

Mothers do make the world a better place, and it is a privilege to honor them today. Kristel and I watched a lot of videos about mothers. We chose that one because it shared some of the different dimensions of what it means to be a mother.

I'm going to do three things in this sermon. I encourage you to write these three things down in this brochure that is in the bulletin. In this brochure you have a place to take notes. I believe that God might speak to you through my words so that you'll want to write something down. You can find a devotion. In honor of Mother's Day I shared a devotion about Jesus' mother, Mary. Each day you can read a Bible story and devotion about Mary. And you have a list of prayer requests.

Three things. First I want to talk about Mother's Day and encourage you to share a defining story. Second I want to share the story of Hagar, who I call the forgotten mother. Third I'm going to close by showing how Hagar's story applies to our lives today.

First. Let me talk about Mother's Day. Mother's Day is a terrific and even sentimental day that has plenty of Hallmark moments. I bought a Hallmark card that I sent to my mom on Thursday. I'll be talking to her later today. Happy Mother's Day, mom.

I say Happy Mother's Day to everyone—even the men—because all of us have a mother. Each one of us has four or five defining stories that illustrate our moms. These defining stories share the qualities of our moms as we see them.

I want to encourage all of us to share a defining story about our own mom with another person before we leave Da Vinci Academy today. A beauty of congregations is we can share these stories with people we'd never meet if it wasn't for church. Share a defining story about your mother with another person before you leave this place.

One of my defining stories about my mom took place when I was in (I think) fifth grade. I remember it being a beautiful spring night where I grew up in Worthington, Minnesota. My Dad, sister and I spent much of the evening watching TV in the basement of our house. My mother wasn't with us. She came home while we were watching TV. When she came into the room she said, "I don't think I made any friends tonight." What happened? She went on to say that she had spoken in front of the City Council that night. Someone had wanted to build apartments near our house. My mom was very concerned about the traffic that would result from these apartments. She went to share those concerns with the City Council of Worthington.

This was in the 1970's when woman weren't exactly encouraged to speak out. I have no doubt that the City council of Worthington was made up of all men.

The male patriarchy of the town wasn't pleased with my mom. My parents were co-owners of apartments in another part of town. The next day there was a headline in the Worthington Daily Globe that basically said, "woman who owned apartments was speaking up against apartments." They were accusing my mom of being a hypocrite—which she wasn't, of course. My parents had talked to people in the neighborhood about the apartments that they built which hadn't happened in our neighborhood.

What stood out to me is my mom was standing up for what she thought was right, even though it was controversial. It would have been a lot easier for her to say nothing. She spoke up and suffered wrath from some powerful men in town.

Share a defining story about your mom with another person before you leave today.

Mother's Day can be a hard day. I'll never forget coming to church once and receiving a bear hug from a woman who couldn't stop crying. She couldn't even talk she was so distraught.

Her husband had to tell me that Mother's Day was the hardest day of the year because their kids didn't want to see them.

I won't forget coming to church and receiving a bear hug from a mother who said this was the hardest day of the year. Every molecule in her body wanted to have a child, but her body wouldn't let her. She would have given almost anything to be a biological mother.

First point—this is a wonderful day where we can share stories about our moms and tell them about how much we love them. It's a hard day for many women.

The Bible has many, many stories about mothers. Today I want to share the story about Hagar who I call the forgotten mother.

We can't know Hagar without knowing about Abram and Sarai. We might know them better as Abraham and Sarah, but when we first read in the Bible about Hagar they were known as Abram and Sarai. God had made a promise to Abram in the 12<sup>th</sup> chapter of Genesis. Write that down—Genesis 12. It's one of the five most important stories of the Old Testament. 12<sup>th</sup> chapter of Genesis. God asked Abram to travel to a far away land. At that far away land God promised A that he would make of him a great nation. Three chapters later God made a covenant with Abram. God told Abram that his descendants would be as many as the stars in the sky. Abram believed God.

Except there was one problem. Abram's wife, Sarai couldn't have any children. She was barren. Sarai's physical inability to have children weighed on the family and on the household.

Sarai took matters into her own hands. She was a strong woman—it wouldn't surprise me if she dominated the relationship with Abram. She had a plan. It was her own plan. She did what a lot of us do. We see a problem and we come up with a plan to solve the problem. Except Sarai hadn't consulted God about the plan.

Sarai told Abram that he should marry Sarai's Egyptian slavegirl, Hagar. They would have a child and this child would continue the ancestral line that God had promised.

When Hagar became pregnant she looked with contempt on Sarai. We're not told what that meant. When Sarai received Hagar's look and saw that Hagar's belly was growing with a child from Abram she became jealous. She confronted Abram. She told A, "you have to choose between H and me."

I think A was a conflict avoider. He told Sarai to take care of the problem. She did. She made life so miserable for Hagar that Hagar ran away.

She ran into the wilderness. It's called the wilderness of Shur.

SLIDE Here is where it's located. You might remember in the Exodus story the Israelites ran out of water and they complained to God. God gave them manna and quail. It was the wilderness of Shur

SLIDE This was a desolate place. This is where Hagar ran. She was pregnant and alone. An angel came to her. The angel told her that H would bear a son and that through her son they would have many descendants. This is what the angel said.

SLIDE "I will so greatly multiply your offspring that they cannot be counted for multitude."

This message is the same message that God gave to Abram. Hagar would bear a son—the angel told Hagar to name the child, Ishmael. The angel said that through Ishmael an uncountable multitude of people would be born.

