

**5.14.23 – Easter 6 & Mother’s Day**  
**“Following Christ’s Example – Part 2”**

The United Baptist Church, Annandale, VA

**Psalm 73:15-28 (NIV)**

*A psalm of Asaph.*

- <sup>15</sup> If I had spoken out like that,  
I would have betrayed your children.
- <sup>16</sup> When I tried to understand all this,  
it troubled me deeply
- <sup>17</sup> till I entered the sanctuary of God;  
then I understood their final destiny.
- <sup>18</sup> Surely you place them on slippery ground;  
you cast them down to ruin.
- <sup>19</sup> How suddenly are they destroyed,  
completely swept away by terrors!
- <sup>20</sup> They are like a dream when one awakes;  
when you arise, Lord,  
you will despise them as fantasies.
- <sup>21</sup> When my heart was grieved  
and my spirit embittered,
- <sup>22</sup> I was senseless and ignorant;  
I was a brute beast before you.
- <sup>23</sup> Yet I am always with you;  
you hold me by my right hand.
- <sup>24</sup> You guide me with your counsel,  
and afterward you will take me into glory.
- <sup>25</sup> Whom have I in heaven but you?  
And earth has nothing I desire besides you.
- <sup>26</sup> My flesh and my heart may fail,  
but God is the strength of my heart  
and my portion forever.
- <sup>27</sup> Those who are far from you will perish;  
you destroy all who are unfaithful to you.
- <sup>28</sup> But as for me, it is good to be near God.  
I have made the Sovereign Lord my refuge;  
I will tell of all your deeds.

**Leader: This is Poetry of Confession & Assurance.** All: Thanks be to God!

**1 Peter 4:1-11 (NLT)**

<sup>1</sup> So then, since Christ suffered physical pain, you must arm yourselves with the same attitude he had, and be ready to suffer, too. For if you have suffered physically for Christ, you have finished with sin. <sup>2</sup> You won’t spend the rest of your lives chasing your own desires, but you will be anxious to do the will of God. <sup>3</sup> You have had enough in the past of the evil things that godless people enjoy—their immorality

and lust, their feasting and drunkenness and wild parties, and their terrible worship of idols.

<sup>4</sup> Of course, your former friends are surprised when you no longer plunge into the flood of wild and destructive things they do. So they slander you. <sup>5</sup> But remember that they will have to face God, who stands ready to judge everyone, both the living and the dead. <sup>6</sup> That is why the Good News was preached to those who are now dead—so although they were destined to die like all people, they now live forever with God in the Spirit.

<sup>7</sup> The end of the world is coming soon. Therefore, be earnest and disciplined in your prayers. <sup>8</sup> Most important of all, continue to show deep love for each other, for love covers a multitude of sins. <sup>9</sup> Cheerfully share your home with those who need a meal or a place to stay.

<sup>10</sup> God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another. <sup>11</sup> Do you have the gift of speaking? Then speak as though God himself were speaking through you. Do you have the gift of helping others? Do it with all the strength and energy that God supplies. Then everything you do will bring glory to God through Jesus Christ. All glory and power to him forever and ever! Amen.

**Leader: These Words of Instruction are of God!** All: Thanks be to God!

**Please pray with me:**

Creator God, you have the qualities of both father and mother, and for those we are grateful. Help us to remember your kindness, love, strength, and protection. As we celebrate Mother's Day 2023, let us give honor to those same gifts you give earthly nurturing women. Let us remember our own mothers here or in heaven with you. May we feel your presence through maternal relationships, as you guide our steps toward more Christlike living. May your voice be the one heard today as you speak through mine. Amen.

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Happy Mother's Day! For most of us, it is a celebration of the feminine ability to give birth. It is a chance for children to bless their moms with flowers, candy, drawings, and gifts to say thank you for all you do for the family. I echo those sentiments; mothers and stepmothers are caregivers and organizers extraordinaire! It is also a time to recognize nurturing women who may have never given birth, who may have adopted children or lost children to death or find themselves in a different role. We also recognize the many generations of motherhood, especially here at United: mothers, stepmothers, grandmothers, great-grandmothers,

aunts, and great aunts. Even **if** some of your memories are not beautiful or storybook, let us recall how they tried to direct our lives toward a loving God. As we study these Scriptures, let us apply some of the Biblical understanding toward living a more Christlike life, as most mothers try to do, especially Christian moms.

