



Wishing you the
very best this
Mother's Day!

This is May 9, 2021, the 6th Sunday of Easter and it's Mother's Day!

On behalf of our family of faith at Community United Church of Christ,
Medford, WI, welcome to this time of worship!

“No matter who you are or where you are on your life's journey,
you are welcome here!”

A special welcome to all mothers who are able to be with their families today,
and to those of us whose mothers who are with us in our hearts and in our memories today.

Let's begin with this **Call to Worship:**

Something so big we can't hold it. Something so deep we can't reach it.

Yet it beckons. It has many names. God. Love. Truth. Community.

To experience some love. To shiver with joy.

God is in all of it and God has drawn us here. To feel some light. To dwell in some peace.

Let's turn to someone near us now or call someone on the phone later and say, “Peace be with you.”

Tamara C. will read the Scripture today: Gospel of John 15:9-17

The Message interpretation brings to us these words of Jesus:

⁹⁻¹⁰ “I've loved you the way my Father has loved me. Make yourselves at home in my love.

If you keep my commands, you'll remain intimately at home in my love. That's what I've done—
kept my Father's commands and made myself at home in his love.

¹¹⁻¹⁵ “I've told you these things for a purpose: that my joy might be your joy, and your joy wholly mature.

This is my command: Love one another the way I loved you. This is the very best way to love. Put your life
on the line for your friends. You are my friends when you do the things I command you. I'm no longer
calling you servants because servants don't understand what their master is thinking and planning. No, I've
named you friends because I've let you in on everything I've heard from the Father.

¹⁶ “You didn't choose me, remember; I chose you, and put you in the world to bear fruit, fruit that won't
spoil. As fruit bearers, whatever you ask the Father in relation to me, he gives you.

¹⁷ “But remember the root command: Love one another.

~The Message, © 1993, 2002, 2018 by Eugene H. Peterson

Thank you, Tamara! **My Message today is entitled:** “Invisible”

Please pray with me: Holy One of many names, we come before you, knowing that you are where we are.
Oh, great Invisible One, let us each be the carriers and sharers of the love and grace that you so freely
give to us. We pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

On this Mother's Day, I would like to begin with a story that is worthy of the sharing. I do not know who the
author is but, I do know that I have kept it in my “sermon ideas” file for quite a while.

Whether you are a mother or not; whether you are a foster mother or have been *like a mother* to someone,
or have become a mother by adoption; whether you have had a close relationship with your mother
or a relationship that you would compare to “oil and water;” whether you think fondly of all the little things
your mother has done or is doing for you ...or, you can't let go of the biting words of parting that hang
in your heart; whether your mother lives nearby, or many miles away or lives only in a very special place
in your heart; whether you never knew your mother or are still searching for her...I believe that we will
all hear this story in our own unique way. It is entitled: “Invisible Mother.”

It all began to make sense, the blank stares, the lack of response, the way one of the kids will walk
into the room while I'm on the phone and ask to be taken to the store.

Inside, I'm thinking, 'Can't you see I'm on the phone?' Obviously not.

No one can see if I'm on the phone, or cooking, or sweeping the floor, or even standing on my head in the corner, because no one can see me at all.

I'm invisible. The invisible Mom. Some days I am only a pair of hands, nothing more:
Can you fix this? Can you tie this? Can you open this?

Some days I'm not a pair of hands; I'm not even a human being. I'm a clock to ask, 'What time is it?' I'm a satellite guide to answer, 'What number is the Disney Channel?' I'm a car to order, 'Right around 5:30, please.'

I was certain that these were the hands that once held books and the eyes that studied history and the mind that graduated sum a cum laude but, now they had disappeared into the peanut butter, never to be seen again. She's going; she's going; she is gone!

One night, a group of us were having dinner, celebrating the return of a friend from England. Janice had just gotten back from a fabulous trip, and she was going on and on about the hotel she stayed in. I was sitting there, looking around at the others all put together so well. It was hard not to compare and feel sorry for myself.

