

Who will care for us?
Psalms 67; John 14:23-29

Our modern day conceptualization and proclamation of Mother's Day can be credited to the work of three women, Anna Reeves Jarvis, Julia Ward Howe, and Anna's daughter also named Anna Jarvis. Anna Reeves Jarvis organized Mother's Day Work Clubs to improve sanitary conditions and to stem her **communities appalling infant mortality rates in 1858**. In the wake of the Civil War, Anna was instrumental in bringing together former foes of the battlefield.¹ Anna's efforts were furthered by Julia Ward Howe's "Mother's Peace Day" Proclamation in 1870. Despite having penned The Battle Hymn of the Republic 12 years earlier, **Howe had become so distraught by the death and carnage of the Civil War** [also] that she called on Mother's to come together and protest what she saw as the futility of their Sons killing the Sons of other Mothers. [We may now add **to that daughters and sons who kill the daughters** and sons of other mothers.] With the following, Howe called for an international Mother's Day celebrating peace and motherhood:

*Arise, then, women of this day!
Arise all women who have hearts,
Whether your baptism be that of water or of tears
Say firmly:*

*"We will not have great questions decided by irrelevant agencies,
Our husbands shall not come to us reeking of carnage,
For caresses and applause.
Our sons shall not be taken from us to unlearn
All that we have been able to teach them of
charity, mercy and patience.*

*"We women of one country
Will be too tender of those of another country
To allow our sons to be trained to injure theirs."*

*From the bosom of the devastated earth a voice goes up with
Our own. It says, "Disarm, Disarm!"
The sword of murder is not the balance of justice!
Blood does not wipe out dishonor
Nor violence indicate possession.
As men have often forsaken the plow and the anvil at the summons of war.*

Let women now leave all that may be left of home

¹ http://today.msnbc.msn.com/id/36969170/ns/today-mothers_day_guide/

For a great and earnest day of counsel.

Let them meet first, as women, to bewail and commemorate the dead.

*Let them then solemnly take counsel with each other as to the means
Whereby the great human family can live in peace,
Each bearing after their own time the sacred impress, not of Caesar,
But of God.*

*In the name of womanhood and humanity, I earnestly ask
That a general congress of women without limit of nationality
May be appointed and held at some place deemed most convenient
And at the earliest period consistent with its objects
To promote the alliance of the different nationalities,
The amicable settlement of international questions.
The great and general interests of peace.²*

Mother's Day did not become recognized as a national celebration, however, until Woodrow Wilson signed it into being in 1914. Again thanks to the ongoing efforts of the daughter of Anna, Anna Jarvis. So **today, we celebrate the now highly commercialized** Mother's Day seemingly absent of any thought to its intent of promoting better living conditions for our **children, its intent to promote world peace**, and the desire for all humanity to join together as a united family.

In our Psalter reading today we find a God who looks upon us and judges us with equity. In our gospel reading Jesus speaks to us about the importance of keeping **God's commandments and continuing the work he has** begun. Jesus also speaks to us of peace. While he teaches us that we are to be a peaceful people loving our neighbor as we love ourselves, here **Jesus is referring to a comforting** peace in the midst of grief and loss. Saying, *“²⁷Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.”* (John 14) Our Savior speaking nurturing, loving, and tender words as one would imagine a caring **mother to, not only for the audience** of that time, but also spoken to you and me today. Peace and comfort.

² <http://www.mothersdaycentral.com/about-mothersday/history/>

Reverend Paul Duke, in one of his sermons, imagines Jesus as a mother standing with her hand on the doorknob, her coat over her arm, watching her children play with Lego's on the living room floor. One of them looks up suddenly and, noticing that she is about to leave, asks: "Where are you going?"

"I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to myself, so that where I am there you may be also."

"Can we go with you?" the child asks further.

"Where I am going you cannot come."

"How long will you be gone?" asks the confused child.

"A little while and you will no longer see me, and again a little while and you will see me."

"Who will take care of us?" the child wonders.

