**Exodus 1:15-2:10 (Meditation #1 of 3)** May 8, 2022

Pastor P. Martin **Faith Lutheran Church, Radcliff, KY** Easter 4, Mother’s Day

 *Exodus 1:15The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, whose names were Shiphrah and Puah, 16“When you help the Hebrew women in childbirth and observe them on the delivery stool, if it is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, let her live.” 17The midwives, however, feared God and did not do what the king of Egypt had told them to do; they let the boys live. 18Then the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and asked them, “Why have you done this? Why have you let the boys live?” 19The midwives answered Pharaoh, “Hebrew women are not like Egyptian women; they are vigorous and give birth before the midwives arrive.” 20So God was kind to the midwives and the people increased and became even more numerous. 21And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families of their own. 22Then Pharaoh gave this order to all his people: “Every boy that is born you must throw into the Nile, but let every girl live.”*

 *2:1Now a man of the house of Levi married a Levite woman, 2and she became pregnant and gave birth to a son. When she saw that he was a fine child, she hid him for three months. 3But when she could hide him no longer, she got a papyrus basket for him and coated it with tar and pitch. Then she placed the child in it and put it among the reeds along the bank of the Nile. 4His sister stood at a distance to see what would happen to him.*

 *5Then Pharaoh’s daughter went down to the Nile to bathe, and her attendants were walking along the river bank. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her slave girl to get it. 6She opened it and saw the baby. He was crying, and she felt sorry for him. “This is one of the Hebrew babies,” she said. 7Then his sister asked Pharaoh’s daughter, “Shall I go and get one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby for you?” 8“Yes, go,” she answered. And the girl went and got the baby’s mother. 9Pharaoh’s daughter said to her, “Take this baby and nurse him for me, and I will pay you.” So the woman took the baby and nursed him. 10When the child grew older, she took him to Pharaoh’s daughter and he became her son. She named him Moses, saying, “I drew him out of the water.”*

Dear Friends in Christ,

**Mothers Are For Life**

 As the battering ram slammed the gates of a city called Abel Beth Maacah, from the top of the walls a solitary woman shouted. *“Listen! Listen! Tell [your commander] to come here so I can speak to him.” He went toward her, and she asked, “Are you [the commander]?” “I am.” “Listen to what your servant has to say.” “I’m listening.” “Long ago they used to say, ‘Get your answer at Abel,’ and that settled it. We are the peaceful and faithful in Israel. You are trying to destroy a city that is a mother in Israel.”* If you want to know the rest of the story, you will have to go home and open your Bibles to the second half of 2 Samuel, chapter 20. What followed isn’t important for today. This Scripture is important today because of something that woman said, a phrase she used. She said to that commander, as something of an accusation, *“You are trying to destroy a city that is a mother in Israel.”* What did she mean by that: *“A city that is a mother”*? So effective was her respectful charge that this commander, no shrinking violet by the Scripture’s reports, in front of all his soldiers, gave an almost shame-faced “Sorry, Ma’am.” Simply summoning up the word “mother” works that kind of magic. *“A city that is a mother in Israel.”* What does that mean?

 Not *all* mothers are good, and I doubt that there is a single mother who does not have regrets, but more than any other demographic: children, men, or even women in general, more than any other, mothers are so dependable and selfless with those under their care, that we know what this woman meant when she confronted a general saying, *“You are trying to destroy a city that is a mother.”* She was saying, “What are you thinking? What right do you have? This city is peaceful, respectable. Its people are known for being fair, for helping, for being team players, for doing the right thing. In short, for promoting the best of life. Go and fight your wars if you must! But how dare you assault a mother of Israel!

 If there is one single attribute common to all decent mothers, this is it: they are on the side of life. It bears mention at this moment in time: life begins at conception, not birth, and therefore is to be protected from its origin at conception. It’s a question of life.

 We meet life-concerned women in Exodus chapters one and two. They were for life. Even though three of the four were not mothers at the moment of their decision to protect life, those three in that moment of decision became mothers. And the one of the four who was a mother, the mother of Moses, she made the hardest decision of all. That precious little baby whom she had shielded for three months, she knew the charade couldn’t go on forever. Nursing him one last time, she took him and placed him in a miniature of Noah’s ark in the Flood, a reed basket in the Nile. She pushed his little life raft away and waited. It was not for her convenience, but for him. It was not that *her* life was endangered, but *his.* It was not because she wanted less trouble for herself, but she wanted life for him.

