

OUR OTHER MOTHER

ACTS 2:46-47

So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

Today, is Mother's Day, and I'd like to start with some Mother's Day cards. If you haven't gotten your mom a nice card this year, I have a few suggestions for you...

Here's the first one, "Thank you for giving me life and thank you for not taking it back during my teen years."

"No matter what life throws at you, at least you don't have ugly children."

"Mom, I love you loads! Speaking of loads... can you do my laundry?" *Ooo, there're some college kids back...*

"Mom, last week everyone jumped off a cliff, but I didn't go." *And I am sure your mom is proud of you...*

Here's another one, "Instead of grand-babies, may I interest you in a card?" *Hey, any kudos you may've gotten from not jumping off that cliff, you just lost...*

"Mom, what's it like to have the greatest daughter in the world? I don't know dear, you'll have to ask grandma."

"Mom, I love your awesome texts, even when they don't make sense." That's just too real to be funny.

"Unlike 1970's fashions, great moms never go out of style."

“Good moms let you lick the beaters. Great moms turn them off first.”

Here’s a unique Mother’s Day card: “Congratulations: You produced the perfect child after just two tries.”

And finally, “You are **the Best Mom** I’ve ever had.”

But this is the place I want to start this morning...

For your earthly mother may NOT be “**the Best Mom you ever had.**” In the next few minutes, I’d like to talk about your relationship with *another mother*. For if you’re a Christian you have a *spiritual mom*... **the Church!**

One of the most memorable quotes from the early church fathers came in the third century, from a North African bishop named Cyprian. Cyprian was godly and humble, and he famously stated, “**No one can have God as Father, who does not have the Church as Mother.**”

It’s been retweeted a million times since, **You don’t have God as Dad, if you don’t have the Church as Mom.**

In his treatise, Cyprian wrote, “**She (i.e. the spiritual, eternal Church) is one mother, plentiful in the results of fruitfulness: from her womb we are born, by her milk we are nourished, by her spirit we are animated.**”

And this was not just a Catholic concept. The Protestant Reformers also saw the Church in this light.

In his work, “**The Institutes,**” John Calvin also quoted Cyprian, and spoke over and over of the Church’s motherly role. Calvin believed she is *our other mother*.

Calvin writes, “I shall start, then, with the church, into whose bosom God is pleased to gather his sons, not only that they may be nourished by her help and ministry as long as they are infants and children, but also that they may be guided by her motherly care until they mature and at last reach the goal of faith... for those to whom he is Father the church may also be Mother.”

*And I agree... **scripturally, optically, practically, and spiritually** the traits of a mother best depict the role of the Church. This was the case in the church of Acts.*

In the year 32 AD, Christianity was a struggling newborn. Jesus had risen from the dead, but His followers were still afraid to come out in the light of day.

Their faith was infantile and needed to develop. Like a fertilized egg yet to hatch, it needed to stay incubated.

*Where best for it to grow than in the lap of a mother? The church played that role. **Church was like a mom.***

Today is Mother’s Day, and what I want to say is more an observation, than a doctrine. For like a toddler, the Christian faith needed special care in its early days.

And it still does today. At times, Christians can act like babies. The devil wants to keep us spiritually immature.

That’s why we need the church - ***our other mother!***

When the Adams’ family gathers, even a group of grown-ups can act juvenile - adult children can revert back to adolescent behavior - but mom is usually the force that holds us together. *She has a way about her...*

And this is the role the Church has played in the development of Christianity. Imperfectly so, but the church continues to reinvent itself to get the job done.

The church is a major part of what's held God's family together, and kept us tracking, and nurtured our growth.

Again, *if God is our Father, and Jesus our Savior, and the Spirit our Comforter; then the Church is our mother.*

First, let me show you **scripturally** a few verses that make this connection between the church and a mother.

Remember the episode in Luke 8, in verse 19 it says of Jesus, "Then His mother and brothers came to Him, and could not approach Him because of the crowd. And it was told Him by some, who said, "Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, desiring to see You."

But He answered and said to them, "My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it." Already, very early in His ministry, Jesus had begun to redefine family relationships. In His Kingdom, spiritual bonds trumped flesh and blood. Commitment not just genetics formed unbreakable ties between believers.

A new community had gathered around Jesus - *folks who desired to hear God's Word and obey.* And they wanted to do it together... Jesus is now speaking of this collective as "*My mother and My brothers.*" Jesus had begun to refer to the community of believers as **mother**.

