

God's Nature Is Manifested In Mothers

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of addressing serious, wholehearted followers of Christ rather than focusing on half-hearted individuals. It highlights the nurturing and caring aspects of God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, likening them to mothers who never forget or forsake their children. The significance of mothers and wives as nurturers, sacrificers, and supporters in the family and ministry is underscored, urging listeners to appreciate and value their roles.

Scripture: Isaiah 49:15, Matthew 23:37, Genesis 1:2, John 14:16, Proverbs 31:8, Genesis 3:20, 1 Timothy 3:4, Proverbs 31:10

Topics: "Wholehearted Discipleship", "The Nurturing Role of Mothers in Faith"

Description

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Transcript

One of the problems that preachers face when preaching to a congregation or a church is whom should we address. I face that myself. Should I speak to the serious, wholehearted Christians who I know there are like that in the church? But then there are others who I know are not serious, who come to church just as a matter of routine and who are not really disciples.

And often I've felt I should speak to them. But then as I've studied the scriptures, I found that Jesus would ignore who they are, these half-hearted people. Very rarely does he preach to them.

If they want to go to hell, let them go to hell. Let them sit in church for 20 years and go to hell. I'm not bothered.

But Jesus would speak to the wholehearted and to those who wanted to be serious followers of him. Now if you don't believe that, read the Gospels and you'll find hardly any... I mean, when he spoke to a bunch of Pharisees, he spoke to them. But when he spoke to the whole crowd, it was always to the wholehearted.

And if you were to ask him, Lord, what about these other people sitting here or listening to you who are half-hearted, not serious? Don't you want to challenge them? No. Some of them will never take it

seriously. They'll come year after year to the church and never become serious Christians.

Forget about them. Don't waste your time concentrating on them when you should be feeding the flock and building them up. The half-hearted will remain half-hearted.

Forget about them. So this has become more and more my policy. So it's not that I never share to the half-hearted, but it's not primary.

So I want to mention that and when some people who are half-hearted and not serious Christians take something that is said in the Word of God as applying to them, let them deceive themselves. There are people who read the Bible and deceive themselves, who take the words of Jesus and apply it to them, and my God shall supply all your need according to his riches and glory. There are lots of unbelievers who take that verse in Philippians 4.19. God allows them to take it and deceive themselves.

So today being Mother's Day, I mean, in the Bible there's no Mother's Day, but since the world celebrates something, it's good to think about it. And we often think of God as a Father and he's a Father. Jesus taught us to call him our Father who art in heaven.

But there is no male or female in God. God is not a male. Male and female are for human beings.

We mustn't forget that. And God made, when it says, listen to this verse in Genesis 1. When it says God, Genesis 1.27, we're talking about the image of God. What is God like? The image of God means it's like somebody drawing a painting of God.

You know, like people draw a painting, make a man sit down there, and they take hours to paint him. Okay, here is God making a painting of himself. Only thing, it's not on a canvas.

It's with clay. And it says in Genesis 1.27, God created man in his own image, repeated twice, in the image of God, and they were male and female. So what is God? The image of God, it is male and female, because that is the image of God written here.

Twice it's repeated. And we see that, and it's good to think of that on Mother's Day, that God is a mother. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, all three are mothers.

First of all, I want to show you Isaiah 49 and verse 15. This is a very important chapter for me because 58 years ago, as I was reading this chapter in India, God spoke to me and told me to quit my job and to serve him, and said to me, you're my servant. Verse three, and I've never forgotten it.

I've often come back to this chapter and said, Lord, this is the way chapter you use to call me to serve you. Many of these promises is fulfilled in my life in all these 58 years, since that day in the month of May 1964. And one of the things that's comforted me is this.

Verse 15, many times, can a woman forget her nursing baby? She may forget her grown-up children sometimes, for a moment, but nursing baby never. She's always alert to the cry of a nursing, suckling child. Can a woman forget her nursing, have no compassion on the son of her which came out with such pain from her womb? Even these may forget, but I will not forget you.

So when God wants to tell us how much he cares for us, he doesn't talk the experience of a father. He says it's a mother. He cannot think of a father.

A father may forget that little baby, but to assure us that he will never, never forget us, he uses the example of a mother. And I want you brothers, those who are serious disciples, and I'm speaking only to serious disciples, you must remember God is like a mother. He will never, never forget you.

Impossible. Even that mother may forget her sucking child, but I will not forgive. This is what our heavenly father is a mother.

Then we go to the second person of the Trinity, that is Jesus. And if you turn to Matthew 23, the last few verses of Matthew 23 you read, it's an interesting chapter. After he had denounced the Pharisees, it's one of the strongest chapters of denunciation that Jesus ever spoke.