I was feeling pretty pathetic, when Janice turned to me with a beautifully wrapped package, and said, 'I brought you this.' It was a book on the great cathedrals of Europe. I wasn't exactly sure why she'd given it to me until I read her inscription:

'To Charlotte, with admiration for the greatness of what you are building when no one sees.'

In the days ahead I would read - no, devour - the book. And I would discover what would become for me, four life-changing truths, after which I could pattern my work:

1. No one can say who built the great cathedrals - we have no record of their names.
2. These builders gave their whole lives for a work they would never see finished.
3. They made great sacrifices and expected no credit.
4. The passion of their building was fueled by their faith that the eyes of God saw everything.

A legendary story in the book, told of a rich man who came to visit the cathedral while it was being built, and he saw a workman carving a tiny bird on the inside of a beam. He was puzzled and asked the man, 'Why are you spending so much time carving that bird into a beam that will be covered by the roof? No one will ever see it.' And the workman replied, 'Because God sees.'

I closed the book, feeling the missing piece fall into place. It was almost as if I heard God whispering to me, 'I see you, Charlotte. I see the sacrifices you make every day, even when no one around you does. No act of kindness you've done, no sequin you've sewn on, no cupcake you've baked, is too small for me to notice and smile over. You are building a great cathedral, but you can't see right now what it will become.'

At times, my invisibility feels like an affliction. But it is not a disease that is erasing my life. It is the cure for the disease of my own self-centeredness. It is the antidote to my strong, stubborn pride.

I keep the right perspective when I see myself as a great builder. As one of the people who show up at a job that they will never see finished, to work on something that their name will never be on.

The writer of the book went so far as to say that no cathedrals could ever be built in our lifetime because there are so few people willing to sacrifice to that degree.

When I really think about it, I don't want my son to tell the friend he's bringing home from college for Thanksgiving, 'My Mom gets up at 4 in the morning and bakes homemade pies, and then she hand bastes

a turkey for three hours and presses all the linens for the table.' That would mean I'd built a shrine or a monument to myself. I just want him to want to come home. And then, if there is anything more to say to his friend, to add, 'you're gonna love it there.'

As mothers, we are building great cathedrals. We cannot be seen if we're doing it right. And one day, it is very possible that the world will marvel, not only at what we have built, but at the beauty that has been added to the world by the sacrifices of invisible women. Great Job, MOM!

Mother's Day is a holiday honoring motherhood that is observed in different forms throughout the world. The American Mother's Day was created by Anna Jarvis in 1908 and became an official U.S. holiday in 1914. Jarvis would later denounce the holiday's commercialization and spent the latter part of her life trying to remove it from the calendar.

Looking further back...Celebrations of mothers and motherhood can be traced back to the ancient Greeks and Romans, who held festivals in honor of the mother goddesses Rhea and Cybele, but the clearest modern precedent for Mother's Day is the early Christian festival known as "Mothering Sunday." Once a major tradition in the United Kingdom and parts of Europe, this celebration fell on the fourth Sunday in Lent and was originally seen as a time when the faithful would return to their "mother church"—the main church in the vicinity of their home—for a special worship service.

Over time, the Mothering Sunday tradition shifted into a more secular holiday and eventually faded in popularity before merging with the American Mother's Day in the 1930s and 1940s.

Perhaps we can all marvel at who we have become because of the love of our mothers! and because of the love of our fathers...and because of *all those* we have come to know as family. This day, in the church, has been traditionally known as "The Festival of the Christian Home."

Whatever we call it, I have to confess to you that, in my years of serving as a pastor, I have tried to avoid singling out mothers on Mother's Day and singling out fathers on Father's Day, fearing that someone would be hurt by the words that I would speak. After all, it is not a church holiday. It has taken me this long to face up to the fact, that the words of Jesus in today's scripture and Mother's Day and Father's Day are closely related.

In last week's scripture passage in the Gospel of John Jesus says, (John 15:4-5) "Live in me. Make your home in me just as I do in you. In the same way that a branch can't bear grapes by itself but only by being joined to the vine, you can't bear fruit unless you are joined with me. I am the vine and you are the branches."

