



People of the Word, in the World



A Sermon By
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Grace Episcopal Church
Silver Spring, Maryland

An audio version of this sermon may be found on the Grace Church website at
<http://graceepiscopalchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/2018-05-13-AB.mp3>.

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Ms. Anna Broadbent
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The Seventh Sunday in Lent - Mother's Day
May 13, 2018

Acts 1:15-17; 21-26
John 17:6-19

1 John 5:9-13
Psalm 1

Good Morning Grace. Happy Mother's Day! To all you mothers out there I hope you all feel extremely loved and blessed today and every day for all you do for your families. As someone for whom Mother's Day can be a tricky day I also want to say that for anyone for whom this is also a difficult may you be blessed. Blessed are those for whom Mother's Day is filled with mourning, pain and loss. Blessed are those for whom Mother's Day is filled with emptiness and unfulfilled dreams.

Blessed are those who are utterly exhausted and just getting through the day is enough.

Blessed are those mothers who need to be reminded that they are enough. Blessed are those who are figuring out what it means to be a mother when your children are no longer at home.

Blessed are those who have not been mothered the way they should.

Blessed are those who are mothers and don't even have children of their own. Blessed are those who are single parents and are both mother and father.

And Blessed are those who are now learning what it means to mother their own mothers.

Thanks be to God for the mothers who come from unsuspecting places. I'm sure if we all take a moment we can identify a few individuals who have mothered us along the way, when we most needed it. Mothers are the ultimate source of creation, both bringing forth life, and helping to shape growth and creation throughout lifetimes. We need mothers at every point in our lives. The task placed upon mothers is virtually an impossible one – definitely bigger than one person can inhabit. In this light I say, Thanks be that God who is our ultimate mother.

Grace Church, I want to thank you for being a mother to me over the past two years. This has been a place of intense growth for me. You all, in some way or another, have loved me and mothered me in the ways I desperately needed you to. To count the ways would make this sermon easily 45 mins and as a good Episcopalian I would never do that to you, but I would like to share a few. Prior to my first few sermons, Amanda and I would meet in this empty sanctuary to practice words I would say the next Sunday – anxious with my body sweating and even a few tears. It was a mother's love that gave me the courage to speak with a shaky voice and trembling hands. Over the past two years I've been meeting with a small group of men and women – referred to as my lay committee – these individuals have mothered me in so many ways – sometimes telling me things I really didn't want to hear, but that I needed along this journey. To those involved with Wade in the Water. You've modeled for me that sometimes a mother's love needs to be tough. It needs to

stand up and be protective of all her children, standing with her hands on her hips against powers that are extremely strong while being grounded in her clear truth. To all you who participated in my Daring Way retreat – you helped to provide me a safe space to allow me to try something new and gave me great feedback about how to continue to grow – this was indeed motherly love.

Every Sunday you all have loved me in a way I have never known before. You all are responsible, for good or bad, for the priest I am becoming and I just want to say thank you. Thank you for loving me over the last two years. It was the Holy Spirit that brought us together and it is the Holy Spirit that will keep us connected long after we are parted.

Now, I'd like to share with you some of my hopes for you all as a church, and thankfully they will come straight from today's Gospel. Did anyone else get a little dizzy from Jesus' words in the reading this morning? This is some classic Gospel of John writing that is a bit circular and disorienting. This passage comes between Mandy Thursday and before the crucifixion on Good Friday. It is one of the last things that John records Jesus saying to his disciples before he dies. What we actually have here is Jesus praying for his disciples. There's a lot going on this passage and in essence what Jesus is doing is a commissioning or a sending out of the disciples. He lets them know, what they do not know yet, which is that he is leaving them very soon. He reminds them that they have been selected by Him to be his disciples and they will have to continue on in the work that Jesus has started once he is gone. He also prays that they will be sanctified and equipped to do everything that they need to do.

I'd like to draw your attention to this specific portion of Jesus' prayer, *"I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world."*¹

When Jesus says that he has given them "your word" what he is referring to is himself. Remember for a moment how John starts his Gospel, *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being."*² When Jesus says that the disciples have been given the word what he is saying is that they have been given himself. They have been given his life and his model of which they are to continue living in the world. He also reminds the disciples that living a life that is modeled after Christ is to live in a way that is counter cultural to this earthly world. It is the type of life that was intended for this world, but quickly the human family fell short.

The second thing that Jesus highlights here in this prayer is that the disciples are required to be in the world, even if they are not of the world and even if the world hates them. This is at the very heart of what Jesus' disciples were called to do - to continue to model Jesus' life and to be deeply connected to those around them.

John 17: 14-16
John 1: 1-3

What is beautiful about this prayer is that, as baptized Christians, this is also Jesus' prayer for us. Jesus has called us to be in the **World** and to be people of the **Word**. Here is where my hopes for you come in. Everything we do at church should be about these two things. We are called to join together, to learn and grow in our faith, to build relationships with those who can support us when we find ourselves in times of struggle and we are to learn and accept that we are loved unconditionally by our Mother & Father God. When we worship together we study scripture, reflect on how that scripture impacts our lives today in the sermon and then we participate in the Eucharist. We take part in the body of Christ, which then transforms us from the inside out. Then, comes the world part... we are called to take that love and share it with the world. We are to incorporate it into every facet of our lives - home, school, work, on our commute, with our friends, with strangers - and we are to share that love! That is what it is to model our lives after Jesus.

Grace, you are full of motherly love, fatherly love, friendly love, tough love, fierce love and Christ's love - now, more than ever, the world needs you to shine. Thank you for sharing your light and your love with me. Just as Jesus' prayer for all of us, I pray you will never forget that you are people of the Word and called to be in this world. Amen.