 I’m not a mother. And this day is a minefield for a pastor speaking publicly on the subject. But as I see it, if there is one thing wrapped up with motherhood, it is life. Mothers give life. They care about life. They preserve life. They nurture life. They enrich life. Need I say, it’s not about their own life, but the life of another, or others. And so it is that those who never bore nor adopted a child can still bear the traits of mothers, sometimes even be called “Mother,” because of that concern running down to their core for the life of another, of others. Every mother is unique, but at the core of it, it’s just a plain old unyielding concern for life.

 Of course, every mother—except for the worst—will admit and even be haunted by the times they were not the blessing you should be. Sometimes it was just a moment of inattention that led to life-shattering results. How could you not continually relive that moment? Sometimes a weakness of character is copied, mirror-like, in the next generation, and you just have to look away sometimes. Or it may be a feeling of inadequacy because you failed to rise to the occasion at a really important moment of life. Some faults are more imagined than real, but a great many—dare I say most?—are rightly called sin, and bear the sort of fruit that sin always bears. And when a mother knows she has been part of that, oh, it is a wound that never heals!

 In those moments, it is time to stop thinking of what might have been, or what should have been, or what can never be undone. It is time to simply remember the one who forgave it all. Remember him who looked mothers, too, in the eye and said, “Your sins are forgiven.” He said that authoritatively because he is the one who shouldered the weight of all your failures and faults and suffered the consequences you should bear. And now he sends you out with new life and tells you, “Be the sort of mother that only a mother who knows true forgiveness can be.”

**2 Timothy 1:3-7 (Meditation #2 of 3)** May 8, 2022

Pastor P. Martin **Faith Lutheran Church, Radcliff, KY** Easter 4, Mother’s Day

 *2 Timothy 1:3I thank God, whom I serve, as my forefathers did, with a clear conscience, as night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers. 4Recalling your tears, I long to see you, so that I may be filled with joy. 5I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also. 6For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. 7For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.*

**Mothers Are For Life to the Full**

Dear Friends in Christ,

 Mothers, what would it mean for you to give *“life to the full”* to your kids? More toys? A nicer house? An awesome education? Better career opportunities? Judging by what I see going on around us, I do think that’s what most mothers think of as *“life to the full.”* Opportunities and stuff. That’s not all bad, but that is not *“life to the full.”*

 By a coincidence that happens every four or five years, today, Mother’s Day, is also Good Shepherd Sunday. Jesus said many things about himself as our Good Shepherd. He summarized his Good Shepherd care with this statement: *“I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full”* (John 10:10). What do you think he meant by that? *“…that they may have life… to the full”?*

 When Jesus said, *“That they may have life… to the full,”* do you think Jesus meant more toys? A nicer house? An awesome education? Better career opportunities? Of course not. People who know Jesus know he was talking about salvation: living now without the guilt of sin, and in eternity with God. That’s *“life to the full.”*

 The Apostle Paul in the few words of this reading was writing to a dear junior colleague named Timothy. More than a colleague, Timothy was like a son to Paul. As Paul reflected on their camaraderie which had only grown stronger through the decades, Paul realized it came down to their shared faith in Christ. And when Paul thought of their shared faith in Christ, he reflected, ***“I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice.”*** Humanly speaking—I mean God is going to get his will done one way or another—but humanly speaking, the reason Timothy had saving faith was his mother’s and grandmother’s faithful instruction in the faith of the Bible.

