

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Happy Mother's Day! Mother's Day is not a religious holiday. It's not a part of our church year calendar. And yet, it is appropriate for us today in our church to honor mothers. God provides so many blessings through moms, that it would be sinful for us to take this for granted and not take time to remember the faithful service of mother everywhere.

Now I'll have to admit that I struggle every year with appropriate gifts for Mother's Day. It's not that I'm not thankful. Just the opposite! I am extremely thankful both for the mother God gave me, and for my wife, the mother of my children. Both are women of rock-solid faith and uncompromising integrity, with a love for God that overflows in their family and in their lives. So I appreciate greatly my wife and my own mother, and I am so thankful to God for them.

But... I still struggle to find the right gift. A card usually doesn't say just the right thing. A piece of jewelry isn't always the right style. Practical gifts (like a vacuum cleaner) they apparently send the wrong message. My wife has made it clear that flowers a waste of money because they just shrivel up and die in a few days. So I flounder a bit. Guys, I'm guessing I'm not alone in this. If only we could come up with the perfect Mother's Day gift!

Well, I personally couldn't come up with the perfect gift, but thank God he did. Mom's... God's got the perfect gift for you today. Exactly the one you wanted and needed: peace. And good news, guys! God is generous and he doesn't just give it to the moms... he gives it to everyone!

My wife forwarded a humorous e-mail to me a few days ago. In honor of Mother's Day, someone wrote a list of all the things his mother taught him. Let me share a few with you:

1. My mother taught me TO APPRECIATE A JOB WELL DONE .
"If you're going to kill each other, do it outside. I just finished cleaning."
2. My mother taught me RELIGION.
"You better pray that will come out of the carpet."
3. My mother taught me about TIME TRAVEL.
"If you don't straighten up, I'm going to knock you into the middle of next week!"
4. My mother taught me LOGIC.
" Because I said so, that's why."
5. My mother taught me FORESIGHT.
"Make sure you wear clean underwear, in case you're in an accident."

6. My mother taught me IRONY.

"Keep crying and I'll give you something to cry about."

7. My mother taught me about HYPOCRISY.

"If I told you once, I've told you a million times. Don't exaggerate!"

8. My mother taught me about ANTICIPATION.

"Just wait till we get home."

9. My mother taught me HUMOR.

"When that lawn mower cuts off your toes, don't come running to me."

10. My mother taught me GENETICS.

"You're just like your father."

11. My mother taught me about JUSTICE .

"One day you'll have kids, and I hope they turn out just like you!"

We find humor because we've said a lot of these things, haven't we? But on a serious note, maybe you also noticed that a lot of those things were maybe not the most loving or appropriate thing that could have been said. Sometimes we say or do wrong things as parents. And this is one of the things that robs us of the peace God desperately wants you to have.

Now we don't want to just pick on moms (or dads). Children, are you guilty of doing wrong against your mother? Do you always give the respect that is due? Do you love her? Do you do what she says?

When I say "children" I'm not just talking about kids. I'm also talking about you adult children. Mom doesn't stop being Mom when you turn 18... or 42. Have you shown a lack of respect? Have you cared for her? Shown your love for her? Do you listen to her advice? Do you pray for her? Do you call her up and talk to her regularly? If any of these struck a nerve, I promise you that you are lacking peace. You are not living with a clear conscience. You have sinned against your mother and even worse, you've sinned against God.

And if any of you have a strained or broken relationship with your mother, that's so destructive. You don't have peace with each other, and thus you're not able to have peace with God. That important connection between mother and child has to be fixed or there cannot be peace.

We need peace. We yearn for it. But... if a mother doesn't show Christ-like love and forgiveness to her children... if the husband doesn't unconditionally love his wife... if children don't honor their parents, there is disobedience. And that disobedience robs us of peace, because it ruins our relationship with God.

Now, listen carefully to the words of Jesus. Very sobering words that make us pause and make us sad. Jesus said, **"If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching."** What teaching? All of it! It is the teaching of Jesus that mothers love their children and build them up. It's his will that they raise them in the teaching and instruction of the

Lord. It is Jesus' will that husbands love their wives... the mother of their children... and support them It is Jesus' teaching that children respect and honor their mothers, whether you're 5 years old or 50 years old. If you love Jesus, you will do these things.

And Jesus says the opposite is true too. **"He who does not love me will not obey my teaching."** Great, just what you wanted on Mother's Day... a guilt trip, right? But it's a trip that Jesus sends us on this day... a trip we must take if we are to receive the wonderful gift he wants us to receive: peace.

Jesus makes it very clear that there is only one way to receive peace with God and it is through him. Earlier in John 14, Jesus had said, **"I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."** *Jesus is the only one who can give us peace with God.* This peace can come from nowhere else and from no one else.

