

A Love Without Limits

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[0 : 00] Well, today set aside to remember our mothers, that's what we're here for at one level, it's a day to honour our mothers, it's Mother's Day. Now we produced a little booklet, a little brochure, it's in your bulletins you can have to read it at another time, but that's there for you to take as well.

In a nutshell, this is a day that came about because of a Christian woman named Anna Jarvis. She wanted to care for mothers who were doing it tough and her daughter Anna Jarvis worked to have a church service on the second Sunday in May to honour her mother, that's how it came about.

And this day is now recognised in much of the world. Now I'm not a mother, nor a woman, just so you know, and however, I am married and in conversation with things, looking at the Scriptures, I've come to see that motherhood in general, in the Scriptures, can be summarised kind of like this, as we've heard this morning, heartache and joy.

That's the sort of spectrum it's on. For some it's more heartache and for some it's more joy, but that's the spectrum of the reality as you look at the Scriptures. Heartache and joy.

Heartache for all kinds of reasons. For some, motherhood is desired but not looking like it's ever happening, where there's no husband in sight. For some, hopes have been dashed, hopes have been lost, disappointments with how things have turned out, there's long-term grief, loss of a child, seeing a child suffering amongst all kinds of other complications.

[1 : 28] If that's you this morning, then let me say you're in the right place, as you've heard already, I'm sure, because God knows what it's like to be broken hearted and there are people here just like that.

This is a place we can be honest and talk about heartache and talk to God and find real comfort. And it grieves my heart that that's the reality as well.

And even though your heart's broken or still breaking, God's heart breaks for you as well.

Motherhood is also a great joy. It's a gift of having a child, in seeing the child grow up, in seeing the child making it in life, and the child reaching various milestones in life, crawling, and then walking, and then talking, and then talking to you nicely, and so on.

It's right, isn't it, to give honour to our mothers every day, but not just on Mother's Day, but because the Lord tells us to do that. The fourth commandment goes like this, honour your father and your mother as the Lord God commanded you, that your days may be long and that it may go well with you in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.

This day is not first and foremost about someone receiving honour if they are only a mother, but about all of us giving honour to those who gave us birth, whether they're alive or dead.

[2 : 55] But when we do that, in conjunction with ordering the rest of our lives as God would have us order them, to that extent we do that, society is better off for everybody.

Today is a particularly good day to honour our mums. To give honour to the one who gave me birth, the one who gave me life, the one, this is the day to honour them.

And to let them know that you love her. Not just for what she's done for you, but for who she is. My mum is also one who took the time to read to me, to encourage me to have a go.

She needed to be jumpers, and there's one particular red jumper that I pull out here at church, probably once or twice a year. It hasn't got moths eaten through it yet, because it's in Brisbane, isn't it?

But just a couple of times a year it comes out. I'll ring her up regularly, I'll let her know what's going on in our life and our family. I don't pray for her enough, but I probably should do that some more, shouldn't I?

[3 : 53] Now this morning I want to take you to Luke chapter 1, as we've had read, to one of the most famous mums, Mary, as we consider motherhood some more.

Now just to give you a bit of context here, Mary, her pregnancy would have been quite some scandal. This is Mary's heartache. A young woman engaged in marriage is with child, and unlike much of our world today thinks, that meant rightly waiting until you were married before sexual intimacy was enjoyed.

But Mary is pregnant, and had already faced the possible rejection of her fiancé Joseph, and also faced the possible heartache of being a mother on her own.

That's difficult now, but it was difficult then, facing destitution in her day. Her morality was in question.

But God told Joseph to stick by her, and he did. And then Mary's gone to see Elizabeth, her relative, because she too has somehow become pregnant in her old, old, old age.

[5 : 05] Miraculously. Elizabeth lived a long time without child, and would have been heartbroken as a result of that for a long time. So just a reminder, we believe in a God who can do the miraculous, and who does do the impossible.

And then when Mary entered the house, we come to our passage today. We're told that Mary is the mother of someone special, special Jesus, and she's very, very special herself.

She's blessed, because she's going to be the mother of the Lord Jesus Christ. God, the Son. And so Mary sings with joy.

And we see the song that she sings in her joy. She sings to God, her Saviour. She rejoices in God, her Saviour. Now, if that's one thing we need to get clear here, Mary was never perfect.

Verse 47, we see that. She was never perfect. She knows she needs a Saviour, just like all of us. She can't save anybody, but God can. It's God who saves. And she rejoices that God has done great things for her.

[6 : 12] He has blessed her. You see that there. She wasn't nobility. She wasn't from a noble household. She wasn't a princess, just a poor woman engaged to a poor man. But God has chosen her and done great things for her.

All generations are going to call her blessed because of her son, Jesus, who is the long-awaited Saviour of the world, the one who brings forgiveness of sins, the one who rights all wrongs, the one who reconciles relationships, the one who will be king of Israel.

But not just Israel, but eternal king of the kingdom of God, filled with people that he saves to be in that kingdom. That puts her in a league above her on her own, really, doesn't it?

Mums are given to doting on their children. I know you do. When children do well, they bring honour to their parents. And mums are blessed with all kinds of things when their kids flourish and rise to stations in life that they're capable of.

Mary is surely blessed with a perfect child who is going to be the king of the universe.

[7 : 26] And she rejoices in God's mercy. You see there in verse 50. Her joy is found in God and his mercy.

God has mercy upon her. And this mercy is available for all who will fear God. That is, obey God, recognise God as God, honour God as God, and that's mercy is something that we all need.

And when we do recognise God as God, we receive mercy, we receive forgiveness. No person is perfect. No family is perfect. Everyone needs mercy.

