

Proverbs 27:1-11

Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring. Let another praise you, and not your own mouth—a stranger, and not your own lips. A stone is heavy, and sand is weighty, but a fool's provocation is heavier than both. Wrath is cruel, anger is overwhelming, but who is able to stand before jealousy? Better is open rebuke than hidden love. Well meant are the wounds a friend inflicts, but profuse are the kisses of an enemy. The sated appetite spurns honey, but to a ravenous appetite even the bitter is sweet. Like a bird that strays from its nest is one who strays from home. Perfume and incense make the heart glad, but the soul is torn by trouble. Do not forsake your friend or the friend of your parent; do not go to the house of your kindred on the day of your calamity. Better is a neighbor who is nearby than kindred who are far away. Be wise, my child, and make my heart glad, so that I may answer whoever reproaches me.

Exodus 20:12

Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.

**“I Remember Momma”
Rev . Charles Schuster
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Proverbs 27: "Be wise, my child, and make my heart glad, so that I may answer whoever is critical of you."

Exodus 20: "Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you."

Imperatives come to us. Imperatives, like, "Don't even think you can make an itch go away by being really good at scratching." I know, you've got to think about that one. Someone told J. S. Bach one time, "If you continue to play this way, the organ will be ruined and the congregation will be deaf in two years." I got a physical this past week. My doctor said I need to eat fruits and vegetables, lose weight, and exercise, or else. We had a sewer backup on Easter afternoon, from the kitchen sink, we had a plumber tell us, "Don't put eggshells, celery, potato skins or asparagus into the garbage disposal." I said, "What about guacamole dip?" and I thought he was going to have a meltdown right then.

Some of you may remember when Olaf came over from Denmark to tune the Marcussen organ, and I asked if we couldn't put red, white, and blue powder in the pipes on the 4th of July and have some patriotic smoke. His response, "Don't let that idiot near those pipes with powder." I found out Friday our dog has a dead bug in his ear, and the veterinarian ordered me to put drops in each ear, and the dog doesn't like it and bares his teeth. Imperatives. Added to that, "Honor your mother on Mothers Day. It's an order. It's imperative." It goes on to say, "so that you will live long in the land that God has given you." Which, in other words, says, "If you know what's good for you, you're gonna honor your mother." There's got to be a better way to honor someone than because it's required, and it must be a little bit funny for the person being honored to know it's done because of some kind of cultural obligation. But that's not why we do it, anyway. Today we're going to try to turn an imperative into a declarative and we're going to try to move from input to

impulse, knowing one day will not be enough in fact. It takes a lifetime to honor our mothers, and even more than that.

Honor your mother. Why? First of all, we honor our mothers because of what they've done for us, although sometimes we're not sure why they did it. She nurtures us, and we need it. Jesus told his mother, when he was 30, they were at a wedding and she told him to do something about the refreshments. "They've run out of liquor, out of wine. Can you do something about that?" and he said, "The liquor stores are closed." This is a modern interpretation. "What do you expect me to do?" and she said, "Turn the water into wine," and he said, in Hebrew, "You've got to be kidding." Actually, Aramaic. But he did it. And it's good that he did it, because his whole life changed because of what she had done, what he had done. It began his ministry.

Our mothers are like that. They nurture us, and sometimes we don't understand, and Stephen was a young boy when he said "I don't like the way she puts me to bed at night. I'm wide awake. She tells me to go to sleep. In the morning, I'm fast asleep, she tells me to get up." Peter, who's age eleven, said, "My mother makes me go to the barber like I'm some kind of show dog." And Michele pointed out that her mother is really nice except when she finds gum in the carpet. Can you imagine? We don't always understand why she did what she did, why she does what she does, but we do understand that we need to be nurtured and she does it. Often, she's the one, and we all need to be nurtured, no matter what our age.

Her name is Brenda. She took her two-month-old son to visit her parents. That first night back in her old bedroom, she heard her mother get up and say to her father, "It's cold. I'm going to be sure that the baby is covered." Brenda pretended to be asleep, anticipating watching this new grandmother in action. That's when she realized she would always be a daughter, when her mom came into the bedroom, she didn't go over to the baby's crib but walked over to the bed she was in, pulled a blanket out from under the bed, put it on her and tucked her in.