You can hardly find a chapter like this anywhere in the Gospels. It's full of woe unto you, woe unto you, woe unto you, right from the beginning, verse 13 onwards, all the way down to verse 29, how many woes there are. And then he says to them, you serpents, verse 33, you brood of vipers, how will you escape the sentence of hell? He's speaking to the Pharisees.

And then you see the balance there is in the life of Christ. He says in verse 37, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, he's speaking to the same group of backslidden Jews, you who kill the prophets and stones, those who are sent to them. How often I wanted to gather your children together, like what? Like a mother hen.

Even Jesus uses a female picture of a mother. Jesus is a mother, like a mother hen. It's good for us to see this.

Gathering her chicks, protecting the chicks from the foxes. You see, you see Jesus like that, covering you, brooding over you? Don't forget this picture. We already saw the father, like a mother caring for the sucking child, and here is Jesus like a mother hen.

We must use these pictures in our mind whenever the devil tries to give us a wrong picture of Jesus or our heavenly father as someone who's very angry with you because you slipped up. What about if one of those chicks made some mistake and crawled out? The mother would go after it and grab it and bring it back under its wings. This is the God we worship.

This is our Lord Jesus Christ, a mother. And even when they're unwilling, He tried His best and we're not unwilling. If you're a disciple, you're willing to come under the wings of this mother hen.

I praise God that Jesus is also a mother. And the Holy Spirit, three persons, father, son. Let's look at the Holy Spirit.

Turn to Genesis in chapter one. The very first mention of the Holy Spirit in the Bible is in verse two. Verse one is when God created the heaven and earth absolutely perfect without a single wrong thing.

That's how it was created. God creates everything perfect. But something happened between verse one and two and that's the fall of the angel who became the devil and all the angels who became demons.

Why is it not mentioned here? Because this book was not written for angels, it's written for man. So it begins with the history of man and says the history of the fallen angels we will relegate to a later year, later time and later on in Isaiah and Ezekiel. Hundreds of years later, God tells us in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 how the angels fell and how the devil was ahead of the angels and became the devil.

But that happened here. Why do I say it happened here? Because it says in the next word, the earth was or in some translations became formless, waste, empty. Now God never creates anything waste, empty and imperfect.

You read in James 1 that he creates everything perfect. Everything about God is perfect. He does something even if it's a small little speck, it's perfect.

This became like this. That's not the way God creates. Nothing God ever creates is imperfect.

It became like that because the devil came in and destroyed and you know just like when Adam sinned, the animals became wild and the garden became full of thorns. That's what happened when initially when the devil sinned. And the earth became like this and immediately as soon as the earth became like this, the next thing you read is the spirit of God.

It says the real word there if you look up the original word, I was looking it up was brooding. The word there is brooding. The word written there is moving is brooding.

And brooding again is a picture of a mother hen. A mother hen broods over its little ones, broods while it is hatching eggs. The hen broods over it.

And isn't it interesting that even the third person of the trinity, the Holy Spirit, is referred to as brooding. And when Jesus, the first time he told his disciples that he was going to send the Holy Spirit, do you know what he called him? In Genesis, sorry, John chapter 14. He was going away, this is the last supper, and he told them these amazing words.

Verse 15. Always read a verse in its context. John 14 verse 15.

If you love me, you will keep my commandments. Don't ever lust with your eyes. Don't ever get angry.

Love all your enemies. Bless all those who curse you. Never judge other people.

I'll keep all my commandments. And you say, wow, yeah Lord, I love you, but how in the world I'm going to keep all this? Immediately there's an answer. I will ask the Father.

Next verse. I told you, read a verse. Always study the Bible in its context.

I will ask the Father. He'll give you a helper. A helper for what, Lord? A helper to keep the commandments which you are finding so difficult to keep.

Do you see the connection between verse 15 and 16? I will give you a helper. Why is it you don't keep the commandments? I'll tell you why. Why is it you get angry and lust with your eyes and find it difficult to love your enemies? I'll tell you why.

You don't seek for the helper. And when you read helper, do you know who was the first person called a helper in the Bible? You remember? God said about Adam, I will make him a helper. That was a woman.

The first person named as a helper in the Bible is a woman. And Jesus uses that to refer to the Holy Spirit. Husbands, value your wives.

She has the same name as the Holy Spirit. She's hidden behind you, mostly in the home. You're the one who's prominent, always up in front.

Who's in the pulpit? Not the woman, the man. But behind the man, there's a helper. I thank God for that.

