

MOTHERS: HEARTBEAT OF HEAVEN

Scripture Lesson: Genesis 49:22-26

Text: Isaiah 49:15

Songs: R560; R535; R533; "Make Me a Servant"

Dear Friends in Christ Jesus Our Lord,

It is Mother's Day. While it is a holiday the world started, it is a holiday that reflects what the Bible teaches. Mothers, truly Christian mothers, are a heartbeat of heaven. A Christian home is the foretaste of our eternal home. Some of you may remember the old country hymn by Ira Stanphill, "Supper Time." It goes like this.

When I was but a boy in days of childhood, I used to play till evening shadows come.

Then winding down an old familiar pathway, I heard my mother call at set of sun.

Come home, come home, it's suppertime, the shadows lengthen fast.

Come home, come home, it's suppertime, we're going home at last.

One day beside her bedside I was kneeling, and angel wings were winnowing through the air.

She heard her call for suppertime in heaven, and now I know she's waiting for me there.

Come home, come home, it's suppertime, the shadows lengthen fast.

Come home, come home, it's suppertime, we're going home at last.

In visions now I see her standing yonder, and her familiar voice I hear once more.

The banquet table's ready up in heaven, It's suppertime upon that golden shore.

Come home, come home, it's suppertime, the shadows lengthen fast.

Come home, come home, it's suppertime, we're going home at last.

That old country hymn is Genesis 49:22-26 transported into a different time and place. What do we really hear Jacob turned Israel say to the son who saved the family from starvation, paved the way for the Promised Messiah to come, and provided the platform that would form Old Testament salvation pointing to Jesus Christ?

We first hear about the God who gives His blessings. Here is how God is described. He is "The mighty one of Jacob." As Jacob now re-named Israel by God Himself looks back on a checkered lifetime he thinks of the Mighty One who wrestled with him until the dawn, and then with the tiny touch of His power on his hip incapacitated him for life. Every step Jacob took after his encounter with God at the Jabbok reminded him that his limp was the result of a Mighty God who with one deft move altered his walk for the rest of his life every day. Jacob's limp was an every-step reminder of the Mighty One. What limp has God given you as a result of your wrestling with His will and way for your life?

This God is more than a Mighty One. He is also a Shepherd who is a Rock. The two words are in curious juxtaposition. Usually when we think "Shepherd" we think kindness, softness, gentleness, and care. When we think "Rock" we think unfeeling, hard, hurt, and hit. Shepherd and Rock are opposite images for us. Yet that is the God Who blesses us. He is hard as a rock, soft as a Shepherd; kind as a Shepherd, and can hit us like a Rock. In His providence He can be as a Rock to hurt us so we have scars to remember our sin, and sympathetic as a Shepherd who cares for every struggling lamb. Do you know God as a Rock, the Lamb of God?

The Bible goes on to say that this is "Your father's God . . . the Almighty." Whenever we think of any blessing it comes from this Shepherd-Rock God. Let's just pause to sing, "Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow."

Here are the blessings Jacob identified. They are blessings from heaven and from earth. I cannot think of any congregation who knows that more than we do. We are people of the soil who know the necessity of rain. It could rain like crazy at just the right time, but if the soil were poor the crops would be poor. If the soil is rich

but it never rains, there is not a good crop either. There must be both the blessing of good rain and good soil, from the heavens and from the earth. That is the backbone of our livelihood. Like Jacob giving the blessing and Joseph receiving the blessing, we need God to bless us from above and below.

Two weeks ago we had Youth Sunday. Many of you in every age group appreciated the morning worship service 412 did for the glory of God. We commented then that one of the characteristics of the Sully Church has been our contribution of youth to the church and to the world at large. We are a church family that is like a spring that, along with many other springs, feeds the mighty river of humanity. When I took the call serve Christ among you Rev. Jerry Holleman asked what I saw in Sully. I told him, "Sully is a spring congregation of our denomination and I am going to be a keeper of the spring." As I look back on almost seven years of service and review where our young people are, I thank God for His blessings as I cared for His spring here in Sully.

Jacob turned Israel sees being the keeper of the spring, people who give birth to and nurture the next generation, as the greatest, the crowning, blessing of life. Jacob calls it "The blessings of breast and womb." You cannot get any more motherly than that! That's Mother's Day language long before there was a Mother's Day! The womb in which children are conceived and the breast at which they are nourished are indeed God's richest blessing. That is why we so enthusiastically endorse Mother's Day. Give thanks to God for the womb in which you lived for the first nine months and the mother who nurtured you once you came into this world. For the majority of us that person is the same, but for many others of us it is two different people. Tonight we will focus on the special place the Bible has for those who nurture children conceived and carried in another womb. We will discover that each Christian has essential things in common with those special Moms.

Just in case Joseph and his descendants might miss the point of Old Testament Mother's Day, the blessing of breast and womb, Jacob goes on to describe this blessing of motherhood as greater than the ancient mountains, more than the bounty of the hills. Jacob is correct. There is no greater blessing from God than being a Mom. As a church family, we desire to do everything we can to make being a Christian mother something special. We affirm Jacob's blessing to Joseph that the gift of life through womb and breast is best of all.

How do we know that? We turn to our text this morning, Isaiah 49:15, "Isaiah 49:15." God looks for the strongest bond in the human experience. God says the strongest bond He sees is a mother who feeds her child from herself. Her milk makes her child grow, be immune to disease, and bond with her in a special way. There is no tighter relationship than a nursing mother and her child. Those Moms are special people because God has given directly to them His blessings of womb and breast. God has crowned motherhood with His special gifts.

It was about fifteen years ago that three of us from Classical Home Missions in Classis of the Heartland went to Lincoln, Nebraska to see if that was a wise place to start a new congregation. We sat in McDonald's to take a mid-afternoon break before we looked more, and then would drive late into the night to get home. Three young Moms came into McDonalds pushing strollers. They ordered about the same mid-afternoon items we had ordered. Then each discreetly nursed her baby. I said, "There's our Coffee Break Moms and our Story Hour Kids." We planted a church less than a mile from that McDonalds. Those kinds of Moms with their husbands and children are the backbone of that church which now has birthed another church. We saw in those Moms the kind of women who benefit from and are blessed by Christ's kind of church in their community. That bond is the basis for God's unbroken promises and an ever-present help for families He embraces in the church.

After God looks at this best bond in human relationships, he declares, "Though she may forget, I will not forget you!" exclamation mark. The strongest human-to-human bond is fragile compared with God's bond to save you from your sins. Long before Mother's Day was formed and founded, God was using Mother's Day to tell you about Himself. His bond of saving love is far deeper than any Mom's love for the child of her womb and the

child at her breast. And that's what makes Mother's Day so special in every Christian church! That makes Christian mothers a heartbeat of heaven. "Come home, come home, it's suppertime, we're going home at last."