

## **Mother's Day 2020**

### **Isaiah 66 and Hosea 11**

For kids who grow up with pastors for parents,  
that moment in worship when their mom or dad steps into pulpit  
always brings a little thrill of fear, a wee bit of dread.

Will Mom be telling any stories about me in this sermon.

My kids actually had to sit me down for a stern talk about this,  
right about the time they hit middle school.

“Mom,” they said, “it’s so embarrassing.

You gotta stop talking about us in the sermons.”

“But people love it when I talk about you,” I said.

“They love knowing that it’s not just them that has a kid who only eats  
chicken nuggets, or had a freak-out on Space Mountain.”

“Mom.” they said. “This is what we’re talking about. It ends now.”

And it -- pretty much -- did.

That was fifteen years ago, and I’ve been well-behaved.

So I hope they’ll grant me just a little leeway today.

It is Mother's Day. And I am their mother.

And on this pandemic Mother's Day, I find that I am feeling the emotion of this day more than ever before.

Perhaps you are too.

On this particular Mother's Day, as is true for many of you, our family configuration is not the normal.

We have a child at home who would not normally be home --  
Andres would have been at Northeastern, in a classroom,  
but now he's with us while he does his Master's courses online.

And honestly, I love that he's here --

I'm only thankful that, unlike all of you with young ones,  
I'm *not* expected to help him with his homework.

And also, like many of you,

I have a child whom I haven't been able to see for a while --  
Brigitta's under stay-at-home orders in Virginia.

I would have loved to see her for Easter,  
or to have her here on this Dogwood Festival weekend-that-wasn't.

Like so many families,

we are living in the unexpected on this Mother's Day 2020.

So, from one mother to a whole host of others out there who are doing the work of mothering:

Happy Mother's Day.

To all of you who have spent two months now teaching your children at home, finding depths of patience you didn't know you had, and counting to 10 several times a day.

To all of you continuing to work and to parent and teach all at the same time, somehow.

To all of you who are essential workers, parenting while doing the work that keeps us all fed and cared for -- you are mothering all of us.

To all of you who are single mothers, doing more by yourselves than ever before.

To all of you who are stretching every dollar, and quietly holding your worry inside.

To all of you who can't safely be with your children and grandchildren just yet.

From this mother to all of you who are mothering in myriad ways,

this Mother's Day blessing is for you.

And it comes with a hug.

I know, I know, hugs are tricky things these days.

A couple months ago, I *preached* about hugs,

believe it or not.

In that sermon I proudly proclaimed that,

with a little help from all of you teaching me,

I was finally become a decent hugger,

after years of awkward embraces at the front door of the church.

And now, just when I get good at hugging, there's a moratorium on hugging.

Sigh.

So, no, it isn't *my* hug that accompanies this blessing to you who are mothering.

Today, on this Mother's Day 2020,

the hug comes from God.

From a God with a mother's heart. Our God.

The words that we read together just a few moments ago are to me some of the most comforting words in the Bible, words that remind us that we worship a God who knows what it is to mother.

*“It was I who taught you to walk,”* it says in Hosea, *“I took you up in my arms.”*

And the tender words of God in the book of Isaiah: *“As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you.”*

On this Mother’s Day 2020,  
when we all need a little comforting,  
what do we discover?

That we worship a God who is tender and loving,  
gracious and gentle,  
whose arms are around us to gather us up for a much-needed hug.

We worship a God who knows something about mothering,  
because in fact it’s what God has been doing from the dawn of creation.  
God knows what the work of mothering is like,  
because from the beginning it has been God's work, too:

guiding each child in love,

aching with pain at each child's bruise, anxiously setting children free in this world.

And this God with a mother's heart knows when we need a hug.

*“As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you,”* says the scripture.

*So I will comfort you.*

If our God is a mothering God,

then there are two things we can know for sure.

The first is that no matter where we are,

no matter what place we find ourselves in these days,

we are held, hugged tight,

by a God whose love for us is fierce and unending,

powerful and protective,

tenacious and tender.

We are loved beyond measure by a God who has mothered us from the day

we were born,

and on every day since.

And the second thing we learn is this:

if our God is a mothering God,

then the work of mothering is holy work.

Then the work of mothering brings something of God's own self with it.

The world needs a whole lot of mothering right now.

The world needs more care than ever before,

more love,

more fiercely protective relentless unconditional love.

The world needs more tenderness than ever before,

soothing and gentle, grace-filled and gracious.

The world -- each one of us -- needs a whole lot of mothering.

And that's work that each one of us can do.

That's the work of love that each one of us is called to.

That's the love that God asks each one of us to live towards,

women and men, parents or not.

The mothering love that we celebrate today --

created by grace,  
nurtured in care –  
this is a love by which our loves are measured,  
this is a love born in the heart of a mothering God,  
this is a love that can save our world,  
a world in need of tenderness  
and great mercy.

For the blessing of mothers,

God be praised.

For the motherly blessing that **each** of us can be,

God guide our hearts.

Amen.