God made a helper for me. Not only the Holy Spirit, but my wife, who's also the mother of my children. And I've learned to appreciate her and value her more and more as the years have gone by.

And the more I have become Christ-like, the more I've appreciated my wife and the one who's the mother of my children. And if you have not done that, you are not growing in Christ-likeness, my brother. That's the plain truth.

The same title given to the Holy Spirit is given to your wife. She's not seen. When the Holy Spirit works in you and through you, does anybody see them? Does anybody see the Holy Spirit? I've never seen the Holy Spirit.

But I've seen him moving in my life, speaking to me, working through me. Everybody gives me the credit, but it's not me, it's the Holy Spirit. And if I'm sensible, I will not take the credit to myself.

When I say, that's the Holy Spirit, how can I take the credit to myself? And behind many wonderful godly men, there is a woman who prays for her, prays for him rather. And behind many men, there is a woman behind the man who is praying for him, supporting him. That's what you wives and mothers are.

Not only supporting your husband, but also the mother of your children. It's a wonderful ministry to be a mother. You know, in the book of Proverbs, 30 chapters were written by men.

One chapter was written by a woman. Did you know that? And it's very interesting what that woman writes. Solomon wrote 29 of the chapters in Proverbs.

Read the Bible carefully. Solomon wrote 29 chapters in Proverbs. The 30th chapter was written by Agur.

I don't know who that is. Some type of prophet. The 31st chapter was written by the mother of a king called Lemuel.

I don't know who King Lemuel is. But anyway, the whole chapter is written by his mother. The instructions she gave to her son, who was a king, and says one of the first things, he says, oh my son, don't ever give your strength to women.

That means don't be fooled by foolish women. And he goes on to say later on in the end of the chapter, the type of woman you should choose as a wife. Think of a mother who is so burdened that her son should get a good wife.

I hope we have mothers like that in the church, who are burdened and pray and advise. This is the type of wife you should get who are concerned that their daughter should get husband. This is the type of husband you must get.

It's a mother. She's burdened. She's burdened.

And she says don't get drunk with wine and don't let anything control your life. Verse four. And then one of the things she says, she warns about strong drinking, verse six and seven.

Then she says, what a wonderful advice she gives. You must care for poor people. Very good advice to give to our children.

Verse eight and nine. Care for the poor, for the unfortunate, for those whose rights are being taken away. Defend them.

One of the things I'm extremely thankful for in Bangalore, in our church, as it grew in numbers and even from the beginning, I'm thankful that my children grew up mingling with educated and thoroughly uneducated people. Many who had never gone to college. I'm very thankful that they mingled with them, who could not often speak English or preach.

They didn't know the language so well. It was a mix of people who had PhDs, very few, but mostly people from the lower class in our church, who loved the Lord. And I'm very thankful that as my children grew up as little boys, it was exactly the same to them.

Whether this boy was from a rich family or this boy from an extremely poor family, who probably couldn't speak English very well. I'm extremely thankful for that. And that has affected them all through their life.

That it's very important because we live in a world where even among Christians, its importance is given to those who are educated and rich. And you should be thankful if your children grow up and find there's no difference between the educated and uneducated and the rich and the poor and mingle equally freely with them and don't gravitate towards the rich and the educated. I feel sorry for children who always gravitate towards the rich and the educated.

I always want to be with them because they know so much and they can speak so nicely. Woe unto such children. Something wrong with their mothers.

Look at this mother. Care for the poor, care for the unfortunate. We know that the first man and woman were Adam and Eve.

But how many of you know this, if you read the Bible carefully, that Eve was never called Eve until after she sinned. You read Genesis chapter one and two, you never read the word Eve. What did Adam call his wife? Have you read the Bible carefully? He called her woman.

Let me show you something interesting. Genesis chapter two. When God brought the woman to the man, verse 22, Genesis 2.22. He said, this is now, verse 23, this is now bone of my bone and she shall be called woman.

And then it speaks about a man and his wife and a man and a woman and the serpent, the woman it was, what chapter three, verse 22. Who spoke to the serpent and the serpent, verse four, spoke to the woman, chapter three, verse four. And it was the woman, verse six, who grabbed the fruit from the tree and so on and on and on.

And Adam said to God in verse 12, the woman who gave me, it was always woman, woman, woman, woman. But after she sinned, before that God had given her one name, woman. After that, he gives her another name.

Adam gives her another name, verse 20, Genesis 3.20. The man called his wife Eve. That's the first time the word Eve comes in the Bible. Why? Because she was a mother.

Because she was going to be a mother. That's why she's called Eve, the mother of all living. That's quite amazing.