There's another passage that speaks to this thought.

In Galatians 4 Paul teaches that the New Covenant of Christianity is better than the Old Covenant of Judaism.

Our salvation is *by God's Spirit, not our flesh - of faith, not works - and through grace, not Law.* He uses the story of Abram's polygamous family to illustrate his point.

God *promised* Abraham's wife, Sarah, a son in her old age. But Abraham doubted, and tried to help God along.

He took a slave girl named Hagar as a surrogate spouse. Hagar had a son named Ishmael, who Paul calls "**a child of the flesh.**" He was sired by human effort.

Ishmael was the offspring of Abraham's ingenuity.

But eventually heaven did a miracle in Sarah's barren womb. The promised son, Isaac, was born by faith.

Ishmael stood for the Old Covenant given on Mount Sinai, and practiced in the earthly Jerusalem - a system dependent on human efforts... **Isaac** represented the miracle of the New Covenant, we participate in by faith...

And it's this New Covenant that brings salvation down from heaven. **Condemnation** came from the systems of Judaism, or **Jerusalem below.** But **salvation** came from "**Jerusalem above.**" This is why in Galatians 4:26 Paul refers to *heavenly Jerusalem* as "**the mother of us all.**"

This is interesting for when we get to Revelation 21, we find out the true identity of this heavenly Jerusalem.

John sees the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven "**as a bride adorned for her husband.**" The apostle introduces her "**as the Bride, the Lamb's wife.**"

Of course, in the NT, who is referred to as the Bride of Christ?
The Church. It seems in the future the sources of our salvation

will merge. *The bride and heaven and the Church will all be known as “the mother of us all.”*

I’m sure your earthly mom has been there for you at vital times in your life, yet **scripturally** you have *another mother*, the Church - who’s been there for believers for 2000 years, and will be on duty until she’s taken home.

And not just **scripturally**, but **optically**, you would also have seen the Church as your mother. For the church in Acts had a heavy and weighty motherly presence.

The women who followed Jesus weren’t wallflowers in a misogynist world. These were brave girls. Women with a backbone. Many of them had come from unsavory backgrounds. They knew the ridicule of men, and thus appreciated the forgiveness and acceptance of God.

They were strong in their loyalty to Jesus. He had faced scorn and criticism for His compassion toward them. They were more than willing to return the favor.

Remember, after the repentant woman broke the vial of perfume, and anointed Jesus’ feet, Jesus said to the judgmental rabbi sitting nearby, “**I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little.**” These women *loved much* because they were *forgiven much*.

I’m sure the deep passion of the early church toward the poor and needy came from the reciprocated love of women who’d been on the receiving end of great grace!

And these women who followed Jesus followed Him all the way to the cross. Even when His men forsook Him, these mothers and daughters stood by Jesus' side.

When His corpse was taken down, we're told in Luke 23, "the women who had come with Him from Galilee followed after, and they observed the tomb and how His body was laid. Then they returned and prepared spices and fragrant oils." It's interesting to me that Luke chooses **here** to mention the home of these women.

They were "*from Galilee.*" Galilee was just three days journey from Jerusalem, but it felt so, so far away under the circumstances. These women had embraced Jesus as He taught on grassy hillsides and by the picturesque lake. Now they've followed Him through a riotous street, in the midst of a lynching party. Their journey began in the flowery fields of Galilee. It led to the bitterest of ends.

Yet, their loyalty to their King was so unconditional they were even there to prepare the spices for His burial.

And in Acts 1 when the roll call is taken in the upper room, after the last of the apostles are listed, we're told, "**These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women...**" *Is it any surprise that these women were there in the beginning? They were among the first members of Jesus' Spirit-born Church!*

And of course, the NT is replete with examples of the vital role women played in the spread of Christianity.

Mary Magdalene was first to see the risen Christ and report the news... Deaconesses served... A special order of widows were managed by Timothy... Priscilla tutored an evangelist

named Apollos... Philip's four daughters were prophetesses... And Paul's friend, Phoebe, smuggled under her robe, his letter to Rome...

It is true that male and female roles matter to God.

In fact, the Church is the canvass on which the portrait is painted. Men are called by God to lead. And women are called to welcome their leadership, for this says much to the world of our relationship with Jesus.

Look at the leadership of the church and you should see a masculine head - but look at the church's muscle and you'll see a mom's energy, and effort, and passion.

The mere optics of the early church conveyed its female affinity. The strong gals that supported its mission made it easy to conceptualize the Church as [a mother](#).

