

Sermon – “Mother’s Day Prayer” 5-13-18

Grace and peace – Pause and reflect...

Way back in 2007, an experiment was conducted involving Joshua Bell, who is a world-renowned violinist. And the experiment went like this: on January 12- a normal Friday-Joshua Bell went into the Washington, DC Metro subway station. He was dressed in jeans, and a long-sleeved T-shirt, and a Washington Nationals baseball cap. And he positioned himself near a trash can. And he opened up a small case, took out a violin, threw a few dollars in the case to give people the idea, and he started playing.

And for the next 45 minutes, he played pieces by Mozart and Schubert, while people walked by. Hardly anyone noticed. They didn't notice that it was Joshua Bell. And they also didn't notice that the violin he was playing was a rare Stradivarius worth over three million dollars.

It is important to Note: three days earlier, on January 9 of that year, Joshua Bell had sold out the Boston Symphony Hall, with ordinary seats going for \$100. But on January 12, he played in that subway for 45 minutes, and there was a total of \$52.17 thrown into his violin case.

Pretty amazing - huh?

This cultural experiment was set up by Washington Post as: "an experiment in context, perception, and priorities-as well as an unblinking assessment of public taste. In an ordinary setting, at an inconvenient time, would beauty transcend?" The result was: most people walked right by and didn't even notice.

Most people didn't notice melodic beauty in their midst, didn't stop or pause to ponder something they might have paid hundreds of dollars and fought traffic to experience at another time. We as humans are funny that way, so focused on what we are doing that we don't always notice what is happening right in front of us. Then I realized that this scenario or experiment also applies to motherhood. So much of motherhood takes place in the ordinary, everyday setting-right? the everyday stuff of life. And so many things go unnoticed or without thanks.

I know that Mother's Day may be difficult day for some of you, for various reasons. Maybe your mother is no longer alive, and you really miss her. Or maybe you don't have a very good relationship with your mother. Or maybe you'd love to be a mother, and that just hasn't happened. So if Mother's Day is a painful day for you, I need to assure you that God is gracious and cares deeply about you.

Today, I want to put a challenge out there for all of us, to slow down, notice and affirm the importance of the world around you – friends, family – butterflies – sunshine and mothers! We each needed a mother be here – and father too – but we will talk about that in a month or so. And I would also like you to consider the mothering components of God. The God who comes to us and nurtures us, cares for us, calms our fears, teaches us to love, helps us to be kind and good natured, forgiving even when it doesn't seem deserved, and loves us unconditionally.

As I was considering our texts this morning and mother's day, I thought about Jesus praying for his disciples before his crucifixion and how he wanted God to protect them and care for them, VS: 9 "*I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on*

behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. 10 All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them.” I see this as a mothering prayer – a mother saying: “*it’s not about me, it’s about them, what’s mine is yours any glory comes because of your (God’s) love for them.* Then in vs: 15 “*I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one.*” How many mothers have prayed similar prayers – “*Dear God, protect my child in whatever comes their way in this weird confusing wonderful world.*”

I’m not sure about you, but I remember learning how to pray from my mother. I remember that my brother and sister and I would say our prayers together before going to sleep at night. For me it was the traditional; “Now I lay me down to sleep, if I should die before I wake...” Then would come the question and answer portion of the evening, and of course I would ask most of the questions. “How do we know God heard our prayer? What if God didn’t like it? How about Jesus? God must hear a lot of prayers every day, is it ok to pray for Sparky? (our dog) If we forget to pray and we die before we wake then what?” My poor mom!

Jesus was praying for his disciples and with them in the garden. Did he really need to pray as the Son of God? I don’t know - That’s one of those questions I might of asked my and you know in the scheme things it doesn’t matter – he was praying for his disciples in a deep and loving way.

When we pray, we engage, in a relationship with God, each other and ourselves. Why pray? Why not? Prayer is self-expression, prayer is supportive of others, prayer is focusing on the needs of others and self – not that God doesn’t already know these needs but through

prayer we become engaged with the power of God who comes in mysterious ways. Prayer is quieting, and uplifting, prayer is loving, when we pray, concern and compassion come flowing out of us and shared with others.

Prayer reminds us of blessings and of giving thanks. In the prayer Jesus is praying today; Jesus takes the opportunity to recognize the disciples and their commitment. Think about how powerful it can be to hear someone thank God for you and pray for you? Something pretty amazing and is easily done!

Again, Prayer is love. It's that simple. Something that gets taken for granted like the beautiful music of the Stradivarius in our midst, the care and concern of a friend or the love of a mother.

There was an elderly woman who walked into church one day. And she was greeted in the narthex by a friendly usher. And the usher said, "Where would you like to sit?" She said, "The front row, please." And the usher said, "You really don't want to do that. The pastor is "kinda" boring." The woman said, "Do you happen to know who I am?" He said, "No." She said, "I'm the pastor's mother." The usher said, "Do you know who I am?" She said, "No." He said, "That's Good."

In my first parish in MN my mother and stepfather occasionally would make the 2 hour drive to worship at the congregation I served, now and then. Because it was a large parish I would have to tell them when I was scheduled to preach and they would come to hear me, usually bringing other family or their friends – it was a big deal. People would ask me, "Isn't it

strange to have your parents visiting your church?" And I say, "No-it's great! I knew that there would be at least two people who would like my sermon that day!"

Mothers often have this wonderful way of loving their children, for no other reason other than being their children. No matter how old one gets, if your mother is still alive, you are still her child – you better behave ☺ Jesus is praying for his disciples today, praying that they might be protected by the mothering arms of God, unconditionally. We are all loved unconditionally and called to love in the same way.

Oftentimes the challenges in life get in the way noticing the Love of God in our midst like the beautiful music in the DC Subway or the smile of a friendly face. Slow down, notice and realize that by Grace you wrapped in the mothering arms of God, each and every day! Happy Mother's Day – Amen!