**St David’s Episcopal Church**

Bean Blossom, IN

Sixth Sundy of Easter, May 12, 2024

Sermon by the Rev Kate Wilson

Acts 1:15-17, 21-26 Psalm 1 1 John 5:9-13 John 17:6-19

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Good Morning and a Very Happy Mother’s Day. All kinds of mothers, those who give birth and those who welcome children into their arms, and those who acted as mentors or places of refuge, qualify for good wishes this day. They, and those who never read “The Good Mother Manual” deserve our prayers So let us raise all of these in prayer.

There are so many poems and card verses glorifying mothers. M is for the many …. Most are romantic and flowery. Many are sing-song in structure, and sweeter than powered sugar. Sylvia Plath may have captured motherhood most honestly. Here is a short part of her short poem, Morning Song[[1]](#footnote-1):

Love set you going like a fat gold watch.

The midwife slapped your footsoles, and your bald cry

Took its place among the elements.

One cry, and I stumble from bed, cow-heavy and floral

In my Victorian nightgown.

Your mouth opens clean as a cat’s. The window square

Whitens and swallows its dull stars. And now you try

Your handful of notes;

The clear vowels rise like balloons

“I stumble from bed cow-heavy and floral in my Victorian nightgown.” She’s been there.

I would watch the moms on TV, June Cleaver and the rest, all of whom wore heels, pearls, and crisply ironed dresses. Then I would look at my mom, and I knew that motherhood was not a pressed, romantic vision. It was hard and loving work, it was patience and an occasional short fuse, it was disagreement and returning to peace.

The origin of Mother’s Day is interesting and, as the History Cooperative explains, is deeply intertwined

with the nation’s history and social movements following the American Civil War. Ann Reeves Jarvis, a notable peace activist and community organizer, laid the foundation for what would become Mother’s Day through her creation of “Mothers’ Day Work Clubs.” These clubs were crucial in fostering reconciliation among divided communities by focusing on shared concerns such as public health and the welfare of children. In the post-[Civil]war era, Jarvis’s initiatives sought to bridge the chasm left by the conflict, advocating for unity and understanding through the common ground of motherhood and community well-being[[2]](#footnote-2).

Now this makes so much sense. Here was an organization of mothers set to unify a divided nation through common ground and work. Ann Reeves Jarvis’ legacy is one of love in action.

So, too, is the legacy of Jesus. Our gospel this morning is the beginning of Chapter 17. Chapters 14 through 17 are called Jesus’ Farewell Discourse, a long good-bye in which Jesus assures the disciples of his love of them and explains that he will soon leave them. The disciples gradually move from disbelief to despair to denial, but the Discourse is loving, reassuring, and moves from the parable forms Jesus so often used to explaining his points clearly, openly, and pointedly. Chapter 17 is different. Jesus moves from speaking **to** his beloved disciples to praying to his father **for** them.

I often wish I could remember the last words loved ones have said to me. I didn’t know they would be the last; I didn’t know to remember them. I didn’t record them. But John recorded all of Jesus’ last words **to** the disciples in the chapters of this Farewell Discourse, Chapters 14 through 16, and concluded with these, Jesus’ prayers **for** his disciples, his most beloveds. Hear his earnestness as he prayed, knowing that within hours he would be arrested and pulled away from them.

“[Father], I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours.. And now I am no longer in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name, so that they may be one, as we are one. But now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves.

May they love one another, and may they have my joy made complete in themselves. Jesus, knowing that his death is imminent, prays for the joy of his beloved disciples. These are the words of a loving parent, a mother, a father. These are a blessing on loved ones, a blessing we all would love to hear.

And we can. Jesus commissioned these disciples to share his love and his message, and the message is shared today, these final words of blessing are shared today. We are the children of God, hearing the words we long to hear from Jesus, even if we have never heard them from anyone else. We are loved.

In the next chapter of John’s Gospel, Jesus is betrayed and the Passion Story unfolds. His last words are a plea for those he loved, and for those he continues to love today.

Thanks be to God.

**Morning Song**

Love set you going like a fat gold watch.

The midwife slapped your footsoles, and your bald cry

Took its place among the elements.

Our voices echo, magnifying your arrival. New statue.

In a drafty museum, your nakedness

Shadows our safety. We stand round blankly as walls.

I’m no more your mother

Than the cloud that distills a mirror to reflect its own slow

Effacement at the wind’s hand.

All night your moth-breath

Flickers among the flat pink roses. I wake to listen:

A far sea moves in my ear.

One cry, and I stumble from bed, cow-heavy and floral

In my Victorian nightgown.

Your mouth opens clean as a cat’s. The window square

Whitens and swallows its dull stars. And now you try

Your handful of notes;

The clear vowels rise like balloons.

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Source: *Collected Poems* (HarperCollins Publishers Inc, 1992)

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   Source: *Collected Poems* (HarperCollins Publishers Inc, 1992) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://historycooperative.org/mothers-day-a-history/> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)