[Scripturally, optically, and practically](#) the Church is our *other mother*. For when you think about **your** earthly mother, and the *feeding, diapering, cleaning, nurturing, sheltering, mending, protecting, guiding, disciplining, consoling, and celebrating* she's invested in you - you realize all the practical ways she's impacted your life.

Hopefully, your first mother has been all this and more.

Here's a list of jobs a person should be proficient at to be a good mom: [nurse, teacher, chef, hostess, Judge, party planner, hair stylist, wardrobe consultant, secretary, janitor, photographer, spiritual counselor, cheerleader, accountant, interior designer, lifeguard, financier, bodyguard, coach, Uber driver, and Lady MacGyver.](#)

Listen to one mom's confession to her now adult child:

"I loved you enough to ask where you were going, with whom you'd be with, and what time you'd be home..."

I loved you enough to insist that you save your money and buy that bicycle for yourself, even though I could have afforded to buy it for you...

I loved you enough to be silent and let you discover that your new best friend was actually a jerk...

I loved you enough to make you pay for the toy you took and to tell the clerk, "I stole this yesterday, and I'd really like to pay for it now..."

I loved you enough to stand over you for two hours while you cleaned your room, a job that should have taken you fifteen minutes...

I loved you enough to let you assume the responsibility for your actions even when the penalties were so harsh, they broke my heart...

And finally, But most of all, I loved you enough to say NO when I knew you would hate me for it. Those were the most difficult battles of all. I'm glad I won them, because in the end, you won too."

So much goes in to being a good mom. I love this quote by Elizabeth Stone, "Making the decision to have a child is momentous. It is to decide forever to have your heart go walking around outside your body." ***"To have your heart go walking around outside your body."***

Having a child makes you vulnerable. It exposes you to disappointment, and heartbreak, and shame in ways you've

never dreamed. At the same time it opens you up to honor and joy and the gladdest sense of fulfillment.

Motherhood is not a safe *neighborhood*. It's a risky place to live. But it's where your life can really matter.

I read Acts 2:46-47 to begin today's lesson. At first, It sounds like such a frivolous and innocuous verse.

You'd think the author could've eliminated this verse and done no real damage to the passage. *What important information does it provide?* It comes across as a filler verse between the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and the miracles that are yet to come.

But let's read it again, **“So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people.**

And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.” When I, as a pastor, read that verse I get overwhelmed. *For real, my blood pressure spikes.*

First of all, they are meeting everyday. That means the pastor is needed everyday - in small groups and large groups. *Who is organizing these meetings? Who's in charge of renting the Temple and training leaders?*

And they're **“breaking bread”** - *who's providing the bread? Who's paying? If we're buying Panera Bread it'll be expensive!* And it's occurring **“from house to house”** - that's a lot of bread! *Where are we going to get it all?*

“And the Lord is adding to the church daily?” That’s wonderful but how does a pastor remember all the new names? And these people need to be disciplined...

They need to be baptized and trained. *And they have kids* - that means more nursery help and SS teachers!

I’m sure much of what happened in the early church occurred organically. The Holy Spirit was in charge.

But as a pastor *I have a sense of what these simple descriptions mean.* Church life in Acts was intense.

The first church was a vibrant church. People really got involved with each other. Their fellowship was deep, and rich, and frequent, *and dare I say, motherly!*

The love, and laughter, and life they experienced was palpable. This was not a drop-in once-a-month kind of church. **This was a church you were committed to, and a church that was committed to you.** The Church in Jerusalem **mothered** its family from cradle to grave.

And in the spirit of the early Church every church should minister to its members like a mother to her child.

We feed and diaper our newborns in the faith.

We help people in bondage get free and clean.

We nurture believers spiritually, and teach them responsibility... We shelter them in environments that help them grow biblically, and morally, and socially... We help mend their wounds, and protect them from heresy.

Then we guide people in wisdom... And we discipline them when they stray... And of course, we hurt with those who hurt, and we rejoice with those who rejoice...

And like a mother's job, is the role of the Church demanding, exhausting, never-ending? *Absolutely!*

I like this Family Circus cartoon... The little boy asks his mother, "I forget. Do we do things for YOU on Mother's Day, or are you s'posed to do things for US?"

Just one day, that's all a mom asks - yet she doesn't even get off on Mother's Day. A mother's job is 24/7, 365 days a year - after year, after year, after year...