Tim said, "The best thing about my mother that she's ever done was have me, though not everybody may agree." Alice said, "She brushes my hair so it's not tangly. She helps you eat food when you can't eat it, and makes it look like you ate it." Nurture. Nancy Friday wrote a book years ago, *My Mother, Myself*. It's about how our mothers help us in ways we may not realize. Nancy writes, "When I stopped seeing my mother with the eyes of a child, I saw the woman who helped me give birth to myself." That's nurture. And Sue Monk Kidd in her book *Journey with Pomegranates* talks about her daughter Ann. She writes, "I smile at her, her hair pixie-short, almost some of it to her chin, her bangs wispy across her forehead. In two days, she'll be 23. I realize I'm still trying to work out the boundaries. How to love her without interfering. How to step back and let her have her own private world, and yet still be an intimate part of it. When she talks about her feelings, I have to consciously have to tell myself, 'She wants me to receive them, not fix them.' Every woman needs to become self-mothering, to learn to take care of herself, to love herself, and has to find a way to find the mother in herself. She will replace me." Nurture

The Broncos have drafted Vaughn Miller. He's big, he's strong, he's fast. He's a linebacker. He will make quarterbacks' lives miserable if the NFL actually has a season. General manager of the Broncos is John Elway, a quarterback. A great one, we know that. Elway has a fear of linebackers. They would, when he played, try to hurt him, and often did. Lawrence Taylor, Jack Lambert, Bruce Smith, and others did hurt him, and the Broncos drafter, first-round draft, second-best player in the draft, Vaughn Miller, linebackers, give John Elway nightmares. He told Vaughn Miller not to walk too close behind him because it still scares him. Vaughn Miller may be a great football player, I hope he is, but he will be forever remembered by something he said when he first came to Denver, and it wasn't about football, and it wasn't about the Broncos. It was about Gloria, his mother. "My mom, being a mom, wanted me to be happy. She encouraged me to play football when my father didn't want me to, because she knew it would make me happy." Mom being a Mom. Mothers, we honor them. They nurture us. They want us to be happy.

Second thing, needs to be said, very obvious, often missed, because it takes a while, and a different way to look at it, to notice a mother is a woman. I don't think it's easy being a woman. Of course, I wouldn't know. But I work with two women clergy colleagues, and they don't complain. But I know it's tough for them. I have a friend in West Virginia who sent me a story that exposes, I think you can all understand, some of why it's difficult to be a woman. Suppose the year is 2016. The United States has just elected the first woman president, who happens to be from West Virginia. A few days after the election, the president-elect, whose name is Susie, calls her father. "So Dad, I assume you'll be coming to the inauguration." "I don't know. Everybody will be so fancy, and what will your mother wear?" "Oh Dad, she'll be fine. They have wonderful seamstresses here, designers, the best in Washington. We'll make a gown for her. She'll be just fine." "Honey, you know we don't eat those rich foods that you eat." "Don't worry, Dad, we have the best caterers in the world here. We'll be sure that all the meals for you will be salt-free, don't you worry." So he agrees. January the 20th, 2017, Susan being sworn in as president of the United States, and in the front row sit the new president's mom and dad. Dad notices a senator sitting beside him, leans over and whispers, "You see that woman up there with her hand on the Bible, becoming the president of the United States?" The senator replies, "You bet I do." And then the dad says proudly, "You know, her big brother played football at West Virginia University."

Whoever doesn't see that has a problem. Women just don't get credit. Betty Friedan wrote a book about fifty years ago, *The Feminine Mystique*. It revealed what it is to be a woman in a world dominated by men. It opened the eyes of many who thought women lesser, or thought women really enjoyed the role of being the servant who serves. Sometimes it takes a lifetime to see our mother as a person. It takes a special son or daughter to step out of the role, and allow our mother to step out of her role, to see her as a unique human being, which she is. To see our mother.

We have a young man in our church who goes to the School of Mines in Golden. Sent a beautiful tribute to his mother and gave me permission to share it, and I will. "The real loving relationship that I have with my mom started once I got into college. Even though

we were further apart we grew closer together. For the past three years, I have made probably ten times as many calls to my mom. I think of her as my best friend. She has become a very special part of my life, someone who loves you no matter what, and will hang out with you and go see a movie or do something. I'm pretty blessed," he said, "to have such a great person to call Mom."

