

Sermon for May 13, 2012 – Mother's Day

Genesis 3:20;4:1,2a, 25,26

Theme: Christian Mothers . . .

- 1) *Are forgiven.*
- 2) *Share Their Forgiveness.*

Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living. Adam lay with his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. She said, "With the help of the LORD I have brought forth a man." Later she gave birth to his brother Abel. Adam lay with his wife again, and she gave birth to a son and named him Seth, saying, "God has granted me another child in place of Abel, since Cain killed him." Seth also had a son, and he named him Enosh. At that time men began to call on the name of the LORD.

It is customary on this day to praise mothers for all the wonderful things that they are and do; but sometimes this praise goes too far. The sentiments expressed on Mother's Day make it seem as if all mothers are perfect. Christian mothers are not perfect - they are only forgiven. And it is faith in this forgiveness that makes Christian mothers such a blessing to their family.

Using the example of Eve, the mother of all mothers, let us praise God for the true blessing Christian mothers are and offer, under the theme: **Christian mothers 1) are forgiven, and 2) share their forgiveness.**

Part One: Christian Mothers Are Forgiven.

Adam's wife Eve was the perfect woman. God created her with incredible gifts that he intended all mothers to possess. Eve was created to be Adam's great helper; to love and be loved by her husband and children. She was created with a perfect will and incredible energy to care for, nourish and protect her family. She possessed all the gifts that the best mothers on this earth have, since all these gifts were passed on to them from her.

But shortly after her creation, Eve did something incredibly foolish. God had only one commandment for both Adam and Eve, and that was not to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He explicitly told them if they ate it, they would die. But the devil deceived Eve into thinking that God lied about that tree, that God was holding out on her. And so, at Satan's prompting and trusting his words over God's, she and her husband took some of the forbidden fruit and ate it.

But God never lies. And so -because of Adam and Eve's foolish act - sin, pain and death came upon them and all their descendants. Because of this one act of rebellion, mankind became subject to God's righteous anger, and faces eternal death in hell.

But God loved Eve and wanted neither her, her husband nor their children in hell. And so God promised that he would put enmity between her and the devil, and his offspring and hers. One great descendant of Eve would crush the power of Satan and rescue her. But the devil would cause this Savior great suffering as he did this (Genesis 3:16). This Savior promised to Eve we know as Jesus.

Eve was forgiven of her sin through faith in God's promise of a Savior. Both she and Adam became the first believers. I find it wonderful that God spoke this promise in front of Eve in order to comfort her and assure her of His forgiving love. At the same time, there would be earthly consequences of her sin that she would have to face until God's promise would be fulfilled: the pain of childbirth, a sinful husband who would rule over her, sickness and death. . . . Eve, who was created perfect, would have to face seeing her children born sinful – hating and hurting each other.

When her first child, Cain was born, Eve hoped that he might actually be the Savior. But Cain ended up being an unbeliever and murderer! Can you imagine the heartache that must have caused Eve? Her own son Cain killing her other own son Abel! When this happened, I can imagine Eve thinking: "If I had not sinned, Cain would not be an unbeliever. He would not have killed his brother. What have I done!"

But God loved Eve and Eve knew it. She trusted in the Lord's promise to send a Savior. She confessed and shared that trust with her children. And the LORD gave Eve another son named Seth to take the place of Abel, and carry on the line of the Savior.

I think a lot of mothers can sympathize with Eve. Mothers are sinners too, and many times a mother's sin not only affects her, but also her children. The sin might be sex outside marriage and the consequences of being a single parent. This sin could be alcohol abuse and having a child born with fetal alcohol syndrome. It could be the sin of gossiping and a rumor that destroys her child's reputation. It could be the sin of neglect, or – worst of all – not sharing the Gospel with their children that results in the child straying from faith and family alike . . .