The words of Jesus today are these: John 15:9-11 "I've loved you the way my Father has loved me. Make yourselves at home in my love. If you keep my commands, you'll remain intimately at home in my love..." "I've told you these things for a purpose: that my joy might be your joy..."

Jesus might have also said, "I've loved you the way my Mother has loved me." He said this just hours before he was arrested; just a day before he was crucified. Before he left them, Jesus felt as though he needed to sum up what was most important that the disciples remember. No matter what is about to happen in the next few days or for the rest of our lives. Jesus leaves us with these same words today.

I am going to read them from 4 different versions of the Bible: John 15:17

The Message: "But remember the root command: Love one another."

Common English Bible: "I give you these commandments so that you can love each other."

New Revised Standard Version: "I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another."

King James Version: "These things I command you, that ye love one another."

In the footnote of my study Bible are these words: Christians will get plenty of hatred from the world; we need love and support from one another. Do you allow small problems to get in the way of loving others? Jesus commands that you love them and he will give you the strength to do it.

It will take us a lifetime to grow into these words of Jesus. It may take us the rest of our lives to realize that even though quite invisible, love placed us in our mother's arms on the day of our birth. Love nurtured us along our life's journey, even though it may not have been what we would call perfect; even though, we can only identify it by looking back.

The banner that hangs in our sanctuary bears these words, "A mother's love never ends," paraphrasing the words of Paul in his first letter to the early church in Corinth. 1 Corinthians 13:8 NRV Love never ends.

These words and the words of Jesus are true on Mother's Day, Father's Day and every day!

Love one another.

Do not just think of these words as something nice to read in the Bible. They come, invisibly wrapped in the love of our mothers this day. I dare say that **we** all still have a lot of loving to do!

Take a deep breath... and let it out

Time for Prayer: Let's spend a few moments in silent prayer.

Let us pray: Loving God, you promise to be with us when we go out and when we come in, in our working and in our play, in our busy-ness and in our resting, when our stomachs are full and when we are thirsty, in our highest highs and in our lowest lows. Thank you!

Forgive our ease in blaming one another and causing one another stress; and raise us to a higher plain by whispering hints in our ears that will lead us to do better. We are able, with your help, to leave our selfish ways behind us and to be leaders in loving and caring. Thank you!

We give thanks this day for our families, no matter the size or the "shape" we are in. Bless us with joyful reunions when we gather again. Thank you!

Hear now the prayers we hold in our hearts as we lift our prayers for those who have asked us to pray for them and for those who never would ask... In the name of Jesus Christ, our Risen Savior, and in his words, we pray: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation but, deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.

Solo, Pastor Mary Jo: "Amazing Grace"

1. Amazing grace! how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost and now am found, was blind, but now I see.
2. 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved;
how precious did that grace appear the hour I first believed!
3. Through many dangers, toils and snares, I have already come;
'tis grace hath brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home.
4. The Lord has promised good to me, his word, my hope secures;
he will my shield and portion be as long as life endures.
5. When we've been there the thousand years, bright shining as the sun,
we've no less days to sing God's praise than when we first begun.

A Time of Intention and Thanks: Many thanks to all who, by your giving, have made possible the loving ministry of Jesus to continue. Let's dedicate the gifts that have been given in person, through the mail and by electronic means.

Oh God of love, we offer you our time, talents and treasures, knowing that you have set before us more to do than we have yet imagined! Bless these gifts and inspire our generosity in the name of Jesus. Amen.

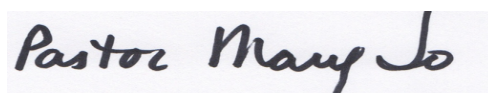
Benediction: Let our intent be: to remember that the good news of God's love is not just a message for today. It is a glorious charge and a holy calling. Go now and do what loving requires of us... the right thing!

Peace be with you and be safe!

Peace be with you and be safe!

You will find this *recorded service* at uccmedford.org

Click on "media." 715-351-0450

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light gray background. The signature reads "Pastor Mary Jo" in a cursive, flowing script.