

## **Mother's Day Sermon**

May 10, 2009

Leonard Sweet gives the following test in one of his articles. He calls it the difference between East and West. Cross Cultural researchers use this question to explore the nature of the difference between East and West, and their respective perceptions of life, family and relationships. Here is the question: "I love my mother, But..." think about how you would answer it... " I love my mother, but...."

Ask a person raised in a Western culture of the United States or Great Britain or a person raised in Turkey or the Greece and you will get very different answers.

I love my mother but....

She drives me Crazy.

She absolutely can't cook.

She has a gangrene thumb! She couldn't grow a dandelion if her life depended upon it!

Her mother's love is smother love!

In other words, in Western culture what comes after "I love my mother But..." is almost always a negative remark. Our love is tempered by our knowledge of our mother's human frailties, foibles and imperfections.

But in the Eastern culture the typical answer is quite different.

I love my Mother but

I will never be able to show her how much.

I can never repay her for what she has done for me.

I owe her so much, she has sacrifices so much for me.

She has worked so hard for her family.

The Eastern culture does not use the But to water down the love. The Eastern Culture instead uses the But to add more feeling and flavor to the love, showing more devotion.

Why do we do this? There are a lot of theories. I believe we in the west are afraid to express emotion, while in the East they are much more free with their emotions. This means that we tend to be afraid of true love. We seek to diminish it, to distance ourselves from it.

Western culture uses the But to dilute expression of love with some sort of expressions of criticism or sarcasms. Why do we do this? We are afraid....

But I remind you, love is not supposed to be safe, there is a vulnerability to love. Love means taking risks. Nor are the ones we love supposed to be perfect. Far from it usually. Love is not blind, love means accepting people in grace....loving them in spite of their faults.

Our text today gives us the foundation for this kind of love. It begins with God's great love for us. In fact, it makes the declaration that "we love, because he first loved us." When we wonder how we can love someone, here is the answer...the Love of God in Jesus Christ. His love fills our hearts and overflows in us...allowing us to love others. We love because he first loved us. We feel loved...and therefore we love. The more we are loved, the more we love. Love begins with God's love...which is unconditional, forgiving and without end.

Our love begins with God's love.

In fact, John twice in this passage makes an amazing declaration about the very nature of God. We are told that God's very nature is Love. God is Love. Now, he does not say that LOVE is God. That is an important distinction. Our limited human experience of love cannot be lifted to deity status, nor can we deify our emotional response to affection...for in doing so we in essence deify ourselves. No, Love is not God. BUT, God is love. God, in everything God is and everything God does is loving. Remember, love is a verb...something you do. the Word used is

Agape, the greek word for love meaning the divine, selfless, giving love. A love that sacrifices and holds nothing back.

This is how God showed his love among us....He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might have life through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and gave his son to be the means by which our sins are forgiven!

The true nature of love is demonstrated in that God came in Christ to be close to us, and that Jesus was willing to die as a means to demonstrate how much God loves us...and to be the means by which we might be saved.

God holds nothing back. God makes whatever sacrifice is necessary for us, that we might live. Which reminds me of Mother's day. We remember mothers because they demonstrate for us this great love on earth. They live out Agape love; a selfless, sacrificial love for their children. And often not just for their children, but for other children as well. Yesterday at the service for Ruth Moellering one of her Neighbors shared what a difference in his life she made. His mother died when he was 9, and Ruth had included him in her family as if he were her own son. She was another mother to him and he said her acts of simple kindness made all the difference to him growing up.

Mother's have notoriously big hearts. Love gives and love makes room. Accepting and being willing to help. Love overlooks our attempts to be cool, to stand aloof, to be independent...love is always there behind the scenes, ready to support us and catch us if we fall. Remember the story of the prodigal sons...for both of them are in need of the Father's love.

A mother moves us to love as well. As does God. John says that as God loves us, we ought to love one another. As we have been loved, so we ought to love. We love, because he first loved us. We can't love God and hate someone else. It can't be done. If we say we do, John says

simply and matter of factly that we are liars...God isn't in them...for again, God is love. And Love and Hate can't exist at the same time. And God gives us examples of love, lived out in the real world. Not perfect, but good and brave and strong. I love my mother...But I miss her since she died much too young. I wish she could have seen the young women her grand children have become, she would be very proud.

We are the bridge to God's love..the way for others to come in touch with the unlimited love of God. One of the best examples is the love of a mother. Thanks moms, for loving us the way you do. In spite of all we do, in spite of our tendency to minimize and distance ourselves from that love...in our hearts we know its power and it is usually only after its gone that we acknowledge all that it meant to us. So if your mother is still around, don't put it off or pretend it doesn't matter...let her know how you really care. You might not get the chance again. Time is short.

Mother's reflect God's sacrificial love and are a constant source of love, hope and joy.

Happy Mother's day.