You may remember last week our psalm writer Asaph, one of David's musicians was a bit jealous of the lascivious lifestyles of the wicked, yet eventually believed God cleansed **him** of all sin. This last part of Psalm 73 reconsiders his former conclusions; he realizes that God has a plan for the wicked. In time, God will place them in dangerous (the Greek is *slippery*) places so they will be destroyed. Asaph confessed his perspective was ill-informed because of his ignorance (in this case naivete), and that caused him bitterness. Comparison was at the root of that bitterness, just like it was with Naomi in the book of Ruth. She compared the loss of her sons to other women, and said, call me Mara, for God has made me bitter. In both our psalm and Ruth, God redeemed this negative trait into a blessing. This writer's transparency reminds us never to compare our lives to others. Only God's teachings should be our plumb line or measurement.

Asaph did know God was with him and would guide him wisely to receive him into glory one day. In most Old Testament uses of this phrase, it was not meant as heavenly glory, but as deliverance in his lifetime. During his worship of God, he felt his presence, and affirmed that God was his strength and portion, and he stopped comparing his life with the wicked. Those who are faithful and near to God at all times will find joy and safety in God's presence. This is an example of Godly

mothers who must sometimes do difficult things to protect and correct their children for their own safety. Have you ever had a fight with your mother or with your children? Harsh words may have been said, and bitterness may have filled your heart until later, after some thought and prayer, you realized you still loved one another. When unsure of life's direction or priorities, haven't you in the past, called your mom, or hoped your child would call you for advice? A praying mother can change lives. Your maternal gifts will be different from others, so there is no point comparing your mothering to others. Our Christian mandate is to love God, spend time in prayer, Scripture, and worship; God will lead your decisions as you experience meaning and fulfillment in your role, leaving a legacy that reflects your faith.

In our second reading continued from last week, Peter exhorts his audience, mostly Gentiles around Asia Minor (present day Turkey), to maintain a Christlike attitude of patient endurance, courage, and strong resolve to do God's will, no matter the amount of suffering. He was converting the Gentiles but wanted to prepare them for potential persecution. This decision to follow Christ requires confession, leaving any sin behind. For Christ followers, their lives will be changed. The penalty for sin was paid for them by Christ on the cross. As we said last week, Christians are to be examples of Christ's love and grace: resisting the attraction of sin, doing charitable deeds, and obeying the civil and moral laws. A good life like this helps others to see and be drawn toward the mercy God gives us in salvation.

Peter shares that our lifestyle decisions impact not only the present, but they and we will be judged in the future. Ignore the old friends you

used to “party” with and start over. Love covers a multitude of sins. Christ will come again, so the Scripture warns his audience and us to be of sober minds, be charitable to others, be kind, be hospitable, prayerful, and to love our brothers and sisters, even those who may be different. Peter warns them to live for and in service to Christ: be clear-minded, self-controlled, and in constant communication with God. Christ followers must also be good stewards, yet generous, and must share their spiritual gifts with others to edify the body of Christ. All credit goes to Christ; the lessons are for equipping the body and soul. Some new Christians were excited to share the Gospel at first and then became bored, so Peter was trying to motivate them again.

Many of these traits are the same ones I see in mothers who devote themselves first to the Lord, then to their families. They are balanced, loving, self-controlled, hospitable, generous, kind, loving, and mighty prayer warriors. They commit themselves to Christ out of love. Mary was a good example of motherhood, sacrifice, suffering, joy, and love. If we follow Christ’s many examples of generous healing, listening, teaching, fellowship, and sacrifice, we can know the best standards of motherhood. Verse 11 ends: “Then everything you do will bring glory to God through Jesus Christ. All glory and power to him forever and ever! Amen.” //

**Will you pray with me?** Loving Christ, we thank you for this message to remind us to serve and love others. Help us make the best choices in how we live each day and how our lives show others your grace and mercy. Lord, we ask your help to be hospitable nurturers, patient, kind, and good stewards yet generous and loving. In your name, we pray, **Amen.**