"I will ask the [Creator] and [Abba God] will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever," the mother responds. Jesus is leaving again, and like children we want to know "who will take care of us."³

Certainly the audience in which Jesus was speaking felt as though they were being abandoned, orphaned by the One who had called them away from everything they had known – their careers, their families, their community, and systems of support. Jesus was saying to them, after their **devoting years to following him, I am leaving you “for a little while and you cannot go where I am going.”** The question of “Who will take care of us?” had to be foremost in their minds because it was Jesus who had done most of the caring work. It is perhaps because Jesus sensed this among them that he said in **verse 18, “¹⁸I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you.”** (John 14:18) Barbara Brown Taylor reminds us that the “‘little while’ Jesus promised **became a long while. A long while became** a lifetime. Ten years turned into a hundred years,

³ James G. Somerville, "Who Will Take Care of Us?" *The Christian Century*, 5/6/98, 471 as found in "Calming Our Infant Fears." <http://www.goodpreacher.com/journalread.php?id=1503>

then five hundred years, then a thousand."⁴ **But Jesus also promised the gift of an Advocate or Paraclete** in Greek. Paraclete means “someone called alongside to help or assist.” We have not been left like motherless children. Jesus, as mother, has gifted us just as he did the disciples with a counselor, an intercessor, **a comforter, someone to walk alongside us** to encourage us and to nurture us as we seek to live out our faith. The Holy Spirit.

"It is the Spirit who strengthens us, comforts us, guides us, and inspires us. It is the Spirit **who enables us to interpret the signs of the times in ways very different** from the ways of the world. It is the Spirit who works through us for the transformation of the world. It is because the Spirit has already been given to us that, in the midst of our journey of life, we are able to live the promises into fulfillment.... We may **be considered foolish by those who live without this hope**, but it is the foolishness of the Spirit of God."⁵ Let us consider how we are like that group of disciples who found themselves trying to understand what Jesus was saying and asking of them when he said to them, “Those who love me will keep my word, and my [Abba God] will **love them, and we will come to them and make our home** with them.” (Jn. 14: 23)

Of course the disciples loved Jesus and as people of faith we say that we love Jesus. We even have a song, “O, How I Love Jesus” that we sing. But what does loving Jesus require of us? We are not called to **sentimentality in reflecting on the “good ole days” of Jesus**, nor are we called to sit twiddling our thumbs awaiting his triumphant return, rather we are called to be obedient, and to continue to live out the life and teachings of Jesus upon **the earth today. It is not about our private experience and relationship** with Jesus rather it is about our communal response to the call upon the church in the instructions Jesus has left us. It is like a mother with her child. For what reasons do our mothers teach us to say “please and thank you,” to not hit

⁴ <http://www.goodpreacher.com/journalread.php?id=1503>

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<http://i.ucc.org/StretchYourMind/OpeningtheBible/WeeklySeeds/tabid/81/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/40/Spirited-Love.aspx>

other children, to share what we have, to be kind to one another, and to not squeeze the baby **chick we've been given for Easter. Those life lessons are for the greater** good of our society. They are kin-dom building acts. They are for the greater good. In love we are taught these lessons by the mothers around us and it is in love that we live them out. So it is also with **our relationship with Christ, "Love expresses itself** in obedience, in keeping Jesus' words."⁶

What would the world look like if we all were obedient and followed the prompting of the Holy Spirit? What would our world look like if all mothers once again united to advocate for an **environment free of toxic waste and advocated care of all of God's** creation? What would our world look like if all mothers once again united to advocate for a world free of the child sex trade industry, a world in which materialism no longer exists but true care for one another more than things, a world that **says all mothers children are created equally and are of greater value than oil?** What would the community of Stevens Point look like if we, the people of Peace UCC, lived loving obedient lives to God's call? **Kin-dom building work indeed. "The resources are surely** [here] to do the work of building the kin-dom, but the church seems lost about what to do about it. We have the resources to do this work. Look around. Do you see them? They're in every one of us and all we have to do is to find the will to do it."⁷ We must simply choose to be obedient to the call.

Who will care for us? We are called to be obedient in caring for all of God's creation and for one another. We are called to share the Good News not only with our words but also in how we choose to live our lives. We're not orphans, you know. We have a partner in the Spirit who loves us as Jesus did. **We are not motherless children. "Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."** The Advocate is with us every moment. **Let us continue the kin-dom building** work of love, peace, and equality of persons that Jesus calls us to. Amen.

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Good Preacher, Ibid