacchaeus the tax collector, Jesus, "you need a little grace."

When Jesus was washing his disciples feet and he came around the table to good ole Judas...have you ever pictured that scenario in your mind? What does Judas

deserve? Traitor, betrayer. Jesus got down on his knees, as a mother would, he crawled across the floor and he said, "I'll love you forever Judas...a little extra grace."

This is a **picture of Keagan**. Of our three kids, he's the ornery one.

He gets this little grin on his face. And there are these occasions where he needs to be disciplined. Usually at our house, it's the "time out chair." That's the tough love to help him become the young man we know God wants him to be. Consequences, discipline for his bad behavior helps him to learn right/wrong.

But there are times when little Keagan also needs to know about grace. Because grace comes from God's heart and is often reflected in our mom's.

And so to teach Keagan about grace. Every once in a while, not often, but every once in a while when Keagan has done something he shouldn't do. I will sit him on my lap and talk to him about his behavior. And then I'll say, "*Keagan you should get a consequence (time-out chair) for this. But this time mommy is going to give you grace.*"

And Keagan is starting to understand grace. The other day, he had done something he shouldn't do and so we were headed for the time out chair. On the way there he looked up at me and said, "*Mommy, this time...can I choose grace?*" (I'm just kidding).

SHAUN: Folks, there is this reality about the human condition...we are not perfect. We make mistakes. We lose our tempers, we allow temptations to get the best of us. Sometimes we need that caring tough love, but other times, what we need is a little extra grace.

We have this other children's book at our house that we read to our kids it's called "**I love you stinky face.**" (PICTURE OF BOOK COVER)

A mom is putting her little boy to bed and she says, "I love you my wonderful child." The little boy then begins inquiring about the limits of his mother's love for him. "But mama, what if I were a big scary ape...would you love me then?" She says, "If you were big scary ape, I would make your birthday cake of bananas and I would tell you...I love you my big scary ape." So the little boy goes further. "But mama, what if I were a super smelly skunk, and I smelled so bad that my name was stinky face?" "Then I'd plunk you in a bubble bath. And if you still smelled bad, I wouldn't mind. I would whisper in your ear, I love you stinky face."

We all need that grace don't we?

That no matter what is I've done, I've never wondered if mom would still love me. She loves me as much as any mom possibly could. She knows more than almost anyone else, I'm not perfect. And she loves me unconditionally anyway. You know what that is? It's grace and it's a reflection of the mother heart of God. That when Jesus comes and begins looking into our lives, and he sees our failure and our sin..."for you a little extra grace."

So maybe today, on this mother's day...what you need to do is reflect back on life and the mother figures who have shown you moments of grace along the way. And today say thank you.

Or think about the people in your world, who have failed, slipped up, hurt you, wronged you...and maybe you can begin looking on them with a mother's eyes. Eyes of extravagant grace.

As we practice compassion in our lives...Learning to have a tough love that helps others become the person they want to be, but filled grace, deep as the ocean...we are often reflecting what we received from our own mom's and ultimately we are reflecting the mother heart of God.

JENNY: Finally, in every mother figure we see another aspect of God's heart...

B. Sacrifice

The essence of sacrifice is choosing to give our lives for the benefit of someone else.

Jesus said in...

John 15:13 - ¹³ Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends...

The symbol of our faith is a cross, where Jesus sacrificed his life on our behalf.

No one exemplifies this sacrificial heart more than our mom's.

Go back to the passage from **Isaiah 49** we read earlier, **"Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! Verse 16, one my favorite verses in all of the Bible...¹⁶ See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands;**

Engraving is kind of like tattooing. It's being marked. It's painful. It leaves a wound. This is what sacrifice does.

Babies leave marks on their mother's physical bodies. Just ask mom's what it's like going through pregnancy and birth and the toll it is on mom's physical body. It leaves a mark. Truth is to be a mom is to sacrifice. But, in most cases, mom's will tell you that the marks are worth the end result. The sacrifice is worth it. You were worth it.

SHAUN: And this sacrifice is evident, not just in the birthing process.

Mom's are often the one's who lead the way in giving up their rights, their freedoms, their preferences for the sake of the family.

Mom's are the one's who give up sleep to feed hungry babies.

Mom's give up TV Remote Control rights.

Mom's are often the one's who put their careers on hold in order to have children.

Mom's are the one's working full time jobs, and cooking, cleaning, keeping the house running...

Mom's often sit down to the dinner table last, and eat their dinner's cold...

When our mom's do this, when they have done this, it's a reflection of that sacrificial heart of God.

We too are engraved on the palms of our maker **(PIC OF JESUS ON CROSS)**. He gave up His rights for you. We've left wounds on Christ, that we might become children of God. And yet, he'd do it all again for you. Such is his incredible sacrificial love.

So maybe today, on this mother's day...what you need to do is reflect back on life and the mother figures who have made incredible sacrifices on your behalf. And today say thank you.

And then maybe what you need to do is to pause and to think about the incredible sacrifice Jesus made on your behalf. And spend a few moments in prayer just thanking him for this incredible sacrifice. And asking that he would instill that same sacrificial heart in you.

JENNY: Truth is our mom's deserve recognition and celebration every day of the year. But today, in particular, we want to encourage you take a moment to thank all those mother figures in your life. Might be your biological mom, may not be. May be a grandparent, an older sibling, may be a father who has had to step in as a mother

figure, may be a teacher, an aunt... But whoever it is...take a moment today to specifically thank them for reflecting the mother heart of God (compassion and sacrifice) in your life.

SHAUN: PRAY