

Mothers Day

By Rev. Todd Farnsworth

Acts 1: 1-11



1 In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach 2 until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. 3 After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. 4 On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. 5 For John baptized with[a] water, but in a few days you will be baptized with[b] the Holy Spirit." 6 Then they gathered around him and asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" 7 He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." 9 After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. 10 They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. 11 "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."

As I told the children earlier this morning, Momming happens in all kinds of ways. It can occur through the birth of a child, the adoption of a child, the

bringing home of a beloved pet. It can happen to people who identify as women who care for children, who advocate for children, who nurture and protect and admonish and support and play with and teach and labor and share their wisdom...you get the idea. Mom's come into our lives in all kinds of ways and in today's lesson from Luke I'd like to suggest that Jesus brings us one more model:

“Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. 5 For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with [b] the Holy Spirit.” 6 Then they gathered around him and asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” 7 He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Luke is helping his audience along. There had been no witnesses to the resurrection on (what we call) Easter morning. Nobody saw what happened behind door number 2, but it sure wasn't Rice A Roni! Jesus, who they had laid in the tomb, was missing, and some said he was stolen, and some said he had Risen! Luke wants to put that debate to rest and so in his *gospel of Luke* and again in *Acts* he relates the honest to goodness ascension confirmation that places Jesus securely in the pantheon of Divinity.

Luke says, “Here is Jesus. (hold up balloon with smiley face) Jesus has been with us since before Easter morning. Some of us have seen him since Easter morning. Look at him here. (and Luke's listeners looked and saw

what Luke saw...there were lots of people looking, seeing, Jesus). Listen to how Jesus promises someone to take care of us in his absence. That “someone” cannot begin until he ascends. We will learn new things about Jesus from this “Holy Spirit.” Look, The time has come, Jesus is ascending as promised.”

9 *After he said this, (Jesus) was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud (or some beams) hid him from their sight.*

Like Jesus’ friends/witnesses, some of us might be wondering, “Where did he go?” “When will he come back?” “How will we get that balloon off the ceiling?” And we look and we watch and we...miss the point that Luke and Jesus are making.

We can rest easy that Jesus really did ascend...that there are witnesses to His divinity...annnd, that witnessing makes room for what’s next while we wait! Luke gives us two angels to snap us back to the here and now. They say,

11 *“Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”*

In the spectacle of Jesus’ rising into the air; in the wonder of how or when He’d be back; in the overwhelming moment of their Beloved soaring up into

the heavens, it was easy to forget that he had left them a gift...a gift triggered by his leaving.

Which brings us to Jesus' new model for Mother's Day.

I remember that waaaay back in seminary we learned that the Holy Spirit identified as a feminine character.

The word Jesus uses for Holy Spirit closely matches the word used in Proverbs for the woman who was at the beginning of time with God creating the world.

The word Jesus uses for Holy Spirit can be identified as feminine archaeologically.

The word Jesus uses for Holy Spirit conveys all of the things the kids came up with for "mother" today: x, y, z...and it carries with it peace, justice, protection, understanding, and wisdom.

The Holy Spirit is the kind of Mom I wished I had as a child...and if I had known this story back then, I guess I would have had such a Mother in my life. Or I would have known it was ok to go looking for one beyond the walls of my house.

Fortunately, I have one now, and you do, too.

While Jesus is away, we all have this mother of all mothers to look to for support, We all have the Holy Spirit to meet those needs we associate with Mother's.

We have this gift that Jesus promised upon his ascension, to care for us, to work for us, to bring us peace, to impart her wisdom on us about the things that Jesus taught during his life and resurrected presence.

We have this Holy Mother whether we have a biological mother in our lives or not.

We have this Holy Mom to help us know our own Mothers better, as we recognize that Spirit alive in their lives.

- Whether they are teaching us how to read or taking us for a walk.
- Whether they are cooking us supper or ordering a meal to fill our bellies
- Whether they are singing a song of love off key or helping us figure out what to do about a bully in our lives.

The “MOMS” in our lives reflect the Holy Mom/Holy Spirit who Jesus left as a gift to care for us in his physical absence, and like the children this morning, we can identify them whether we are related to them or not, because they are doing Jesus’ work among us.

By this understanding I can identify several mothers who have helped me figure out this life I'm living:

My biological mom brought me into the world.

Anna Begley taught me I was loved.

Olive Anderson showed me unconditional love in the face of deep grief

Florence Potter gave me curiosity.

Jen, Christine, and Anna have demonstrated how care for our four footed children.

Jane Gabbie gave me patience.

Dee Moak taught me to speak my truth.

Martha Moak continues to show me how to share love with people beyond myself.

Perhaps you can name some mom's in your life, too.

*According to Wikipedia, The modern holiday of **Mother's Day** was first celebrated in 1908, when Anna Jarvis held a memorial for her **mother** at St Andrew's Methodist Church in Grafton, West Virginia. Ms. Jarvis did not bear any children of her own.*

Let us update Anna Jarvis' holiday by honoring all of the people who we identify as "Mom" in our life. They are the people who bring God's love and justice close to us as we wait for Jesus' return.

If you are sitting next to someone who the children missed earlier this morning, please raise your hand and I'll bring them a flower. May every "Mother" be honored today as we live out our faith together in community, waiting, in Jesus' name. Amen.