

Greenfield Hill Congregational Church

1045 Old Academy Road
Fairfield, Connecticut 06824

Telephone: 203-259-5596



Date: May 10, 2015
Sermon Title: A Celebration of Mother's Day
Pastor: Rev. David Johnson Rowe

One of the differences between Protestants and Catholics is that Catholics really revere Mary, the mother of Jesus, as the perfect woman, the perfect mother, elevated as the "Queen of Heaven," and just like Jesus, born without sin, perfect in every way. In our church, Mary is only a great woman, a really good person, a wonderful mom, and I like that because she is attainable. What she is and what she does and what she's like—we can be like that.

And so, on Mother's Day, we can look to her for inspiration. Mary's is a simple story—not easy—simple. God chooses her for a daunting and challenging task, to be the mother of Jesus, the Savior of the world. And it's to happen in a particularly mysterious and miraculous way, under difficult circumstances. So the very first thing we know about Mary is she is willing. God needs her, it's all pretty puzzling, and she's O.K. with it. "I am the Lord's servant," Mary said, "let it be."

That's sort of "Motherhood 101," isn't it? Our niece just gave birth to her first child, Luke. The mom was nine months pregnant plus two more weeks late, then endured two days of labor, then finally a C-section. And she still has her sense of humor! All in all, another birth, mysterious, miraculous, under difficult circumstances, all to fulfill God's plan for her to be a mom.

Luke's birth was greeted by Alida and me, and the moment he saw me, he started yelling. Jesus's birth was greeted by Wise Men, shepherds, and angels singing in the heavens. It was all a bit overwhelming, and the Bible says that Mary's response was this lovely, perfectly "Mother's Day" verse, "and Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart." Later, when Jesus was almost a teenager and had done some things that scared the heck out of his parents, the Bible again records, "his mother treasured all these things in her heart." (Luke 2:51)

Mary "treasured" and "pondered." In other words, she didn't miss a thing. She watched. She noted. Nothing got by her.

America is a mess, isn't it? But I don't know if it's more of a mess than in our day or if, with 24-hour cable news and immediate Internet, we just know about everything now. But whether it's better or worse than "the good old days," it sure seems like a mess now. So everybody loved that mom in Baltimore who found her teenage son participating in the street riot, wearing a hoodie and a facemask. She grabbed him by the neck, pulled him out of the crowd, pushed him down the street, slapping him every two or three steps to keep his attention. Since then, she's been hailed as "Mother of the Year," interviewed, and praised. For what? For being alert, aggressive, aware, involved, on top of things.

Hillary Clinton is famous for a book title she used, *It Takes a Village: and Other Lessons Children Teach Us*, and because of politics, a lot of people hate the idea. Here's my advice: get over it. Because first, it's not her idea, and second, it's true! It does take a village to raise a child. As things heated up in Baltimore, there was a call to all moms to get on top of their kids, to go out into the streets, and in all honesty don't just grab your kid, grab your neighbor's kid too, dare them to sue you. It takes a mom and a village of moms and a Little League coach and a Scout leader and aunts and uncles and pastors and ASP advisors and interested bystanders and concerned neighbors. Yes, it takes a village, a whole village, a whole city, a whole nation, a whole universe of moms and mom-types to raise a child.

When I got into the teenage years, old enough to have a summer job, my folks started taking my sisters and going off on summer vacations without me, leaving me alone in the house. A couple of weeks later, they would return, oh, let's say, late in the afternoon, maybe 3 or 4 o'clock. By dinnertime, my mother had sat me down and told me everything I did and with whom. What day and at what time, who was in the house and when they left and what I wore each morning. How did she know? The vast network of moms or neighbors who treasured everything, who pondered everything, who noted everything, who cared about everything. And guess what! We loved it.

And, yes, we complained about it, we snickered, we made fun of them behind their backs, but we loved it. We wanted to be "pondered," we wanted to be "treasured," we wanted people who acted as though we were the center of their universe. This Mother's Day we honor those moms and mom-types: "helicopter moms," moms who hover over us, who watch over us, who wait up late, who lose sleep over us, who worry and pray and love us to death.

God bless 'em!