Every family needs mercy. And Mary has received mercy. God is the one who has mercy on all who fear him. There can be forgiveness for all our wrongs.

See verse 50. And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. Young or old. Poor or peasant. Powerful or not.

[8 : 30] Rich or poor. Men, women, mums, dads, kids. Because God is good. God is merciful. God is kind.

You see his goodness there in verses 51 to 55. He's shown his strength with his arm. He's scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He's brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted the humble ones.

He's filled the hungry with good things and the rich he sent away empty. Her joy is in the goodness of God. God has shown mercy in his strength and his righteousness.

He's scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. The proud and the arrogant who look down on others, well, in the end, they won't prosper. God sees into the heart.

Remember the people at the Tower of Babel who thought they could actually achieve greatness on their own? Scattered. He's deposed despot kings.

[9 : 34] That's what he's done. He's actually taken them off the throne like Nebuchadnezzar and exalted and lifted up people, the humble ones like Mary, a poor obscure woman from Israel.

And verse 54, he's helped Israel. The nation that was set aside to serve him and him alone, in remembrance of his mercy, he saved them, he helped them after they'd been wayward and disobedient.

He keeps his promises to Abraham, we're told. Even though his chosen people, Israel will build against him time and time again. His promise to Abraham was that through his family line, he would come a promised saviour to the world.

See that as he spoke to our fathers there in verse 55, to Abraham and his offspring forever. That's how he's helped his servant Israel. Abraham, who lived about 1,800 years beforehand, before Mary.

And now through Mary herself, a descendant of Abraham, comes a saviour of the world, born of a woman, as a child, as all people are.

[10 : 46] God has highly esteemed mothers, for he chose to have the saviour of the world, his only son, born to a peasant woman, Mary, and it was all according to his plan.

Which is what Mary is singing about. Not how great she is, but how great God is. And Mary herself has the son.

And a couple of chapters, or a couple of verses later on in chapter 2 of Luke, we see ultimate heartache promised to her. Because of this son, Jesus, Mary is also promised heartache.

In Luke chapter 2, verse 35, Mary's promised some things about Jesus, that he's appointed for the rising and the falling of men in Israel, and for a sign that's to be opposed.

But not only that, a sword will pierce her, through her soul also. She's promised that there'll be great heartache come her way.

[11 : 58] The child that Mary brought into the world, the Lord Jesus, grew up as children do, into a man. And Mary saw her son risk his life, but more than risk his life, give his life on the cross.

The most gut-wrenching moment for a mother to ever face, seeing her son executed before her very eyes, in the most barbaric way, so that she could be saved, and so that we could have life. I'm told that there's nothing like a mum's love. Mothers risk their lives to give us life. Mothers suffer to give us life.

It's a love that loves to the end. It's a love that loves the wayward. It's a love that loves the lovely, and it's a love that loves sacrificially, going without sleep to care for us, feed us, comfort us, care for us, nurse us when we're sick.

It's a love that's without end, without limit. And our mothers might be willing to die for us, because our children, we are precious to them. But God shows his love for us in this.

[13 : 11] While we were still sinners, while we were still like defiant children, while we were still kicking and screaming and saying terrible things to God, while we were his enemies, Jesus died for me, for us.

That is a love beyond measure. That is a love without limit. And his death was a death that we all deserve for our rebelliousness against God.

And this rebellion works its way out, doesn't it, in all kinds of ways we've heard today. The way we've treated others, including those in our own families. His death was a death that we all deserve for attempting to dethrone God as God and live there ourselves.

And yet Jesus endured death on the cross for the joy that was set before him. Being raised and exalted as king of the kingdom and filling the kingdom with people that he's saved from sin and death.

But that's not all. There's ultimate joy to come. See, not only did Mary give Jesus birth, not only did Jesus die in her sight, but she also saw him alive again.

[14 : 40] She was there at the empty tomb. Can you imagine? Can you imagine that day? Seeing her son, not as a corpse, but as alive in a glorious resurrection body.

The risen king who has conquered death. Her tears turn into joy. Astounding joy. Her son is alive, never to die again.

And because he's alive, Mary can be confident in her salvation. Life beyond the grave. What incredible hope, what incredible joy that is for her to know and to experience.

Now, men and women, boys and girls, brothers and sisters in Christ, if your heart is broken for any reason at all, whoever you are, for whatever strife you're in or whatever strife you've caused, let me

tell you, hope and joy is to be found and it's found by belief in the Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, we are told that this joy that comes by believing in him is absolutely inexpressible. It's a joy found in the first instance by believing in Jesus and it's a joy kept by continuing to believe in him our life long.

[16 : 14] His mercy is still available for all who fear him and believe in him for when we do, forgiveness is found and hope is given for the sinner.

Now, the way that we honour our mothers is this, to recognise who they are and to thank them for giving us life. In a similar way, the way to honour Jesus is to recognise who he is, recognise and say, thank you for your work and your sacrificial love for me and take him up on his offer to give us eternal life, receive his mercy.

Today might be the day for some here this morning. There's a prayer on the news sheet you can pray at any time to become a follower of Jesus Christ and then to be born into the family of the one who loves you so much, one who loves you so much.

To receive what God is still offering and has on offer today, forgiveness, so that we too can sing with Mary, my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour.

And for those of us who have received this mercy, continue to honour the Lord Jesus Christ by honouring our mothers in obedience to his word. Let's pray.

[17 : 29] Our Father in Heaven, thank you for your Son, the Lord Jesus, born of a woman, born under the law, the one who went to the cross, bore our sin and rose again to eternal life, to bring forgiveness, never to die again.

We long for the day when we return to make all things right and we pray that as that day approaches, we be those found honouring him as our Lord and Saviour.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.