

Sermon outline and notes:

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## Luke 2:34-35 “For Those Who Hurt on Mother’s Day”

Intro. Today is Mother’s Day. It is a special day for many mothers. They receive gifts, cards, hugs, and other expressions of love, appreciation, and honor. They often get to see their children, or at least receive a phone call. To give love, appreciation, and honor to our mothers, especially on Mother’s Day, is the right thing to do. The first of the 10 Commandments that deals with interpersonal relationship is the 5<sup>th</sup> Commandment: “Honor your father and your mother....” Furthermore, Romans 12:15 says, “Rejoice with those who rejoice....” We should rejoice with those mothers among us who are experiencing joy today.

Yet some are *not* here today because they find that Mother’s Day is a painful day for them, not a celebration. Others are present in spite of the pain that they feel. Perhaps Mother’s Day is painful because they are still grieving the loss of their mother. Or they are giving the loss of their child. Or they are grieving because they wanted to have a child but could not because of a miscarriage or infertility. Or they feel hurt because even on Mother’s Day they are not receiving love, appreciation, and honor from one or more of their children. Or they have a child in jail and they feel guilty, wondering if they could have been a better mother. If on this Mother’s Day you are hurting, know that you are not alone.

So this Sunday I am going to preach a different Mother’s Day message. In 40 years of preaching I have never preached a message like the one I am about to preach. I do not wish to put a damper on this special day for so many. As I said, I ask all to “Rejoice with those who rejoice....” However, Paul’s exhortation in Romans 12:15 goes on to say, “weep with those who weep.” Let’s also remember those who weep from the hurt they feel on this Mother’s Day. I will not only address the problems that we may face, but also how we should respond biblically to life’s hurts, and how we should minister to those who hurt. May these words today be at least a small consolation for any hurt you feel.

So let’s see first of all:

### I. EXAMPLES OF THOSE WHO HURT

I want to give some biblical examples of women and mothers who experienced hurt, and shed tears. The depth of pain and weeping is based on the following principle: The greater the love, the greater the hurt when we experience a loss concerning those we love. Isn’t that a true statement? Motherhood should bring great joy, but there is also the potential for great pain and sorrow. And should we be surprised? Motherhood begins with great pain (Gen. 3:16), and sometimes that is a foretaste of what is to come.

So let’s consider some examples of those who are hurting on this Mother’s Day. First, some are hurting:

A. From the Death of a Child – I believe the greatest fulfillment of Simeon’s prophecy to Mary, “a sword will pierce through your own soul also,” is when Mary witnessed the death of her Son Jesus. It was painful to see Him rejected by His own nation. It was painful to see Him carry His cross to Calvary. It was painful to hear Him cry out from the pain of those large nails

in His hands and feet. It was painful to hear the mockings of the crowd at the cross. Yet I believe that as long as her son was alive, Mary had hope that somehow He would overrule His enemies by His power, and live. Yet when she witnessed His death, it was as if a sword pierced her heart. She wept bitter tears. His death affected others, but the greatest pain was borne by His mother and His Heavenly Father.

Then I think of what King Herod did in his attempt to kill the One who was to be King of the Jews. He ordered his men to go to Bethlehem and kill every male child “from two years old and under.” The result is stated in Mt. 2:17-18, “Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah<sup>1</sup> the prophet, saying: ‘A voice was heard in Ramah, Lamentation, weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, Refusing to be comforted, Because they are no more.’”

Then I think of the book of Ruth, where Naomi not only became a widow, but both of her sons died as well. When she returned home she said, “Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me” (Ruth 1:20).

I could give other biblical examples,<sup>2</sup> but none others are really needed. Oh, there must be no pain like the death of your child, especially for the mother.

A pastor dealt with today’s topic in a blog.<sup>3</sup> A mother wrote in response, “My son died Jan 21 2012 at the age of 26. He battled cancer for 7 years and I was so proud of him for never acting or living like he had cancer and always said, ‘I’ve lived my life mom... look at these babies fighting cancer... it’s not fair.’ I cry every day. I want my son back!!!”

One of my best friends from Bible College is a pastor, and only a couple months ago and he and his wife buried their first-born son who was only 34 years old. I expect that this Mother’s Day is going to be the most difficult of her life.

So I am speaking to some here today who have experience the pain of losing a child in death. We acknowledge the sorrow you feel.

