

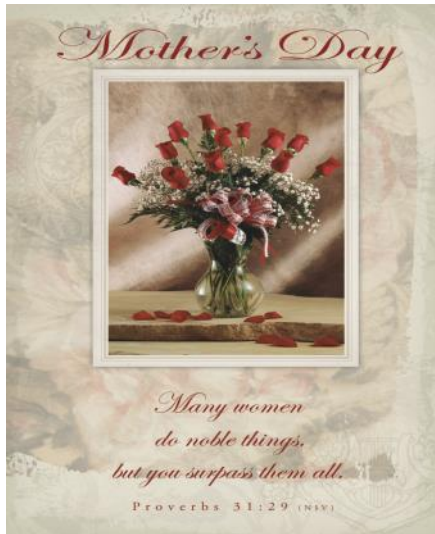
Menifee United Church of Christ

Established in 1962 by God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit

SERMON FOR

May 10, 2015

“Mother’s Daze”



Reverend Bill Freeman: Senior Minister
Eckart Seeber: Music Minister
Marie Paulus-Nyquist: Children's Minister
Eleanor Sorenson: Lay Reader

Menifee United Church of Christ

Sunday Service and Sunday School 10 AM

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Live Life Fully Alive!

Luke 2:25-35

Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying, 'Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.' And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, 'This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too.'

Luke 2:8-19

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.' And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!' When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.' So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart.

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“Mother’s Daze”

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The family cat was chasing a momma mouse and her babies along the hallway. Suddenly the momma mouse screeched to a halt. Her babies huddled around her. The cat was getting closer. The momma mouse opened her mouth. “Ruff, ruff, ruff, ruff, ruff!” she barked. The cat, shocked, turned tail and fled. The momma mouse turned to her children. “And that, my dears, is why it is important to learn a second language.”

Mother’s Day as a national holiday had a difficult time getting started, probably because those who were trying to start it were mothers themselves and were too busy to work on one more project. Several local attempts began after the Civil War, to honor the mothers who had lost sons in the war. On June 2, 1872, Julia Ward Howe, the woman who wrote the words to “The Battle Hymn of the Republic,” held an anti-war event called “Mother’s Day for Peace” in Boston, but the annual event was held for only ten years.

Then, on May 10, 1907, Anna Jarvis held a small memorial service in Grafton, West Virginia to honor her mother, Ann, who had recently passed on. She then campaigned to make it an official holiday. On May 8, 1914, the U.S. Congress passed a law designating the second Sunday in May as Mother's Day. Congressmen were asked to wear a white carnation on that day in honor of their mothers. Anna chose the carnation because,

“Its whiteness is to symbolize the truth, purity and broad-charity of mother love; its fragrance, her memory, and her prayers. The carnation does not drop its petals, but hugs them to its heart as it dies, and so, too, mothers hug their children to their hearts, their mother love never dying.”

Later, florists changed the tradition to wearing a white carnation if your mother was still alive or a red carnation if she had passed

on. Then they advertised more expensive flowers, such as roses. Soon the flowers were given to the mothers. It wasn't long before other merchandisers got on the bandwagon – jewelers, card-makers, and chocolatiers. Anna said she regretted having begun this holiday since the commercialization had robbed it of its original meaning. She spent the rest of her life and all of her money trying to halt the celebration, and was even arrested once for disturbing the peace while protesting the holiday she helped to start.

I wonder what Mary, the mother of Jesus, would think of the commercialization of the Nativity, and how she would feel about the honored place she holds in churches around the world as the mother of Jesus. She must have had some idea of how the world would view her, because in her *Magnificat*, the song she sings after the angel Gabriel comes to tell her about Jesus, she says, “for behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.”

When she was told she was going to be a mother, she was so happy she broke into song! She and Joseph weren't married yet, but she wasn't worried about what people would think. She had no anxiety about the pain of childbirth or what it would be like raising God's Son. She was just overjoyed that God would be using her to bring salvation to the world.