It takes a while to see our mother as a woman, as a friend, and as a best friend. I think it happened to Jesus, but I don't think it happened to him until later in his life, in fact on the cross, when he said, "Behold, my mother." Because there was a time in his life when he was busy talking to somebody, and someone interrupted and said "Your mother is here," and he said, "Who is my mother?" To see her as a woman, to notice who she is, may take a while. It's important.

Third, level of honor. She nurtures us, we notice her. Finally, she never leaves us. We remember Mama. There is a spiritual dimension to motherhood that we don't know until she's gone, sometimes. Several years ago, I did a class on Hope Edelman's book, *Motherless Daughters*. Edelman has written this book specifically for women who have lost their mothers. When I taught the class, there were more men than women in the class because really, in this, doesn't matter. She said, "You go through two stages. The first stage when you begin to realize" and she says it's more profound as a woman, she may be right about that, but we all understand it. Any of us who have gone through it, have lost our mothers, we all understand it. We go through a period of time when we're saying to ourselves, we're orphans. And then it hits us, she's still with us, because that bond between mother and child is strong, so strong.

Jim Stovell tells the story about two warring tribes in the Andes mountains. One lived in the highlands, the other the lowlands. The tribe from the highlands came down and raided the tribe from the lowlands, and in their pillage they took one of the children, one of the babies up into the highlands of the mountains. The lowlanders didn't know how to climb the mountain, because they didn't know the trails, but they sent out some of their strongest and bravest men to go retrieve that child, and they tried. One trail after another, and they couldn't find the right trail, and they couldn't get up there. Finally, they just had to give up, and they were collecting themselves, ready to move down the mountain, when they looked up and coming down the mountain was this woman. And they said to her, "How in the world did you do this? We couldn't climb that mountain. How did you do this?" Then they noticed that the baby was strapped to her back. "We have some of the bravest, boldest young men in our tribe. We couldn't do it. Why is that?" She shrugged her shoulders, and she said, "It wasn't your baby."

A mother and child may spend their lives fighting each other. A mother and child may come to periods in their lives when they do not speak. Why? Because they're too much alike? Or because they're too different? Or because somebody, or maybe both, are insecure? Relationships are never easy. We hurt most the ones we love. But once upon a time, we were somebody's baby, and what we got from our mother was nurture, and what we gave to our mother was notice. And she said, in the words of Maureen Hawkins, "Before you were conceived, I wanted you. Before you were born, I loved you. Before

you were here an hour, I knew I would give my life to save you." This is the power of love. When we think about our mothers, we begin to realize, this is the power of love. One person said of her mother, "She laughs when I laugh, she cries when I cry, she lives when I live. I can't say more about her except she lives in me and I live for her." Another person added, "Mothers do not die, because they live in the hearts of their children." There's a spiritual quality. She lives in us. She was our mother. And when she's gone, she's still our mother, and today we honor her.

There was a time we wore flowers on Mothers Day, colored flowers meant our mother was alive. White flowers meant that she had died. Today could be a difficult day for some of us, because we have only the memory. "I remember Mama." It could be Mothers Day in absentia. And she may not be with us, if that is the case, but she is within us. And we love her more, not less. And she is present more than gone. The spirit of the woman who gave us birth is born in us as we live. The spiritual dimension. She nurtured us as her child. We noticed her as a woman.

Two men. One stood on the balcony of a palace with his new wife and the nation cheered and he had big dreams. His mother was not perfect. She was a princess. He was a prince. But if you had asked her about her life before her death, she would have said, "I live for my sons." Another stood in the dark recesses of a mansion, pretty much alone, and the world wondered. He had plans, frightening, terror-filled plans. His mother was ridiculed. They called her slave girl. He was raised by nannies and nurses. He had no connection to his mother. She was "slave girl." He was called "Son of slave" and if you ask Osama, he would have said, "I never knew my mother." Today, we honor our mothers because it matters, and maybe more than we will ever know.

For the good that we experience and the life we have, for the moments of joy and meaning, for the memories of the past that inspire the future, for our mother's love, we are thankful and hopeful and filled with promise for the days to come.