

3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Easter – Year A – May 8, 2011 – Faith Lutheran, Radcliff, KY  
Based on 1Peter 1:17-21 written by Pastor Paul Horn

### “Holy Women of God: Live in Reverent Fear”

Christ is Risen! He is Risen Indeed! The wonderful thing about Easter in the Lutheran Church is that we are privileged to celebrate it for seven weeks! And... it just so happens that Mother's Day also falls in the Easter season, so to all of the mothers this morning I say, "Happy Mother's Day!"

So you've seen the title of the sermon.... and you're wondering... it is Mother's Day after all, but what's this business about living in fear? Shouldn't we be talking about all the pampering and flowers and gifts mom should be getting today? The theme comes from our lesson in the Apostle Peter's first letter. He writes, "**Live in reverent fear.**" What does that mean? That mom needs to be afraid and always cower in terror? To fear God means to show him the highest respect; to honor God above anyone or anything else. It means to live before God in complete humility. To love and trust in him above anyone or anything else; to put his priorities above yours. Living in reverent fear is demonstrated in everything that you do as a Christian woman. It's an attitude that governs how you live. Since this is Mother's Day, here are some examples of women in the Bible who exemplified this attitude of living in reverent fear:

This morning we recited the verses from Proverbs 31 which talk about the wife of noble character. She is a hard worker, her children respect her, her husband has full confidence in her because she manages her household well, and he praises her for her hard work, and not just on Mother's Day. All of these characteristics of the wife of noble character flow from her fear of the LORD (vs30). Because she regards the LORD as most important in her life, all the other areas of her life flourish.

What about Noah's wife? We don't know her name because the Bible doesn't tell us, but didn't she have a great fear of the LORD? She had great respect for the LORD and was in awe of his promise to destroy the world with a flood and yet save her and her family because of his grace. In holy awe of the LORD she humbly submitted to her husband and willingly supported him and assisted him as he built this big boat, which took 120 years to construct.

What about Lydia, the seller of purple cloth in the town of Philippi? The book of Acts tells us that the Lord opened her heart when the Apostle Paul shared the good news of Jesus with her. With great respect and honor for the Lord, who by his grace, brought her out of the darkness of unbelief to the light of faith, opened her home to Paul and the other apostles whenever they were in town. Because of her reverent fear for the Lord, she showed it in her life. She used her wealth to support the gospel ministry.

And of course we can't talk about Mother's Day without mentioning Mary, the mother of Jesus. As a young teenage girl Mary showed the utmost respect to God's messenger who told her, "You will be with child through the Holy Spirit. This child will be the Savior of the world." Mary said, "I don't know how this will happen but I will believe it! I am the LORD's servant. May it be to me as you have said." Such humility! What an indescribable sense of awe must have come over her, "I am going to carry in my womb the Christ child!"

I think that Mary is one of those women who embodies the joy of motherhood. Even as a young teenage girl, she is happy for this blessing, to be the God-carrier, to have the privilege of raising a child, teaching him God's

Word, to encourage him and support him. That's exactly why God gave some of you to be mothers, so that it may be a blessing to you! What joy there is to be found in bringing your little one to the font, to allow God's powerful Word, together with water, to wash away your child's sins; to take them from being a child of the devil to a child of God. Motherhood is a joy! You have the privilege of watering that faith that was planted at baptism, to have your little ones sit on your lap as you teach them the story of the flood or birth of Christ, to teach them to sing "I am Jesus' Little Lamb", to load them into the minivan and carry them to church and to Sunday School. What a joy to be able to provide for their needs; food, clothing and shelter. What a joy to allow them to make mistakes so that they learn, to give them responsibilities so that they grow to be good citizens, to show them how to manage money that their hard work earned, to teach them what it means to give back to the Lord who so graciously given them of his gifts.

But motherhood is not always an Anne Geddes day in the home, is it? Anne Geddes is a photographer who dresses up babies in costumes made to look like daisies and fruit and honey bees. Motherhood means busyness. You are so busy, always running. At times you feel your children are out of control, and that attitude makes you want to... well... you know. Single moms try to balance career and motherhood. Army wives have an hard time, especially when the husband is deployed. And then your child reaches their teenage years, yikes! As a mother you want your teen to talk to you. You try to make yourself available to listen to your teen, to support them in the awkward years of life. And when they don't talk to you, you feel disappointed. Motherhood is a burden when the children are grown, too. When you see that they have not followed the faithful example you set, they are not church goers, you're not even sure if they are believers. Your heart breaks when they make one poor choice after another and you wonder, "Where did I go wrong? What could I have done differently?" And soon you forget what a joy and blessing and high privilege God has blessed you with, to be a mother.