Others are hurting today:

B. From a Mother’s Death – Many of you could not lay your hand on your mother during our prayer a while ago, for she has gone to heaven. The death of one’s mother is one of the greater sorrows of life. Psa. 35:14 says, “I bowed down heavily, as one who mourns for his mother.” In Gen. 24:67 we read of a reference to Isaac having mourned his mother’s death.

Someone else responded to that blog by saying, “I lost my wife yesterday suddenly and out of nowhere. I had to tell my 4 year old daughter that her mommy was gone and in heaven. I am angry and sad and hurt and broken this Mother’s Day.”

Ah, but I’m glad that even in the face of death Christ gives us hope. The apostle Paul said in 1 Thess. 4:13, “But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep [died], lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.” He said in John 14:19, “Because I live, you will live also.” I will see my mother again, and I trust you will as well.

Others are hurting today:

C. From Infertility – One in six couples experience infertility. You are not alone! I hope it didn’t pain you when mothers stood today to be honored. Infertility was experienced a number of

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<sup>1</sup> Jeremiah 31:15.

<sup>2</sup> In Luke 7:11-16 we read the story of the widow of the city of Nain, who also lost her only son. She followed behind weeping as they carried her son’s body out for burial.

<sup>3</sup> Pastor John Pavlovitz, a blog entitled “For Those Who Hurt on Mother’s Day” (johnpavlovitz.com).

times in the Bible. In 1 Samuel we read of Hannah, who for years had been unable to conceive a child. What made her pain worse was the fact that her husband's other wife had children, who "provoked her severely, to make her miserable, because..." Hannah could not conceive (1 Sam. 1:6). Even though her husband loved her very much, it did not make up for the pain that she felt. So when she went up to the house of the Lord, we read that "she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed to the LORD and wept in anguish" (1:10).

Ah, but to you who have felt pain from not being able to have children, I urge you to keep praying and asking God for a child as long as there is hope. Psa. 113:9 says, "He gives the childless woman a household, /making her/ the joyful mother of children. Hallelujah!" (HCSB).

But what about those who have lost hope of ever having children?

Someone wrote in response to a blog about those who hurt on Mother's Day, "I don't have children. I do have a stepdaughter whom I love—but she has a mother. An adoption fell through years ago and we said "we're done". I am now 61 years young and still get a heavy sadness on Mother's Day. I don't go to church on Mother's Day unless I am scheduled to play in the worship band. I find it is better if I don't....first off, I "don't belong" that day. It makes me sad and I have reached a place where I am not sad most of the time."

This may be difficult to accept, but Christ is all you really need. And if you know Him as Savior, He provides you with a church family. You have brothers and sisters in Christ. You can volunteer to work with our children and establish special relationships with these children, including my granddaughter!

One time the crowd said to Jesus, "Look, Your mother and Your brothers are outside seeking You." But He answered them, saying, "Who is My mother, or My brothers?" And He looked around in a circle at those who sat about Him, and said, "Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother" (Mark 3:32-35). Only your spiritual family will be you forever!

Another source of pain on this day is:

D. From a Rebellious Child – Prov. 10:1 says, "A wise son makes a glad father, But a foolish son is the grief of his mother." Prov. 17:25 says, "A foolish son is a grief to his father, and bitterness to her who bore him." Then Prov. 19:26 says, "He who mistreats his father and chases away his mother is a son who causes shame and brings reproach." Mother's Day is not a good day for the mothers of prodigals. Some mothers have no idea where their grown child is, and they do not expect to hear from him or her. We acknowledge your pain.

There is no doubt but that a mother is to love, instruct, and discipline her child, set a good example, and so forth. Generally speaking, good parents and good parenting results in good children. Yet the correlation between parenting and how a child turns out is not automatic, because there are other factors, including genetics,<sup>4</sup> ungodly influences of friends and society outside the home, a child's own self-will, and so forth. Some children have turned out well in spite of bad parenting, and some children have turned out poorly in spite of good parenting.