Here's where it gets even more interesting. Our brothers and sisters in Islam trace their ancestry through Abraham. We Christians call Abraham the patriarch of our faith. Our Muslim brothers and sister call Abraham the patriarch of their faith. Our Muslim brothers and sisters

trace their ancestral line through Ishmael. It's through this story of an angel of God sharing this message in the wilderness of Shur with Hagar.

The story goes on. Abraham and Sarah have a child. His name was Isaac. One day Sarah saw Isaac and Ishmael playing together. All hell broke loose. Sarah became jealous again. She told Abraham to throw Hagar & Ishmael out of their house. This was very distressing to Abraham. He appealed to God. God told Abraham to do what Sarah wanted. Early in the morning Abraham took some bread and water and gave it to Hagar. Hagar went into the desert. and Hagar went into the wilderness. It was a desert.

SLIDE        Here's a picture.

Hagar and Ishmael drank the water that Abraham gave them. She had nothing left. She put Ishmael under a bush. The sun was so hot. She went away. She couldn't bear to look on the death of her child. The story said she lifted up her voice and wept.

She lifted up her voice and wept. She was wailing. I think it was a shriek. It was the cry of a woman who was overwhelmed with life.

We hear this cry. It's Hagar's cry.

I'm joining the Blaine Rotary club. This week they shared a presentation on Guatemala. The presenter shared the story of coming into contact with a child with disabilities. The service network in Guatemala isn't what it is here. Sometimes what happens is when a child has severe disabilities the parents feel they have no options. They leave the child naked on the street. That's a signal that the child needs help.

I have no doubt that the mother who left her child on the street wailed about the decision. She didn't want to do this. Her cry was Hagar's cry.

Did you follow the story this week of the three woman who were freed from their captivity in Cleveland? The three women were held in captivity for ten years.

SLIDE        The name of one of the women who was held is Amanda Berry. She disappeared in 2003 when she came home while working at a Burger King.

SLIDE        Amanda's mom is Louwanna Miller. Louwanna held out hope for a long time that Amanda was still alive. She was so desperate to find out what happened that she went to a psychic on the Montel Williams television show. The psychic told her that she was dead. Louwanna said in a newspaper article that she would often talk to pictures of Amanda. I'm sure that she shed many tears over the disappearance of her daughter. Louwanna died in 2006 of issues with her heart. One person wrote that she died of a broken heart. Her cry was Hagar's cry.

Have you ever felt overwhelmed and couldn't help but cry. Your cry is Hagar's cry.

The good news is God doesn't leave us in that place. God hears our cries. God sent an angel to Hagar. I've taught you before that when an angel encounters a human the angel typically says a phrase. Do you remember the phrase. "Do not be afraid." This is what the angel said to Hagar.

SLIDE        "What troubles you, Hagar? Do not be afraid; for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is." Genesis 21:17

Do not be afraid. It's a consistent message from God.

We gather every week in worship to hear this message. Do not be afraid.

Today is a special day as we baptize Miles. It's extra special that we can do it on Mother's Day.

It doesn't seem that long ago that my daughter, Hannah and I were visiting Miles in the hospital for the first time. This past Wednesday I had the privilege of visiting with Justin and Sally to talk about what this baptism means.

This is a monumental day for him. We believe that through baptism grace is sealed inside of him. I shared with Justin and Sally on Wednesday that Miles will always carry this grace with him. No matter what happens to him in his life he will always have this grace. He's never alone. We can tell Miles because he's baptized, "do not be afraid."

We live in a scary world. We might not be able to change the scariness of the world. But you and I can share a message that will help people live in this scary world. It's the message that God shared with Hagar; it's the message that God shared with Miles; it's the message, of course, that God wants us to share with others. "Do not be afraid."

We've started this church to share this message. Do not be afraid. Say that with me. That's the message we want to share with the world—with people who have become overwhelmed.

Do you think the world needs a group of people who are unapologetic in telling people, "do not be afraid."

This week at Chain of Lakes we had two wonderful conversations about our congregation's outreach efforts. One conversation was at our staff meeting and the other was at our Steering Committee meeting.

Outreach is an effort of the entire congregation. Outreach happens through events and activities and ministries. Outreach can happen when everyone in a congregation is willing to share a message. The message is "do not be afraid."

In our conversations this week we talked about how it is easier to just focus on the people we know. The default setting for a church is just to focus on each other. We become comfortable with who we know and how we are. When that happens we become inward focused. God doesn't want inward focused churches. God wants us to share a message with people outside our community.

Our motivation is to see people's lives changed. To see strangers become friends who become disciples who impact the world.

I want to close with a challenge. In your bulletin is a card. We did this before and we're going to keep doing this. In the announcements we're sharing a faith sharing tip of the week. I want you to share this card with a stranger. Tell them that our church is sharing a message with people—do not be afraid.

This really isn't that hard. We just have to pay attention. On Friday I went out to rent a wet suit. I'm doing a triathlon next week. I want you to pray for me. When I went to the store in White Bear to rent the triathlon I started talking to the clerk. I told him that our church is a sponsor of the triathlon. Just mentioning the church opened up the conversation. He asked me what church I belong to. I told him that I'm the pastor of Chain of Lakes. We're a new church that worships at Da Vinci Academy. I asked him if he knew about Da Vinci Academy. He said, "yes I live near there." I don't know if he's ever going to come. I do know that I shared a message.

When you share this card this week, you're going to feel wonderful about yourself.

Do not fear.

In a world of fear you and I can be messengers of peace. God told Hagar do not fear. That's what we celebrate on Mother's Day. Happy Mother's Day.