

GATEWAY CHURCH NORTHUMBERLAND

15.3.15

Mothers Day thoughts - Joss Bray

Some important points to start with-

- There will be many different experiences of mothers (and fathers) - both good and bad.
- If your experience is not good, the most important thing to remember is this:

PS 27:10 Though my father and mother forsake me, the LORD will receive me.

- God's love for us does not depend on our experiences in life.
- Our view of God mustn't be shaped by negative experiences of earthly parents who often get things wrong (as we all do)

What about God then?

- God created both mothers and fathers and he made human beings in his image.
- Therefore in God there will be the attributes and qualities of a mother and a father.
- There is a risk of stereotyping mothers and fathers by "traditional" role models. God's nature is ideally seen in both - it's not about role, it's about character and heart attitude.
- We know that Jesus described God as his Father and that he told us to do the same and see him as our heavenly Father.
- So what has happened to the mothering side of God?
- Here are some thoughts about how out of God's heart we see things that we often associate with mothers:

Mothers endure pain for their children.

It is amazing how much pain mothers go through in childbirth and then quickly say they want to go through it all over again!

What pain God must have gone through, when he allowed his only son to be tortured and crucified on the cross. God had to turn his face away from Jesus - as he said "my God, my God, why have you forsaken me" - how hard that must have been for a parent

But Jesus did it voluntarily - it was his choice. He saw beyond the pain and sorrow. He loved us so much that he willingly laid down his life for us - to take the punishment that should have been ours.

HEB 12:2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Like a mother suffering through childbirth in fact. There is a joy set before her that far outweighs the severe pain. God is not distant from pain - the pain of a parent when their child is suffering or indeed the pain of suffering itself.

But God did it to bring to birth many spiritual children - whom we are some of. Without Jesus going through the cross and demonstrating that he had conquered death itself - then we could not have that new life and be born again.

JN 1:12 Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God-- children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

Born of God! - There is a motherly picture if there ever was one - but what does it mean?

JN 3:5 Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.'

There is a spiritual new birth needed to become children of God. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to do that. It is a completely new start to become spiritual children. We were born naturally, but we have been born again supernaturally.

Mothers gather in their children and nurture them.

Jesus said this about Jerusalem:

LK 13:34 ".....how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!

As a mother loves to have her children with her, so Jesus longed to gather the children of Jerusalem - the Jewish people who so often went astray and forgot God.

His heart was to nurture and look after them, not to reject them. It is the same for us now and everyone who is straying from God. Jesus is looking for people to gather in and feed and care for.

Mothers are comforting and caring.

ISA 66:13 As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you

God comforts us like a mother. Little children (and bigger ones) want their mother when they are hurting. Paul says:

2CO 1:3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles

So there we see that the mothering qualities of God sit are totally compatible with God being our father. That is of course because he created mothers and fathers in his own image - to be like him.

Even the apostles Paul, Silas and Timothy managed to be motherly to the Thessalonian church -

1TH 2:6..... As apostles of Christ we could have been a burden to you, but we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children.

So it is possible also to be like a mother when you are a tough manly apostle! As we said before, since we are made in the image of God, we should all reflect his attributes - being a man doesn't stop you being motherly!

In conclusion:

God shows his love for us in many ways - both in traditionally motherly ways and fatherly ways. He has the qualities of the perfect father and the perfect mother - the best mum and the best dad. Even though we know him as our heavenly Father, his love for us is complete in every way.

Remember, though - if your experience of mothers or fathers was less than good - then listen again to this:

PS 27:10 Though my father and mother forsake me, the LORD will receive me

That is God's promise to us. He says this:

JOEL 2:25 "I will repay you for the years the locusts have eaten

So if you identify with that, then God understands - he knows about suffering - even for many years. He welcomes you with the open arms of a loving parent. He will receive you. He also promises new life and a joy far beyond what has been lost.

Let's gratefully receive what he wants to give. He does not give grudgingly or with a mean spirit. He gave it all in Jesus.