

Community Church of Issaquah

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## Mothers Remembered

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There is no doubt in anyone's mind who has read even portions of the Bible that there are many stories about women that are fascinating and often inspiration. The two stories I have chose for today's service are concerning women who have stepped up as mothers and approached Jesus with a request regarding their children. It seems appropriate on this special Sunday we call Mother's Day that we spend some time focusing on the women who have taken on the role of mother and have done what they believe to be in the best interest of their children.

Each of us had a mother, or we wouldn't be here. Over my many years of ministry I have learned that not all children have felt they had the perfect mother. Sadly, the news is filled with stories of mothers – and fathers – who have abused their children causing them to have lives none of us can imagine. I don't know the story behind most of you and your own mothers, but I am stepping out to say I think you have appreciated your mother and hopefully loved her. We will be remembering our mothers in a few minutes, but before then, let me give some thoughts about the two women from our selected Scripture passages today.

The first story I chose is about a woman that those in the time of Jesus would say was a foreigner or unwelcomed immigrant. A Greek person in the times of Jesus was not wanted in Israel, and was usually treated very poorly. There are many questions that Mark leaves unanswered in this section of verses, such as: how did the woman get from Greece to Galilee? Where is her husband? How old is this little daughter? What

were the symptoms of her being possessed by the unpure spirit? Those are likely only things a curious mind would ponder, and not essential to the core message, which is simply a mother asking for help for her daughter.

After she had begged Jesus for help, his initial reply sounds almost heartless, though that was definitely not the intent. Imagine how confused the mother was when Jesus said, “First, let the children eat all they want for it is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to the dogs.” His intent, I am sure, was to comfort the mother but obviously, this mother was not comforted by such a casual comment. Her motherly response was to reprimand him and let him know that his response was not comforting at all. Her reaction was to tell him that even the dogs under the table ate from the children’s crumbs, or in other words, “Your answer, Lord, didn’t offer any compassion or healing.”

Realizing what was the mother was asking and saying, Jesus told her that because of her reply to his responding to her request, she should go home and that her daughter would be well. That’s exactly what she did. She went home and found her daughter well and lying on the bed. I have always been impressed with this mother who confronted Jesus about his light response to a very serious issue she was dealing with regarding her child. You don’t find very many references in the Scriptures in which someone stands up to Jesus like she did.

The second story we had in our Scripture Reading today is one of my favorite for several reasons. In this story, a mother comes up to Jesus and asks a most unusual favor. Who is she? She’s identified only as the mother of the sons of Zebedee. Do you think mothers today would like to be identified that way? No name, just the mother of your husband’s children. Oh, I know women are thrilled to be the mother of their children jointly parented with their spouse or partner, but to be labeled

only as the mother of your husband's children doesn't sound very kind to me.

Though we don't know her name, we do know her husband's place in the Scriptures. He is Zebedee, the father of James and John. Though it might not have been a notable name in his day, the names of his sons certainly have gained importance for us who regard the disciples as the founding fathers of our faith traditions. So, picture this. The mother of the two men – they were not kids when their mother came to Jesus, they were adults who had already been chosen as disciples – steps up to Jesus and asks a favor. There she knelt in front of Jesus, and he asked, “What is it you want?”

Can you hear the voice of a mother boldly asking, I want you to put one of my sons on your right side and one on the left in places of honor. That would mean that her two sons would have preference over the other disciples or the chosen. Perhaps, her underlying reasoning was that she felt her sons were better than the other disciples. Mothers often place their children at the top of the class, just as this mother did. With that in mind, I understand her request, and at the same time, I am amused at Jesus's response. His reaction was bold. “You don't know what you are asking.”

And turning to James and John, he asks them, “can you drink the cup I am going to drink?” Their response indicates that they did not know what Jesus meant by the question, but they were sure they could do whatever he did. Then the other disciples heard about this episode and they were furious. How could this mother be so blatant and try to butt her two sons in front of everyone else. Jesus had to straighten things out, and though the passage doesn't tell us this, it seems things got better or went back to normal.

There you have it. Two bold woman, two mothers who confronted Jesus with a request and didn't back off until he answered. Today we honor the women – the mothers – who stand strongly with their children, who stand behind their children in life. I know that personally my own mother was always there for me, standing up for me when I needed support. I hope that you can say the same for your mother.

With this in mind, I would like for us to turn our attention to the altar table. There you will find a bowl of clear pebbles and a bowl of water. Those pebbles represent the loving life of a mother. The water represents the pool of memories. After a prayer, I would offer you're the opportunity to come and take a pebble representing the life of some mother you want to honor with memories. Perhaps that would be your mother. Perhaps it's the mother of your children. Perhaps it's a daughter who is a mother. Perhaps it is someone you hold special in your heart that you wish to honor today. Whomever that person might be, come and place a stone in the well of memories. If you need someone to do that for you, someone will be there to help you.

Come now and share.