That's what Satan wants; to turn what God has created as a blessing into a burden. When you are overwhelmed and so busy with motherhood, you sometimes forget where to turn, where to run, to unload this burden. You might find yourself sitting in front of the TV or Facebook with a glass of mommy juice to take the edge off. And there's nothing wrong with unwinding. But you will not find peace there. You will not find comfort there. There you will not find the One who promises to strengthen you.

But when you take time to sit down with your Savior, for a little folding of the hands, you can let him know how you feel. There at the cross unload your burden of sin and guilt, of anger and frustration. When you take time to sit down with your Savior, and open his Word, you allow him the opportunity to speak to you. There he will tell you what you need to hear, what you're yearning to hear.

Dear daughters of your heavenly Father, lift up your heads. Let the good news of Jesus cheer your hearts and calm your troubled souls. Peter says in our lesson this morning, "**You were redeemed from your empty way of life.**" Sometimes motherhood feels like that, doesn't it, an empty way of life? But what has Christ done for you? He carried your burdens, he carried your sorrows, your guilt, your sins, took them on himself, and he paid a price to set you free from your sins. He paid a price to free you from slavery to your guilty conscience and your sinful nature, to free you from Satan who constantly tries to keep you from living a life of reverent fear. You were redeemed.

Peter explains the cost, "**For you know that it was not with perishable things, such as silver and gold that you were redeemed from your empty way of life, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.**" (vs18-19) In Scripture that word *redeemed* means *to buy back, to pay a ransom price to set*

*someone free.* God the Father demanded that a payment be made to set you free from your slavery to sin, to Satan, to death, to hell. The payment: death; the lifeblood of a human being must be offered. But not just any human being; one without sin, without the stain of a sinful nature, one who was innocent. The Son of God knew this and he knew that he was the only one who could make this payment, even if it came at the cost of his life. Peter says he knew this from eternity (vs20). But he doesn't ask questions. Like the Navy SEALs, they didn't ask why they were to carry out that mission last Sunday, even though they knew there was a possibility they might not come back. But they stepped up and carried out their work, because they willingly signed up to do it.

In the same way, Jesus willingly steps forward to accept the responsibility of making the payment of death. He does it because he understands the seriousness of God's demands over sin; that sinners must die, that sinners, such as you, such as his own mother Mary, sinners like Noah's wife and Lydia and the wife of noble character, must die for they have sinned. But he obediently dies instead, in your place, for you. By his death he makes the full payment God demanded. You were redeemed.

Dear women of God, do you know what this means? It means your sins can no longer condemn you. Your guilty conscience can no longer burden you. You are no longer a slave to your sinful nature, nor to Satan, neither are you a child of this sinful world. You are a child of God. You are holy to God. You are free. You are free to live in reverent fear for God. That is what you are, and that is how you will live.

And I understand that it's not easy to live in reverent fear, with complete humility and love and respect for God and his Word... because you have such poor examples in this sinful society. It's not easy because you are so busy. It's not easy because there are moms raising their children on their own. It's not easy when a mother does not have the spiritual support of an unbelieving husband, or a husband who is just apathetic and lazy about the spiritual care of his family. Because it is difficult, you will set aside time in your busy schedule to return to your God in prayer, to tell him how you feel. You will set aside time in your busy schedule to sit down for quiet time with him and his Word, and there you will find the promises of comfort. There God will strengthen you, and remind you that you have a Father in heaven who knows, and who loves you, so much, that he sent his Son to redeem you. You will sit down with God in his Word, because there he reminds you that you are not alone. There in his Word he offers you wonderful models for Christian mothers. Read about Deborah and Ruth, Deborah and Esther, Hannah and Abigail, and Phoebe and Priscilla, Anna and Rachel, Sarah and the other Marys... women who lived in reverent fear, women who put their faith in God's promises, women just like you.

Dear holy women of God: Happy Mother's Day. Live in reverent fear. Amen.