While I was going to seminary in Dallas, TX, Cheryl and I became friends with another couple who lived in the same apartment complex. He also attended the same school as I. They had 3 children. The first two were sweet, obedient, good children. They thought they were great parents. They had it all together. They could write a book on how to be a good parent. Then, the third child came along, a boy. He was stubborn, hyperactive, self-willed, and non-compliant. He

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<sup>4</sup> Mental illness is largely hereditary.

was a handful! Needless to say, God humbled them quite a bit regarding their parenting skills! [Illus.#C-2686]

So don't beat yourself up over a child who hasn't turned out well. If you loved that child, prayed for that child, taught that child God's truth, including right from wrong, what more could you have done? Besides, in many cases there is still time for that grown child to come back to God. Prov. 22:6 says, "Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it." Oh, if you are one of those children who have brought grief to your parents, what a day it will be for your mom and dad if you repent and come back to God! Perhaps it could begin today!

E. From an Uncaring or Absentee Mother – Some have had the pain of having a mother that has forsaken them. Perhaps an addiction or other mental health difficulty ruined her relationship with her children. Perhaps she was verbally or even physically abusive. Or she pursued another man or even pursued a career over her children. Regardless of the cause, it can be very painful for a child to feel forsaken by his or her own mother, and Mother's Day is not a good day for them.

In such circumstances we are to look to the Lord to heal the pain and fill the void in our hearts. Psa. 27:10 says, "When my father and my mother forsake me, Then the LORD will take care of me." Then Isa. 49:15 says, "Can a woman forget her nursing child, And not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, Yet I will not forget you."

I could give other examples of those who may be hurting today, like the mother who lost her children after the divorce, when her ex-husband alienated their children from her. But I believe you get the picture why for some, Mother's Day is not a day of celebration, but a day of tears and grief.

So I have given some examples of those who hurt, especially on Mother's Day. Next, I want to broaden the topic to all who have faced life's hurts and share with you:

## II. HOW TO RESPOND TO LIFE'S HURTS

Our first response may be tears. That's okay. God gave us tears for a purpose. But I want to share 4 responses to life's hurts based on God's Word:

A. Remember, the Lord Cares for You – There was a widow of the city of Nain, who not only had lost her husband, but had lost her only son as well. When the Lord saw her weeping, we read in Luke 7:13 that "he had compassion on her..." Knowing that the Lord is compassionate, the Psalmist said in Psa. 25:18, "Look on my affliction and my pain..." God knows the pain you may be feeling today, and He has compassion for you!

Therefore, let us heed the words of the apostle Peter in 1 Peter 5:7, "casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you."

B. Reject Bitterness – The apostle Paul said in Eph. 4:31, "Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, ... be put away from you, with all malice." Then Heb. 12:15 says, "looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled."

Don't be bitter toward God because life has dealt you a painful blow. Bitterness does not hurt God; it only hurts you. And don't be bitter toward people. Be gracious, and forgive. If you

have a rebellious child that has shattered your dreams, forgive. If you had an uncaring or abusive mother, forgive! You are hurt far more by a bitter spirit.

C. Reject Envy - James 3:14 warns believers against having “bitter envy” in our hearts. When others have what we do not have, we should not be envious of them. Envy is a work of the flesh, a manifestation of the sin nature (Gal. 6:21). It’s that self-centered feeling that says, “If I don’t have loving children then I don’t want you to have them either.” Or, “If I don’t have a loving, caring mother, then I don’t want you to have one either.” That is so wrong!

Illustration: [Tell story of 1 Kings 3:16-27]

Instead, as I shared earlier, Romans 12:15 says, “Rejoice with those who rejoice....” If the spirit of Christ is within us, we will truly be happy for others who are blessed.

D. Pray and Trust God – Psa. 62:8 says, “Trust in Him at all times, you people; Pour out your heart before Him....” In Jer. 49:11 God says, “Leave your fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let your widows trust in Me.” Nahum 1:7 says, “The LORD is good, A stronghold in the day of trouble; And He knows those who trust in Him.”

When Hannah was troubled because she was not able to conceive, she went to the Lord in prayer. In 1 Samuel 1:15 she said, “I ...have poured out my soul before the LORD.”

So again, 1 Peter 5:7 says, “casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.” Trust the Lord to heal the hurts of your life. He is the Great Physician. He can do it!

Conclusion: We cannot control many of life’s hurts, but we can control how we respond to them. We can respond in a way that makes things worse for ourselves and others, or we can respond in a way that makes things better. I encourage you to respond to life’s hurts in a biblical way.

Sources: This message was written primarily using the Scripture search tool in Larry Pierce, *Online Bible* [Ver. 4:23] (Ontario: onlinebible.net, 2012). Other sources listed in the footnotes. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982).