What can a mother do when she sees the effect her sin has on her family? She can learn from the example of Eve. When faced with the tragedy of what Cain did to Abel, all Eve could do is remember the LORD's promise that her sins were forgiven because of what the coming Savior would do. The promise that a Savior was coming to forgive sin and restore believers to the perfection lost through the Fall gave Eve great comfort. It also is what gives all of us comfort when we face the consequences of sin in our life. When you see your children rebel, fall away or hurt themselves, it is easy to look into your past and wonder what you did wrong to cause it, or what you might have done differently to prevent it. Mothers are not perfect. They make mistakes. But know this: you are forgiven in Christ. Take your troubles and sins to the Lord in prayer and look to Jesus for forgiveness and hope. He loves you and will not turn you away in anger. Trust that the LORD hears your prayers and will keep all his promises to you, just as he did for Eve. Christian mothers are forgiven.

Part Two: Christian Mothers Share Their Forgiveness

Eve treasured the forgiveness that the LORD promised her. It comforted her through the many trials that she faced in life. I find it very interesting that the LORD spoke the first promise of the Savior, to comfort not Adam, but Eve. I find it interesting that the first recorded confession of faith in the LORD was from Eve, saying, "With the help of the LORD I have brought forth a man." Even after her first son Cain, brutally murdered her second son Abel, she confessed her trust in the Lord by saying, "God has granted me another child in place of Abel, since Cain killed him." Eve understood the Lord's forgiveness and she certainly shared this faith with her children, a pattern that all Christian mothers certainly follow.

I have noticed something interesting throughout my ministry: who is it that is most often involved in witnessing the Christian faith to their children – fathers or mothers? While there certainly are many Christian fathers who fulfill their God-given duties to bring their children up in the way of the Lord, it is more often than not Christian mothers who share their faith with their children.

Let me tell you about another Christian mother named Monica who lived in Northern Africa. She had a son who fell away from the faith and lived a very wild life. He was known to hang around prostitutes. He followed this and that religious movement and philosophy, but was never really receptive to Christianity. Monica deeply cared for her son and did not want him to die as an unbeliever. So what did Monica do? She shared her faith with her son, even though he didn't listen. She would spend time in the church, weeping to God, praying that He bring her son to faith.

One day her pastor saw her weeping in prayer and asked her what was wrong. She told him about her son. Her pastor told her to keep trusting in God, that He will answer her fervent prayer. And guess what happened: Not only did her son repent of his sins and turn to the Lord for forgiveness, but he later became one of the most important and influential Church fathers of all time. His name was St. Augustine.

The reason I told this story is to give an example of the love and concern that Christian mothers have for their children. They are always before the throne of God begging for their children. They witness their faith to their children, and, in doing, so pass on the most precious gift they have: the forgiveness of sins.

Young mothers gathered here today: you certainly want the best for your children, don't you? You want them to succeed in life. You want to guard them from danger. Dear mothers, the best gift you can offer your children is your faith in Jesus for forgiveness. This is what your children need. How can you share it with them? Bring them to Church and Sunday School. Read Bible stories and pray with them at home. Enroll them in our Christian elementary School at St. Paul's in

Algoma, or Manitowoc Lutheran High School. Lead by example, showing how much Jesus' forgiveness means to you, and your children will follow.

But what about when the children of faithful Christian mothers fall away? Sometimes you might feel like you have failed in some way. Get rid of these guilty thoughts by going to the cross and remembering that Jesus has removed any imperfection and sin you have or only think you have. God has forgiven you. What can you do? Continue to pray for your children and grandchildren. Continue to witness your faith to them. God certainly will hear your many prayers and will work through the Gospel message you witness to your children.

Children: consider the instruction, prayers and love that your Christian mothers have for you. They don't want you lost or hurt. Listen to them, especially when they tell you about God's love for you in Christ. This is the best way you can honor your Christian mothers, who truly are one of God's greatest earthly blessings to you. This is how you can honor both them and God, not only today, but everyday.

I also want to give a word of advice to the husbands of Christian mothers. Treasure them as the gift of God that they actually are to you and your children. Do everything you can to support them, listen to them and love them. Treat them with the same self-sacrificing love that Christ has for the Church. This is your duty to them, and God will hold you accountable for the way you treat your wives. He has forgiven all of your sins; now live in that forgiveness by doing what is right – to the praise of God, and out of love and thanks to your wife.

Christian mothers are not perfect, but they are forgiven, and they share this forgiveness in a way that only a mother can . Praise God for Christian mothers and grandmothers. Amen.