

## *A Fierce and Fervent Love (Mothers' Day 2006, Baby Dedication)*

**Intro:** In the mid 1700's there lived an old woman who everyone called "Mama." The whole square block knew her and loved her. They wanted her as their mother. How odd, then, that the son she bore didn't want her. He had run away, years before, to sea leaving her to a life of loneliness and poverty. Every day and every night you would find Mama crying and praying for her son as she struggled in cleaning homes and washing laundry.

While everyone loved Mama, everybody hated her son, John. John grew into a man who had no friends; a man who even his business partners despised. But Mama kept praying with a fierce and fervent love that knew no end.

One day, God answered those prayers and John turned to Jesus. He was as surprised by that as anyone else! Describing his state of sinfulness and how much he needed the grace of God, he wrote the song "Amazing Grace." His song and his teaching influenced many of the greatest hymn writers the world has ever known. His son was a number hit in the pop charts in the early seventies and is still linked to the nation of Scotland. It is sung at funerals, worship services, and in the dark of night in homeless shelters.

Because his mother prayed.

### **I. Two Mothers' Days**

- A.** Most of us know the standard story of Mother's Day. Anna Jarvis, at a memorial service to her mother, passed out carnations to the entire congregation. The next year, the first Mothers' Day service was officially held in Fairmont, WV and by 1914, President Woodrow Wilson made it a national holiday.
- B.** Generally, on this day, we buy a card for our mothers, take them out to lunch, give them a gift, and recognize their great impact on our lives – and it has been great!
  - 1.** Abraham Lincoln said "Behind every great man is a great mother."
  - 2.** Napoleon said, "Let France have great mothers, and France will have great sons."
  - 3.** Rudyard Kipling wrote, "If I were hanged on the highest hill, I know whose love would follow me still."
- C.** But this Mothers' Day we all know and love is not the first one. The first one is a much darker one, with less pastel colors and

poetry. It had its genesis on the battlefield; specifically, the blood soaked fields of Gettysburg.

- D.** Julia Ward Howe was a feminist, a Unitarian, and an abolitionist. She fully supported the taking of arms to end the evils of slavery. When challenged to write new words to an old tune, to replace “John Brown’s Body” with a National Hymn, she wrote The Battle Hymn of the Republic.
- E.** She wrote of the call to freedom and of freedom’s terrible price: the sons of mothers would face fire and steel so that others could walk free.
- F.** She was not a warmonger, though. In fact, in 1870 she called for an international Mothers’ Day where mothers from all over the world would gather together and insist that their husbands lay down their arms and settle their disputes without war.
- G.** That Mothers’ Day is forgotten now, replaced by one full of sentiment and sweetness. Julia Ward Howe would not have approved.
- H.** But why not? Isn’t the special magic of mothers the fact that they are that most mysterious and wonder of creatures: woman, and that femininity is a mixture of fierceness, passion, intelligence, drive, sacrifice, and faithfulness?
- I.** Our honor of them must not be one dimensional. They are complex mirrors of the complex love of God.

## **II. Complex Mirrors, Beautiful Reflections**

- A.** The reason we honor thing things we honor, is because they are reflections of things we honor. Let me explain...
  - 1.** We honor fathers when they love us, protect us, teach us, guide us... just as God the Father does (even though the human versions do the job imperfectly).
  - 2.** We honor graduates from college and high school for they are a reflection of the continuing of civilization, learning, and progress. They are a reflection of our hope.
  - 3.** We honor soldiers, sailors, and Marines, because they are a reflection of the best that people have to give: honor, duty, sacrifice, courage.
  - 4.** We honor missionaries and care workers for they reflect what we say we believe.

- 5.** We honor mothers when they reflect the love – the fierce and fervent love – of Jesus Christ.
- B.** That is how a Mothers’ Day lesson can touch us all – even those of us who are not mothers, those who always wanted to be but never were, and those who had terrible mothers: we can learn to look for the reflection of God in others and learn to honor what should be honored.
- C.** We can also learn that if we wish to be honorable, we **MUST** reflect the love and mission of God.
- D.** If we live as God called us to live, love as God called us to love, and serve as God called us to serve, everywhere we stand will be holy ground. We will take it for Jesus and hold it for Jesus and send others to take new territory for Jesus.
- E.** Just as many of us were raised by godly mothers who then sent us out to be holy in our generation, we send out our children to take every part of their lives and make them holy ground.