But the Church keeps the same hours! Trust me caring for God's family requires a mother's schedule. **Our other mother** has been at it non-stop for 2000 years.

Let me suggest the same problem exists when we talk about *the motherhood of the Church*, as when we discuss *the fatherhood of God*. An obvious gap exists...

As an earthly father my job is to demonstrate to my kids the role of our heavenly Father. Yet sometimes - *in fact, perhaps most of the time* - I fall miserably short.

Maybe you had a **dad** that was more a **dud**.

The same can happen with the Church. We study eras of church history and pockets of church life when believers are particularly vibrant, healthy, and biblical. We read about all that God intends for the Church to be.

But then we compare *what should be* to *what is* - and we get discouraged. We recognize that today's church is lacking. In fact, some folks have given up on the church.

Recently, prominent Christian author, Donald Miller, created a stir in the blogosphere when he revealed he no longer attended

church. *And he said he knew very few Christian leaders who did.* If the church is our mother; **then Miller isn't a mama's boy.** He's among many Christians who are estranged from their mother.

In my opinion, this is the modern Christian's most glaring weakness. We no longer take church seriously!

Society today is hyper-individualistic and anti-institutional, and Christians follow suit. Now that we can listen at our leisure to our favorite preacher's podcast, and Spotify the latest worship tunes - why risk the rigors and deal with the inconveniences of attending Church?

In fact, current Christianity with its obsessive emphasis on being all about *a personal* relationship with God, gives the impression folks can get along just fine without the Church. Some Christians even view Church as a distraction from *their own private relationship* with God.

In a recent Christianity Today article the author writes, "For most of Christian history, a relationship with God was inseparable from a relationship with the church."

Most believers over the last two millennia - Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox alike - would deem spiritual life without the church as incomprehensible and impossible as biological life without a mother." Today, Cyprian's statement that "*No one can have God as Father, who does not have the Church as Mother*" falls on deaf ears.

I'd imagine for most of us no matter how derelict our mother became in her duties, she'd have to fall pretty far down the snake hole before she got outright abandoned.

After all, the lady is your mother! She brought you into the world. *When you were born you already owed her nine months' womb and board.* I'm certain none of us would be too quick to forsake our very own mother.

And the same should be true of the Church! She's not only the *Bride of Christ, our Savior* - she's our very own mom - even mother to our brothers and sisters. She has been there for us and for our family for two millennia.

Don't think you or I would be where we are in our faith without the Church. The Church of yesteryear has laid foundations we've build on today. We're harvesting seeds we didn't plant. The Church deserves our respect, especially when she gets sick and needs our help.

It's possible you had a negligent mom. There's an even greater possibility you had a terrible experience at church. But you still owe your mother a debt of gratitude, and you are never justified in giving up on the Church!

Our obligation to *our other mother* extends *scripturally*, and *optically*, and *practically*, and finally *spiritually*.

Next Sunday is Pentecost Sunday. It's the fiftieth day after Passover. And it was on this day that Jesus commenced His Church. The Spirit of God filled the Upper Room like a rushing mighty wind. Flickers of fire stood over the living sacrifices, the disciples. The people spoke the praises of God in tongues

they'd never learned. In short, they were filled with the Holy Spirit.

On that great day our Lord and His Spirit launched **the mother Church - *the church of Acts***. And let's be clear, **the mother Church** isn't the Catholic Church, or the Southern Baptist, or Calvary Chapel. It's the powerful, transformational church in the book of Acts. The church born of the Spirit in Acts should always be our model.

When the Spirit of God fell at Pentecost He didn't come to inhabit a building, or hijack an institution, He came to empower a community of people. He melted their hearts and merged them into one. As Paul later declared, they were bonded in **"the unity of the Spirit."**

The Church is both mysterious and miraculous. It was not the *good idea* of early Christians, it was *God's idea*, conceived by His wisdom from the foundation of the world. And despite its flaws and failures God will never abandon His Church. It remains His means of working in a fallen world. He shows up in the midst of His Church.

I love the quote, **"The Church has many critics, but no rivals."** Or said another way, **"No one can replace your mom."** For like a mother, the church is irreplaceable.

I love the story about the conversation between God and one of His angels on the day he created moms. The story is fictional of course, but it's meaning is true.

"The angel said, 'God, You sure are doing a lot of fiddling around on this one.' The Lord answered, **'Have you read the specs on this order? She has to be completely washable, but**

not plastic - have 180 moveable parts, all replaceable - run on black coffee and leftovers - have a lap that disappears when she stands up - a kiss that can cure anything from a broken leg to a disappointed romance - and six pairs of hands.'