The next nine months were not so glorious. The physical changes of pregnancy, the awkward looks from friends and relatives, the trip to stay with her cousin Elizabeth, the long trek to Bethlehem, the labor and birth far from home are not accompanied by any recorded songs of praise. She may have wondered if the meeting with Gabriel had even been real. Was this baby special? Her questions were answered after Jesus' birth, when the shepherds came to the manger to tell about the angels who had appeared in the sky to announce that a Savior had been born to them in Bethlehem. The Bible tells us that she took this moment, this treasure, and saved it in her heart, pondering its meaning. In that moment she was fully there, fully aware. Any moment that we treasure in our hearts is a moment when we were fully there. Any moment we ponder, trying to figure out its meaning, is a moment when we are fully aware.

When I was told that I was going to be a mother, I walked from the doctor's office to the train station and noticed everything – the blue August sky, the heat of the sun, the brightness of the flowers, the smells in the air. It all seemed so much more real. I remember walking along the tops of the cement curbs between the street and the sidewalk as though I were a child myself. I was fully there, fully aware.

But that heightened awareness of my world dimmed over time into a “mother's daze,” when lack of sleep, the tedium of caring for an infant, the lack of stimulation and socialization with others put me into a zombie-like state where I paid little attention to the world around me. I have no memory of the politics of the time or the television shows that other adults found entertaining. I got things done that needed to be done, but without much enthusiasm or excitement.

I did come alive for the milestones: those were times to be treasured and pondered in my heart. I have a collection of these memories – the first tooth to come in, the first tooth to be lost, birthday parties, awards and concerts at school, cuddling on the couch reading together, driver's ed, dances, graduations, the first car, leaving Amy at her college dorm, driving Cory to basic training, weddings, grandchildren. I remember these times because they were times when I was fully there and fully aware.

But what about the ordinary days, the every days, the days that seem all the same? In reality, they weren't the same. Like snowflakes, there are no two alike. So why don't I remember those? I have a friend who has kept a journal for each year of her life. She knows what happened on each of those days. If she wants to, she can look back to any year and find out what happened on a certain day and how she felt. The keeping of the journal kept the “mother's daze” syndrome at bay. Because she knew she would be writing about them that night, she went through her days fully there, fully aware.

I don't have journals, but I do have photographs and videos. The first ten years of motherhood, I was a stay at home mother. I took lots of pictures, put them in albums, and even labeled them.

The next ten years I went to work. The picture taking continued, but there was no more time for putting them in albums. Now they are all in boxes and bins. They are under the beds and fill half the closet in the guest room. When I look at them, they bring back the happy moments. But they don't show what was going on in my head or in my heart.

When I was in high school I took a trip to Germany with my German teacher and about 12 other students. By the time the week was over we were all exhausted. The last day was a boat trip on the Rhine River to look at the castles. We were so tired that we sat with our arms folded under our heads on the tables. Our eyes were closed. Every 15 minutes or so, the captain would point out a castle coming up on the right or the left. Our heads would come up, everyone would snap a photo of the castle, and then our heads would go back down. We had photos to prove we'd been on the boat trip to see the castles on the Rhine, but we weren't fully there. We weren't fully aware. We were in a traveler's daze.

How many of our days do we spend in a daze? Are you in a mother's daze, a father's daze, a caregiver's daze? When we are in a daze, we do what needs to get done and ignore the rest of the world. A mother changes diapers, provides food and milk, washes clothes, reads announcements from school, and church, and Little League, puts the children to bed, and collapses into bed herself or into a sleepy heap in her chair. Waiting for a cry or a call from the bedroom. "Mom!" In a daze.

A father gets up, dresses for work, drives to work, does his work, drives home from work, and spends the next few hours before bed trying not to think about work. He moves through dinner, makes minor repairs, supervises homework, watches television without energy or attention. Waiting for the next thing on the schedule. In a daze.