 For how many millions this is true! For how many of you your mothers or grandmothers played a crucial role, even *the* crucial God-given role of bringing you to know your Savior Jesus! For you, her faithful God-first focus on life still bears rich fruit. *That* is giving *“life to the full.”*

 Moms, you have the duty and privilege to give life, to nurture life, to enrich life. You provide so many things to your children, young and old. The wide variety of things you provide is simply overwhelming, especially to the male mind. We men find it impossible keeping so many things going at once. But you do! You care for your kids’ clothes, food, school, manners, friends, athletics, clubs, and who knows how many other things that are always bumping around in the mind of the average mother. As you strive to provide all that, do not forget—please, do not forget—Jesus’ words, *“I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”* Jesus was not talking about clothes, food, school, manners, friends, career opportunities. He was talking about the fact that unquestionably the most important thing a mother can do for her child is to sit down and teach that child to pray before bedtime; to look through an age appropriate children’s Bible after supper and let that child absorb a reverence for the word of God; to every week be in God’s house with her child where we gather around a cross that looms large above us. It stands there because in that cross we have forgiveness and eternal life. In giving time and focus to those disciplines of Word, prayer and worship, mothers give what Jesus intends for your child, *“life to the full.”*

 Don’t let the world deceive you. Don’t imagine that career opportunities, education, toys, athletics or anything else are anywhere near as important. They aren’t. None of those get your children to heaven, or your children’s children to heaven. Be a mother with the mind of Christ, who not only imparts life to her children, but *“life to the full!”*

**John 19:25-27 (Meditation #3 of 3)** May 8, 2022

Pastor P. Martin **Faith Lutheran Church, Radcliff, KY** Easter 4, Mother’s Day

 *John 19:25Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. 26When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, “Dear woman, here is your son,” 27and to the disciple, “Here is your mother.” From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.*

Dear Friends in Christ,

**Mothers: Let Her Be Honored**

 Recently in my daily devotions, I came across a thought provoking passage in Proverbs. *“A kindhearted woman gains respect, but ruthless men gain only wealth”* (11:16). I had to mull that one over a long time. What makes it interesting to me is that the Truth of this proverb stands on three paradoxes, all compressed into a single sentence.

 The first paradox is women versus men. When it comes to the things that appeal to the sinful nature—wealth, dominance, power, etc.—men undoubtedly had a huge advantage in the ancient world. And yet this passage says that the virtuous woman, even in that world, came out better than men doing what men tend to do.

 The second paradox is cut-throat competitiveness versus kindness. Someone said it once and it will be repeated to the end of time, “Nice guys finish last.” That’s why people cheat, gouge, fight, lie, mock, kick, bite. Most people perceive those as the way to win. All the while, the kindhearted forget about their own advantage and invest in others. In spite of their competitive disadvantages, the kindhearted come out on top of the ruthless.

 The third paradox is gaining respect versus gaining wealth. All the world chases after wealth, but consider the wealth gained by the wealth chasers. People hate you and speak ill of you. The one who seeks the good of others is spoken well of by all. Well, nearly all. The robber baron, trying to justify his behavior, will label the kindhearted as chumps; but the rest of us know the truth.

 And so we have the beloved day of Mother’s Day. *“A kindhearted woman gains respect, but ruthless men gain only wealth.”* By losing herself, your mother has become the most respected person in your life. And the more she lost herself in you, the more you respect her.

 Therein lies great beauty of what Christ Jesus did for his mother in his dying moments. She was a mother like the best. Do you remember how at the wedding at Cana she told the servants regarding her boy, “Do whatever he tells you” (John 2:5). Now that’s a mother, right? She also had a moment of maternal overreach in Mark chapter 3 (vv.21,31) when she and the rest of the family thought Jesus had lost his mind, and went to take charge of him. Which is also exactly like a mother, right? Yet she accompanied Jesus to the end. She was even there at his execution—one cannot imagine the agony for her. She was a mother, a good mother, was she not?

 And then, Jesus, in his last moments, lived out the fourth commandment for us. That commandment says, “Honor your father and your mother.” It doesn’t say, “Obey your father and mother,” it says, “Honor them.” A child must obey. But when 33 years old and dying on a cross, “honor” means even more. It means exactly what Jesus did for his mother: ***“‘Dear woman, here is your son…’ and ‘Here is your mother.’”***

 Following the lead of Jesus’ own honor and respect for his mother, we honor this day.

 It is right on this day for mothers to remember all they have been given to do, and privileged to provide, and blessed to experience. It is right to direct them to the rest, consolation and forgiveness they too need and find in their Savior. But finally, it is right for us to honor them, to speak words of thanks, to supply what they need, for they are worthy of our honor and respect. Amen.