The angel shook his head, 'Six pairs of hands... no way!' 'But it's not the hands that are the challenge,' said the Lord, 'It's the three pairs of eyes that mothers require.' 'That's on the standard model?,' asked the angel. The Lord nodded. 'One pair that sees through closed doors and asks, **'What are you kids doing in there?'** - even when she knows the answer... Another set in the back of her head that sees what she shouldn't, but what she has to know... And, of course, the eyes in front that can look at a child when he goofs up and say to him, **'I understand and love you'** without a single word of condemnation...

The Lord continued, 'I'm making good progress, Already I've created a model who heals herself when she's sick, can feed a family of six on one pound of hamburger, and can get a nine year-old to stand under a shower.' The angel circled the prototype slowly. 'It's too soft,' he sighed. 'But tough!' the Lord said excitedly. 'You can't imagine what this mother can do or endure.'

'Can it think?' asked the angel. 'Not only can it think, but it can reason and compromise and dream,' said the Creator. Finally the angel bent over and ran a finger across her cheek. 'There's a leak... Lord, I told You... You were trying to put too much into this model.'

'It's not a leak,' said the Lord, 'It's a tear.'

'What's it for?' the angel wondered. 'It's for joy, sadness, disappointment, pain, and loneliness.'

'Wow, this tear is a stroke of genius,' said the angel. The Lord looked somber, 'I didn't put it there.'"

Here's the irony, when it comes to both moms and the Church - *the scars, and wounds, and tears* - the very hurts that might cause us to avoid her, **were inflicted on her by us. We're what's made her cry!**

When it comes to your first mom, the blows are obvious. Your sins are well-documented. But maybe you need help to see how you've harmed the church...

The Church is not what you need today, because it lacks what you could've given it in healthier times. *In a sense the church makes us, but in another sense we make the church.* We **are** what we're quick to criticize.

The Church is full of family dynamics as complicated as those between a mother and her child. Often, it's *a love-hate - a give-take - an I need you-you need me* kind of tension. You want the joys and blessings of the Church. You just don't need the time and responsibility.

Sometimes we'd prefer a more socially-suited, a mix-and-mingle type of church. A place that feels... *more party, than revival meeting - where Christianity is more fun and games...* But then you get to a place where you desperately need some bite to your spiritual life, and you discover the church you chose has no teeth!

O, I suppose no one wants to be at a party with their mother, *but that's who you need when the party is over!* That's why you pick a church, *for the hard times!*

Spiritually speaking the Church is like a mother, for a mom is always alive and sensitive to her child's needs.

She never stops caring. She's prone to give you her opinion, whether you want to hear it or not. *The mere fact she's mom gives her that right!* When you go see your mom you can expect some unsolicited feedback.

And I dare say, there's some folks here today who would give anything to hear their mom's opinion again.

At the time it wasn't so welcome, but now that she's been gone awhile; they realize how much it's missed.

And the same is true with a good church! Sometimes we don't appreciate God's blessings until they're gone.

Spiritually, you need **a motherly-kind of church**. I'm sure you'd probably prefer a *buddy-buddy church* - or a *rah-rah style of church* - or a *chit-chat type of church*.

But what you need is a *motherly-kind of church* who remembers where you've come from, and who you are.

Who loves you honestly. Who loves you enough to see through the games that you play, and put you in your place, and remind you that **you are not all that**.

I hope Calvary Chapel is that kind of church.

Perhaps the most salient point we learn from the book of Acts is that as far as God is concerned **the church is where the action is! It's God's hotspot.**

In Acts 2 God launches His Church and it spreads like kudzu from Jerusalem, to Judea, to Samaria, to the end of the earth. And along the way hypocrites join it, squabbles erupt in it, persecution comes against it, but nothing can derail it. People get saved, baptized, filled with the Spirit, and miracles occur around this Church.

It's as if God can trust a mother with her children!

The book of Genesis is the story of how God took the first man, Adam, and populated the human family.

Well, the book of Acts is a similar story of how God took the last Adam, Jesus, and began to populate a family. *And if you're going to grow a family what would you want at its center - nurturing it, and feeding it, and caring for it, and holding it together - but **a mother?***

To all the ladies here today who are somebody's mom, Happy Mother's Day. And to **our other mother**, the Church, Calvary CSM, Happy Mother's Day to you!

And as the pastor, I'll take your cookie! *Amen!*