

A Sermon By Rev. Jim Hickman
Corona United Methodist Church
May 9, 2010
MOTHER'S DAY

Remembering My Mother
Proverbs 1:8-9; 6:20-23

I've been thinking about my mother lately. I suspect it is because some of you have been really surprised to hear me say, "I am an introvert." I suppose you are surprised because

I come around and visit you;
I am friendly;
I will take the initiative in getting others to talk.
I have reasonably good interpersonal skills

If this is why you are surprised, then thank my mom. I don't know if she understood all three of her children were/are introverts, or what; but it was very important for her that we learn to be sociable.

"Come out of your room..."

"sit here in the family gathering and visit..."

I learned those lessons from her. I don't appear to be an introvert? Thank my mother.

And that isn't the only thing I remember and thank her for:

- She loved to cook and would try new receipts 2 or 3 times a week. She taught me to try anything once. I don't have to like it. I just have to try it. That is a very helpful when you work for an organization that has lots of Potlucks.
- My mother was interested in what made people tick. She would watch people and speculate about why they did what they did. She took classes at the Adult Education program in Psychology and Sociology. I suspect her interest was partly genuine curiosity and partly the fact the family she grew up in was "dysfunctional" to say the least (The last time I was at a gathering of her family one of my aunts told a group of us, "Now we need to be nice to Mary because she just got out of prison"). Anyway, she studied why people do what they do. I inherited that from her. I have quite a number of psychology classes under my belt from college and seminary and to this day I watch people and speculate about why they do what they do.
- My mom had a particular curiosity about superstitions. She collected them and thought about them, wondering, "Do they contain wisdom that is true even if the way they are expressed isn't true?" She taught me to ask those kinds of questions. I would say she laid the foundation for my ability to think outside the box--to ask questions about the truth or insight of something even if we haven't correctly explained what is going on.
- I said she took classes. She continued learning. Now part of that is the fact that she dropped out of High School to get married. In fact, my mom graduated from High School two years after I did. But it was more than that. She liked learning stuff. Some of you know I have the same characteristic—I took a class in modern

art history a year ago at RCC in Norco. I just do that. I have my mother to thank for that desire to keep learning new things.

- Finally, my mom loved doing crafts and cake decorating (My dad enjoyed working with his hands). From both of them I received a love of arts and crafts and beauty. There is a down side, though. I got to eat so many heavily decorated cakes as a young person that I will pass up any opportunity to have a piece of that wedding cake with all those roses and other foo-foos—just give me a little piece from the middle thanks.

Now I wouldn't want to give you the impression that my mother was perfect. I don't think either of my parents knew what to do with a kid who couldn't spell—just drill those words over and over again. I think twenty years later she would have tried to understand learning disabilities. But all they knew back then was, “Jim can't spell worth beans.” And add to that the fact that in the home I grew up in A-s were the expectation—anything less was not good enough. You can see my first 6-8 grades were hard on me.

Likewise I don't think either of my parents ever said, “I love you...” to any of us three kids. I don't remember ever hearing it. I learned how proud my parents were of me (for my education, ordination and family) from others—they never found a way to say it.

I could go on, but I don't want to. Not because it is painful—I resolved some of that stuff years ago. No, I don't want to go on about it because *I want to go on*. A lot of us are stuck back there—remembering and going over the past. We need to let go of the past. We need to move on. We need to see our folks as they were/as they are: imperfect human beings. Just like us.

In some cases we need to forgive them.

Forgive them because they were human.

Forgive them as we want to be forgiven.

Forgive them so we can see the gifts they did give to us.

By learning to forgive and let go of those resentments towards our parents, we find the ability to love them *and* to love ourselves. If we can't accept our parents imperfections we probably can't accept our own. They were human. We are human. God loves us both. That is a freeing realization.

When I am doing premarital counseling with a couple I am going to marry I will ask, “How is he similar to your dad?”

“How is she similar to your mom?”

In preparation for talking about how we learn to be men & women/husbands & wives in the homes we grew up in. About 1:10 times one of them will cloud over and you can tell this person does not have happy memories of his or her parents. I don't go into depth with them about their feelings—because I am not doing therapy—but I usually do talk with them about the fact that our parents are a lot more complex than we realized. I point out that the list of what we “got” from their parents is a lot longer and positive than the handful of resentments we are aware of.

We learn a lot from our parents. And an awful lot of it was and is good.

The Book of Proverbs is the “Young Person's Guide to a Good Life.” There is lots of really good advice for living in it—including the statement that was our scripture reading this morning:

Children young and old, do listen to what your father tells you and never forget what your mother taught you. Keep their words with you always; wear them as a

garland 'round you neck. Their teachings will lead you when you travel, protect you at night, and advise you during the day. Their instructions are a shining light; their corrections can teach you how to live. (Proverbs 6:20-23 the translation is a combination of the RSV & the TEV with some word choice by me)

Remember what your mom and dad taught you. Get under the junk and find the pearls that they gave you and wear them as a garland around your neck/remember them as a guide to living.

Proverbs says remember your mother's teaching (some of you will want to know that this ancient Jewish book stands alone in ancient near eastern writings in saying what mothers teach is important). Remember your mother's teachings. I hope I have done that this morning—I hope I have done it well.

Let us take a few minutes to reflect on what we've heard and seen this morning.
Amen.