I think most of you have seen our baby, Micah. He's a wonderful, happy baby boy and such a blessing to our family. But like all babies, sometimes Micah gets fussy. You can tell he want something. He needs PEACE. And I can't seem to give it to him. I hold him, but he cries. I change his diaper, but he cries. I try to play with him, but he cries. Nothing helps. Then his mother comes around the corner. He leans toward her, fussing. She takes him. And... just like that, he stops. He wanted his mom. And only she could bring him peace. No one else in the world could provide what he needed.

That's Jesus for us. But here's the problem. Our disobedience to Jesus and his teaching... disobedience that is evident this day as we consider God's will for mothers and God's will toward mothers... our disobedience destroys the peace we so desperately want and need.

Here's the first step to having true peace with God: 1) Recognize that *you* are the reason peace has been destroyed in your life... and it's because of disobedience to Jesus and his teaching. And just as importantly *you* are incapable of reestablishing that peace. We broke it and we can't fix it! We must fall on our knees before our God and confess: "Lord, I love you. Lord I want to obey you! Lord, I have failed you."

It is then that our Lord Jesus comes to you and says, **"Peace I leave you; my peace I give you. I do not give you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."** If there is to be peace, sin and disobedience cannot be present. Jesus comes to you today and tells you that *he* gives you peace. He establishes it. Jesus truly is the way, the truth and the life. He is the way to the Father because he and the Father are one. Jesus was perfectly obedient to the Father. He loved his Father perfectly and his Father loved him. His life counts as your life. And Jesus in order to establish peace stopped at nothing. He decided that he would forfeit the peace he had with his heavenly Father for you and me. On the cross, the peace was gone because he took our disobedience and made it his own. The Father's wrath against our disobedience poured out on Jesus. He was forsaken by his Father. **"The punishment that brought us peace was upon him."** **"And by his wounds you are healed."**

That perfect obedience of Jesus, God credits to you and to me by faith. Trust in him. Rely upon him. But the truth is, we can't even do that. We are so disobedient in our inner being that we can't even hand over our disobedience to Jesus for him to take care of it. And so God helps us with that too. Jesus promised this: **"The Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you."** Just like Jesus disciples, we are slow to

understand and quick to forget. And so God the Father through Jesus his Son sent the Holy Spirit into our hearts. There the Holy Spirit teaches us and reminds us of all that Jesus did for us. He creates and strengthens faith in our hearts through the Word of God and through the Sacraments. He kindles a flame in your heart that overflows in your words and in your life so that you can confess, "Jesus is my Lord and Savior! Jesus has given me peace with the Father! I love Jesus because he first loved me!" And peace is what you have. A peace that passes all understanding. You are right with the Creator and Judge of the universe! What an incredible gift from God for all of us here on this Mother's Day.

And there's one more important thing the Holy Spirit does for us. He also motivates us to cheerfully obey the teachings of Jesus. And so with the power of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, we are actually *able* to do what Jesus has commanded us to do. Empowered and enabled by the Holy Spirit... tapping into his power instead of your own... we are able to honor our mothers on this day and every day in a way that is pleasing to our God! And mothers, you *are* able to show the love of Christ to your children. The Holy Spirit enables you to always love, always be patient, always encourage and support.

Let me tell you a story I heard about a Christian mother. One day her little girl came up to her when she was in the kitchen and said, "Mommy, I sorry! Mommy, I sorry!" The mom took a closer look and saw the black permanent marker on her daughter's hands. "Can you show me what you're sorry about?" she asked. Her daughter took her into the living room toward the window. The mom started imagining permanent marker on the drapes, on the wall, on the window sill. When she pulled back the drapes, the marker wasn't any of those places. But she had drawn with the marker on the window and on the sealant around the window.

Now put yourself in her shoes. How do you react? She bit her tongue. And the Holy Spirit in her heart reminded her of Jesus' love and forgiveness. She saw her daughter was truly sorry. She got down on her level and said, "I forgive you. Now let's get this cleaned up." They got out the magic eraser and started working on it... and as they rubbed the stain disappeared completely. And she said to her daughter, "This is how Jesus removes our sins. He forgives us completely and there's no mark left behind."

Wow. What a difference the Spirit makes in our hearts! He gives us the peace of Jesus AND he enables us to share that peace with others. He gives us his forgiveness AND he enables us to forgive others. He teaches us about Jesus' love AND he enables to show and share his love with others.

Moms, I don't know what gifts you have received or will receive today. And all the rest of you, I don't know what gifts you have given or plan to give to your moms. But we can all rejoice in this: our God has given all of us the very best gift imaginable on this Mothers Day. He has given us peace... peace with Almighty God through the blood of Jesus. And along with that peace he has given us faith, understanding, and knowledge of God. He has given us motivation and empowerment for godly, obedient living. We've got it all in Christ Jesus. Happy Mother's Day. Amen.