So I'm just showing you all these verses to see how very often because we are so masculine, many of us men, we don't even see these verses, right? How many times have you noticed these things I pointed out this morning? We are so masculine as men, we don't like to see women in the Bible. The first person who saw the resurrected Jesus was a woman and a very sinful woman was converted, Mary Magdalene. Learn to appreciate your mother, your wives, and your mothers.

I'm very thankful that my wife is a mother primarily who has brought up four sons and I know that, you know, the Bible says that a man cannot be an elder if his children are not walking in the ways of the Lord, if they are not brought up properly, if they are not respectful. And who is it who made my four sons respectful and learned to be obedient and respectful? It wasn't me. It was my wife.

I was traveling so much. Many husbands are so often away from their homes and then I'd be away from home for five or six weeks preaching the gospel here and there, not making money. I never went to make money.

There's always to preach the gospel. There were times when all three of my children, that time we had only three, had chicken pox. That's a pretty serious sickness.

Sores all over the body, etc. But my wife never called me up and said, hey, come back. All three are sick.

She just took care of them, knowing that I had gone to serve the Lord. Okay. He's gone to serve the Lord.

He'll come back maybe a couple weeks later. She took care of them and I'm very thankful for that. She guided them, taught them.

She even sat down and taught them their homework and they came back from school. She had a lot of other things to do. Of course, she gave up her profession as a doctor in order to be a mother.

I'm very thankful for that. The day our first son was born, she resigned and we became a mother thereafter for the next, the rest of our life. And today I see the result of that.

She could have been a doctor for all these 54 years we were married and probably made millions of dollars. Or, on the other side, have four sons who wholeheartedly follow the Lord. Put them in a balance which is heavier.

You mothers can decide. She decided to be a mother and not a professional doctor. And I don't regret it.

And in heaven, in eternity, that value will be seen even more. It has involved a lot of sacrifice. It has involved a lot of self-denial.

And we had very little money as we, in the early years, very, very little. And she learned to live with little. We couldn't buy, initially when children were born, we could not afford to go and buy clothes for the little children.

She had to stitch clothes with other clothes that we tore up and stitched together. That's how we took care of our little babies. We couldn't go to afford to buy.

Now, if you can afford that, that's great, but I'm just saying we couldn't. She was a mother. She had to care and she had to live within the little income we had.

I'm deeply thankful for such a wife and a mother. And a lot of people give me the credit for many things. I could not have had a ministry if my children were going astray.

You know that I would have to resign. I told the Lord that. I said, Lord, if my children go astray, I will not preach.

Because the Bible says you can't take care of four children at home. What are you going to preach to 50, 100 people in the church? Keep your mouth shut. I would have kept my mouth shut.

I know a lot of preachers whose children have gone wildly astray, continue preaching. Let them disobey scripture. I decided I will never disobey scripture.

I told the Lord, if my children go astray, I will stop preaching. Because if I can't bring up four children properly, where am I going to tell other people to grow up properly? My children have a bad testimony in the church. I can teach nothing to anybody.

And I'll tell you, no man can do it, unless he has a good wife who's a mother, who's not thinking of money and comfort. I mean, if my wife was thinking of, let's live more comfortably, and did not want to deny herself and be a mother, I don't think I would have a ministry, I'll tell you quite honestly. I'd have to give it up long, long ago.

So there I'm telling you the value of a wife who's a good mother. My own mother died when she was 90 years old, and I have to admire her as well for the way she brought me up and cared for us, and I have to give thanks for that. She was born again, but she was not someone who from early childhood taught me the word or anything.

I left my home when I was 15 years old to join the Navy, and the Lord saved me when I was in the Navy. And so most of my study of the word came through there, but one thing my mother did to do for me was leave me a little inheritance. She lived extremely simply.

She would give every month some money for God's work, for some missionary work, regularly. Even when her memory was failing, she would still send my money to the missionaries in India. And she's saved up, saved up, lived extremely simply, and saved up to give me a little inheritance.

We were three of us, and I got one third of it. And that helped us so much in my wife and I in our poverty to support ourselves, because we decided, you know, we'll never take a salary from the church, we'll never depend on anybody, we will not ask anybody for money. That's one other thing that helped us through the years, all through the years, even to educate our children, etc.

It wasn't very much, but we lived simply. We rode a scooter instead of driving a car. We couldn't afford anything more, but that was my mother's money, and I'm extremely thankful for my mother, and I'm extremely thankful for my wife who's a mother.

So I mention all this just to say, dear brothers, appreciate your wives and the sacrifices they make as a mother. God bless you all.

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