

“The Mothering Spirit”

John 15:1-8
Acts 8:26-40

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Children rely heavily on their parent’s instruction. My mother stayed at home with my brothers and me until we were all in school. She was ever present telling us this and that. Make sure you scrub behind your ears. Don’t forget to brush your teeth. Share with your brother. Don’t yell at your brother. Don’t hit your brother. Go to your room and wait for your father to get home.

At the same time she loved me. She held me. She read me stories. She kissed my boobos. She taught me how to do everything from tying my shoes to reading. She taught me how to be kind and respectful. She taught me love and compassion.

The most important thing she may have taught me was to include those on the outside of the group. Go invite Joshua next door to play with you and your brother. Joshua was shy and he was different. He didn’t have any friends except my brother and me.

But your mother can’t tell you what to do all your life (some would beg to differ). What she did was help prepare me for another guide. One that is always with me. One that teaches me how to love others. One that nudges me in the right directions. One that leads me to others who need a friend. One that gives me the assurance I need when my confidence is low. Kind of like a mother.

I remember the first time I really felt led by the Spirit. I was in high school and a friend of mine was struggling with life. He was really upset and he left my house in what I felt might be a suicidal frame of mind. He was on foot, but he was out of my sight before it occurred to me to go after him. I prayed to God to lead me to him. I didn’t know which direction to begin. I simple trusted that God would lead me.

I found myself 5 or 6 blocks away in front of a large bush, catching my breath and wondering if it was too late. “Dusty!” I called. I heard a voice coming from within the bush. “I want to die.”

I didn’t know what to say, but the words came pouring out. I told him the God loved him, that he had a purpose for him and that I loved him too and knew that this was not the answer. Eventually, he came out.

I always think of that event when I read this story from Acts. Philip lived by the call of the Spirit. The Spirit led him southward on a rarely used road. He had know idea where he was going or for what purpose. The Spirit would lead him to an Ethiopian eunuch of high standing in his land, but an outsider and an abomination in Jerusalem.

He came a long way to worship at the great Temple in Jerusalem, but in all

likelihood would have been turned away. Eunuchs and anyone with any physical deformity, mutilation, or missing limb were forbidden from entering the Temple based on the law in Leviticus. Perhaps this is the reason he was reading Isaiah 53 “In his humiliation justice was denied him.” Perhaps he had experienced the humiliation and pain of rejection because of something he could not change.

But the Spirit was not rejecting him. The Spirit was preparing him. He was like a kettle of water that was reaching the boiling point. And the Spirit was sending Philip with the tealeaves.

It’s easy to think that in doing the work of the church, whether it be mission work, worship, or evangelism that we do all the work. We have the bible to instruct us and we just interpret it and do what it says. But just like this eunuch who asked Philip to help him understand what he is reading, the Spirit instructs us.

The Spirit is both leading us and going ahead of us preparing a way. And so often the Spirit leads us to people that are in a bad state of life, that are walking away from a world that rejects them, people that sometimes or all the time feel like a motherless child. They’ve been abandoned by society, maybe even the church. But the Spirit doesn’t abandon them.

The Spirit leads the church to them, if it is open to it. And in turn we can then lead them to a savior that knows the pain of humiliation and rejection. Who knows what it means to be unjustly judged.

We all have a mother in the Spirit of God. A mother that never rejects and that never gives up on us.

This weekend I saw the movie Changeling. It is a true story where a single mother has her only son abducted while she was at work. A true nightmare for any mother. I won’t go into the details, but the mother goes through what can only be called hell in search of her son. She never gives up despite what anyone tells her, despite all the evidence. Despite the persecution she undergoes for challenging the authorities that have given up their search. She never gives up hope that her son might still be returned to her. This is the character of a mother.

And this is the character of our God whose Spirit seeks us. Even if we are lost, this mother of a Spirit keeps after us. Even if all the evidence says that a person could never be found, could never be saved. The Spirit never gives up. She has hope for all of us. She has hope for the people in this world that no one else has hope for. There is no obstacle, no darkness, no sin, no distance of separation that she will not seek to overcome. And because she is the Spirit of the sovereign God, the almighty God of all powers, she will prevail. She will and she has because when her only Son was lost to death, it was by her power, the power of the Holy Spirit of God that the only Son of God was raised to life.

Receive this Spirit and you will never be lost. Come out of you're the hidden place of your despair and be found. Have hope that the lost ness of our lives and the lives of others is not lost to the ever-present, ever-loving Spirit, mother of us all.