An elderly woman is caring for her even more elderly mother. She makes her meals, washes her clothes, takes her to doctor appointments, to the grocery store, to the hairdresser. Both are stressed. Both are going through the motions, in a daze, waiting for a day neither will mention. It remains unspoken because of

the pain, the fear, the guilt associated with that day. Waiting. In a daze.

What would our days be like if, instead of living our days in a daze, we were fully there and fully aware? What if instead of coming into church already tired from lack of sleep the night before, distracted by the events of the past week, anxious about the coming week, we could come into church with a prayer to God to let us be fully there and fully aware? Let's try an experiment. Sit up straight. Take a deep breath. "God, let us be fully here today and fully aware." Now look around you. What do you see? Look at the colors of the stained glass windows. How beautiful! Thank you, God! Remember the sounds of the music that accompanies our service. How glorious! Thank you, God! Feel the smoothness of the pew in front of you and think of all the people who have sat where you are sitting and all their contributions to bring this church to where it is today. Thank you, God! Notice the people around you. Is there someone you haven't seen in a while? Is there someone who is visiting? Is there someone missing? Make a note in your heart to say an encouraging word to someone after the service. Now how do you feel? Do you feel more awake? More alive? More aware?

What would our lives be like if, instead of living our days in a daze, we lived every day fully there and fully aware? Would our loved ones get more of the love and attention they need and deserve? Would we look them in the eyes when we are conversing? Would we notice how they feel and would we respond to that in creative ways we might not have thought of before? Would we sense any frustration, or fear, or pain and would we engage in meaningful conversation about it? If we make it our goal to spend each day fully there for our loved ones and fully aware of our own and other's needs, how much richer our life experience would be!

What about pain, though? Simeon told Mary that a sword would pierce her heart. The heart that pondered the treasured moments of her life would be pierced. Pain is part of motherhood and part of life. Sometimes the days we spend in a daze are in order to blanket the pain so we don't feel its intensity. But healing involves attention to pain. Healing involves feeling the pain.

Healing involves knowing our pain's source and its limits. Healing involves an awareness of the lessening of pain over time. So if it is our goal to be fully there and fully aware then we need to practice that in times of pain as well.

Jesus said he came that we might have life and have it abundantly. So we are meant to spend life fully there and fully aware and not spend our days in a daze. With God's help we will succeed.

Prayer: God help us to make it our goal to spend our days fully there and fully aware. Wake us from the fog-like daze in which we sometimes find ourselves. Teach us to treasure special moments and to ponder the events of our lives and puzzle out their meanings. In the name of Jesus and by the power of your Holy Spirit we pray. Amen.





Whoever you are,



Wherever you are on life's journey

You are welcome here!



*United Church of Christ
Menifee, California*





There are

Angels

God puts on this Earth

Who care for us and guide us.
You can feel their love and gentleness
as they walk through life beside us.

They do great things for us every day
they whisper in our ears,
they even hold us in their hearts
when we are filled with all our fears.

They are always there to give a hug
and try to make us smile.
They treat us with respect and love,
they treat us like their child.

God blessed me with an Angel,
I'm proud to call my own.
She's been with me throughout my
life, been with me as I've grown.

She's guided me the best she can,
she's taught me like no other,
and I'm thankful I'm the lucky one
who get's to call her...

Mother



THE GOLDEN RULE

*What is hateful to you
do not do to others.*

Judaism

*Do to others what you would
have them do to you.*

Christianity

*None of you believes until he wishes for his
brother what he wishes for himself.*

Islam

*Do not do to others
what would cause pain if done to you.*

Hinduism

*Hurt not others in ways that you yourself
would find hurtful.*

Buddism

*Regard your neighbor's gain as your gain,
and your neighbor's loss as your loss.*

Taoism

*Do not do to others
what you do not want them to do to you.*

Confucianism

*Treat other people
as you'd want to be treated in their situation.*

Humanism