

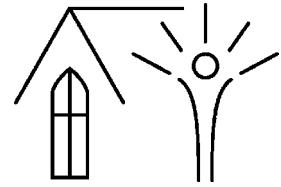


ROSELLE
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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Our Mission Statement:

*“To Know Christ,
To Grow in Christ,
To Show Others Christ”*



May 14, 2006

Sermon: “Mothers on the Front Line”

Psalm 23

Reverend Thomas Kim

“Your mother died to save you. If there is one thing Voldemort cannot understand, it is love. He didn’t realize that love as powerful as your mother’s for you leaves its own mark. Not a scar, no visible sign... to have been loved so deeply, even though the person who loved us is gone, will give us some protection forever. It is in your very skin. Quirell, full of hatred, greed, and ambition, sharing his soul with Voldemort, could not touch you for this reason. It was agony to touch a person marked by something so good.” This is from the ending part of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone* (pg 299) which is written by a mother. It is the theme for today.

In the church year, today is the fifth Sunday after Easter. In the flower shops, the candy stores, the TV channels, the Internet, and the restaurants, today is Mother’s day. And on my United Methodist Church’s desk calendar, both occasions and the Festival of the Christian Home are cited.

Today I don’t want to ridicule Mother’s Day as a lot of sentimental drivel. At the same time I do not want to put all mothers under the “Superwoman Syndrome.” However, I would like to acknowledge one of the outstanding characteristics of mothers, and how they help us to understand who Christ is. The greatest and most common characteristic of mothers from Beijing to Roselle is their love. Love is the single greatest defining characteristic of a mother. And that’s why today’s lesson from John’s Gospel is so appropriate.

Today’s Psalter reading from Psalm 23 says, “The Lord is my shepherd,” and Gospel lesson from John says, “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”(v. 11) Both Bible lessons tell us the Lord is the good shepherd, and lays down his life for his flocks. The role of the good shepherd is sacrificial.

From 1980 through 1990, in the spring, almost every street in Seoul, S. Korea was covered with tear gas. April 19th is the day of celebration for the Student Revolution of 1960 against the dictatorship government, and May 18th is the memorial day of for the thousands of civilian victims in Kwangju that were killed by the military government in 1980. Most students went out to the street of the city to ask for democracy. From time to time, there were more and more civilians joining students. The tension between the government and demonstrators became severe and very dangerous. The irony and pain of the time was that the government recruited young college students for the duty of the three year military service, and put them in front of the line as riot police squads, and ordered them to suppress the demonstrators who were mostly college students. There were so many (I should say too many) victims and casualties of the riot police. It was on May 8, 1986 that mothers were standing in between the students and the riot police squads . In Korea, May 8th is Mother’s Day. In front of the line of demonstrators, mothers held carnations, and marched toward the riot police squads, and approached

them, and decorated their armored helmets with carnations. I believe it was the turning point of the history of Korean democracy movement. It was a moral victory of Korean democracy over the military dictatorship. It was a triumph of peace over violence. It said love was stronger than hate. Of course, political freedom was not given to Koreans immediately, but one month and 21 days later, the military government announced that the right of electing their country leader belonged to the people of S. Korea, and it was sweet. It was possible because of the characteristics of the mothers of S. Korea who stood in front of the line.

Standing in front of the line of danger is to lay down life for the sake of others, and is indeed sacrificial love. Jesus says, “the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.” So did the mothers of Korea. As sacrificial love happens, there is life, healing, change of life, and more.

Today I would like to speak of the power of sacrificial love.

Most of all, ***sacrificial love is a life giving love.*** In his book, *In The Grip of Grace*, Bryan Chapell tells us about that kind of love:

“On Sunday, August 16, 1987, Northwest Airlines flight 225 crashed just after taking off from the Detroit airport. 155 people were killed. One survived: a 4-year-old from Tempe, Arizona, named Cecelia.

“News accounts say when rescuers found Cecelia, they did not believe she had been on the plane. Investigators first assumed Cecelia had been a passenger in one of the cars on the highway onto which the airliner crashed. But when the passenger register for the flight was checked, there was Cecelia’s name.

“Cecelia survived because, as the plane was falling, her mother,

Paula Chican, unbuckled her own seat belt, got down on her knees in front of her daughter, wrapped her arms and body around Cecelia, and then would not let her go.”

Jesus says, “The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.” Paula Chican became a human cushion in front of her daughter, and would not let her go, and Cecelia was miraculously saved. It is impossible to overstate how great the mother’s sacrificial love was. Sacrificial love is a life giving love, and it makes a miracle possible, and stands in front of the line.

Also, ***sacrificial love is a life changing love.*** How many people have been encouraged by the words of Jesus, “I know my own and my own know me.” Christ, the good shepherd, knows our needs, and protects and helps us. So we can cope, we can endure, and we can conquer our difficulties and problems with Christ’s help. It is because of the love of Christ. Love requires work. Love is something at which you work. Especially sacrificial love has the power to turn a life around and strengthen it.

When Carole Yamaguchi delivered her baby daughter, she noticed that the child’s feet turned inward, the toes facing each other. Carole was determined to do whatever it would take to help her daughter walk normally.

For four years Carole provided the child with corrective shoes. Her daughter was walking normally by age six, but Carole wasn’t satisfied. “I wanted her to do anything in which she would use her legs,” she says. The girl chose ice skating. The girl was a natural on the ice. Before long, the youngster was bugging her mother for more rink time. She’d refuse to leave the ice until she got a particular move right. Soon Carole was rising at 4 a.m. to get her daughter to the rink.

Finally, after 15 years of lessons, as the U.S. flag was hoisted during the 1992 Olympic medals ceremony, Carole and Jim Yamaguchi watched Kristi receive the gold medal. Kristi Yamaguchi stood on that victory platform because of a mother who stood behind her and helped her conquer. Her mother’s sacrificial love not only made healing possible, but also helped her grow to her best.

Another power of *sacrificial love is life sharing*. Christ had another point to make about love: Sacrificial love shares even life and death. He explained it like this, “the hired shepherd sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away.” But the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. A sacrificial love shares not only life but also the danger of death.

Do you know the story of Princess Alice?

Alice was the second daughter of Queen Victoria, and she had a four-year-old son whom she loved very much. When he contracted the disease known as “black diphtheria,” Alice was devastated. The disease was highly contagious and very deadly. Not being in the best of health herself, the nurses continually warned the Princess to stay away from her son. Naturally this would be very difficult for any mother. Still, Alice knew she would be in danger if she ignored the warnings.

*One day as Princess Alice stood in a far corner of her son’s room, she heard her son whisper to a nurse, “Why doesn’t my mother kiss me anymore?” That was more than Alice could bear. As tears streamed down her cheeks, she raced to her son’s bed, held him in her arms and smothered him with kisses, reassuring him of her love. Tragically, this turned out to be the kiss of death. Princess Alice contracted the deadly disease, and in a matter of weeks both mother and son were buried. (William K. Quick *Signs of Our Times*, p. 106)*

All of us who are parents can understand why Princess Alice did what she did. When you love, when you truly love, no sacrifice is too great. That was sacrificial love of the good shepherd, Jesus Christ says to us, and that was the love Jesus Christ showed us, and that was what Princess Alice did for her son.

We respond to such a sacrifice, don’t we? So do the followers of Jesus, the Good Shepherd. Jesus says, “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.” Thank be to our Lord, for his sacrificial love, and I salute mothers everywhere for their love for their children, and mothers on the front line.