

May 10, 2015  
Mother's Day 2015

*Unfinished Business*  
John 2:1-11

**Opening words:** According to the Chicago Tribune, Mother's Day is big business. The average American will spend \$172.63 on Mother's Day this year. That is up \$10 from last year. That means Americans will spend a total of \$21.2 billion on their mothers. That breaks down this way:

1. 80% will buy a card
2. 67% will buy flowers
3. 33% will buy some form of clothing
4. \$1.8 billion will be spent on a special Mother's Day lunch

There is no other way to say it. Mother's Day is big business because it is important to Americans.

Our primary scripture lesson for today is about a mother and her adult son. You may have heard of them, Mary and Jesus. The scene in the manger had passed thirty years earlier. Jesus's earthly ministry is about to begin and it is his mother who gives him a push to get started. You know the story. It is the story of Jesus's first miracle at the wedding at Cana. Our primary scripture lesson is John 2:1-11. Our message is called *Unfinished Business*.

**John 2:1-11** <sup>1</sup>On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, <sup>2</sup> and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. <sup>3</sup> When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine."

<sup>4</sup> "Woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My hour has not yet come."

<sup>5</sup> His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

<sup>6</sup> Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons.

<sup>7</sup> Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim.

<sup>8</sup> Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet."

They did so, <sup>9</sup> and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside <sup>10</sup> and said, "Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now."

<sup>11</sup> What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

It all began in America with the death of Anna Reese Jarvis in 1908. Her daughter, Anna M. Jarvis, didn't want her to be forgotten, so she campaigned for the creation of

an official Mother's Day. She dreamed of having a day when all mothers would be honored. She began by petitioning the superintendent of her church, the St. Andrew's Methodist Church, in Grafton, West Virginia. Her mother had spent over twenty years there teaching Sunday school in that church. Her request was granted and the first Mother's Day celebration was held on May 10, 1908. Four hundred and seven people attended. Anna Jarvis arranged for white carnations — her Mother's favorite flower — to adorn the patrons. Two carnations were given to every Mother in attendance. The idea grew fast. By 1909, forty-six different states were observing Mother's Day. In 1912, West Virginia became the first state to officially observe Mother's Day. In 1914, Woodrow Wilson signed into law the national observance of Mother's Day. Mother's Day is great, but it is not isolated to America.

Mother's Day is celebrated around the world on a variety of dates, using a variety of names. Let me give you a few examples. In Great Britain it is called Mothering Sunday. In former Soviet bloc countries it is called International Women's Day, which is celebrated on March 8. In the Arab world, Mother's Day is observed on March 21, the first day of spring in the northern hemisphere. In Argentina, Mother's Day is celebrated on the third Sunday in October. In Armenia it is celebrated on April 7 and is called Maternity and Beauty Day. In Paraguay, it is observed on May 15, their Independence Day. The United States is one of the eighty-five countries who observe Mother's Day on the second Sunday of May. This is the point. People around the world recognize the importance of motherhood. If you find motherhood important, say, **"Amen!"**

This morning we find ourselves in the second chapter of John. This story is only found in the gospel of John. It can't be found in Matthew, Mark or Luke. However, that fact does not diminish the popularity of this story. Everyone knows the story of Jesus's first miracle. The scene is a wedding reception. Couples in Jesus's day didn't go on honeymoons. No one traveled to Mexico or the Caribbean. Instead, they stayed at home and held receptions that lasted approximately a week. That is a lot of partying!

According to the story, Jesus was invited to one of these week-long receptions. I would like to say his invitation came because Jesus was fun. This is the truth, his invitation came because Jesus was a respected rabbi. It is while Jesus is at this reception that the unthinkable happens. The wine runs out. The hosts of the reception are devastated and look for someone to blame. Mary doesn't look for the guilty, Mary looked at Jesus. She knew Jesus had the power to save the day. She believed in Jesus when Jesus didn't believe in himself. She knew it was time for Jesus to get started. God had a special plan for her son. The problem is, Jesus wasn't ready. In verse four, we find Jesus making an excuse for his inactivity, *"My time has not yet come."* Mary does not listen. Instead, she instructs servants to bring him water. By the end of the scene, the party has resumed and everyone is happy. Everyone had enough wine. Verse ten tells us, it was good wine. What does that mean? It means the wine Jesus produced had a kick. However, today, I don't want to talk about wine. I want to talk about the important role of motherhood. You know the truth. Motherhood does not end when the child starts

school or learns how to drive. Motherhood is a never-ending job. Motherhood always has unfinished business. Look at the story. Jesus was thirty years old and he still needed his mother. Don't fool yourself, regardless of your children's age or station, your children still need you. I have wrapped my thoughts about motherhood around three words. Mary models them all in the story. However, these words are not just isolated to mothers. They are useful for anyone who cares for the young. If you are ready to begin, say, "**Amen!**"

### **Encourage**

History tells us that Abraham Lincoln carried an old newspaper article with him regularly. Those who were closest to him say he read it daily. He couldn't believe the words. The article said Lincoln was a great leader. The article was correct. He is remembered as being a great leader, maybe our greatest president. However, Lincoln didn't see himself that way. He was crippled with self-doubt. Lincoln illustrates for us a simple point. It doesn't really matter what others think of you. The only thing that matters is how you feel about yourself. How do you feel about yourself?

Mothers always need to encourage. Jesus is thirty years old in the scripture lesson for today but he still needed to be encouraged. The Master was hesitant, but Mary encouraged him to do it. Encouragement is something mothers do best. Mothers encourage their children to take their first step, and mothers have encouraged their children to start their own business or get that advanced degree. The world is always telling us that we aren't good enough. When you encourage someone, you are saying, "I believe in you." Does anyone here need a word of encouragement? When was the last time you encouraged someone? If that makes you think, say, "**Amen!**"

### **Envision**

When 16-year old Eliza married the 20-year old tailor, he had never been to school. Others might have written his education off as a lost cause, but Eliza didn't. She taught him to read, write, and spell. He had a quick mind and learned at an amazing rate. Soon he wanted more out of life and got into politics. In time, he would be selected by Abraham Lincoln to be his running mate in the 1864 election. When Lincoln died, this once uneducated tailor became our seventeenth president, Andrew Johnson. It all began because his wife saw something in him that he didn't see in himself.

Good mothers always need to envision. Mary had an unfair advantage. She had all the memories of Jesus's birth tucked away in her heart and mind. She knew Jesus was called to be more than a carpenter. Don't ever look at the child in your life and believe they have arrived. Our children are like us, evolving into something new. I grow weary of people who tell of their children's past failures and difficulties. I am sure they could have done better in school. I am sure they could have been more respectful during those teenage years. I am sure their divorce brought shame on the whole family. Let me give you some pastoral advance, move forward! Let those past things stay in the past. Look at the people in your life and envision their future. Everyone has the right to

tap into their potential and evolve into something new. When you look at your children, do you just look back? When you look at your children, do you look into the future? Never forget, God isn't done with anyone yet! And all of God's people said, "**Amen!**"

### **Eternal**

Mothers need to accept the fact that they have an eternal influence. Jesus never forgot his mother. He remembered her as he hung on the cross. My mother was born in 1921 in Brooklyn, New York. Her name was Ruth, the oldest daughter of two girls born to Walter and Nina Milligan. She attended P.S. 92 and graduated from Erasmus Hall High School. Against public opinion, during the Second World War, she went to college and graduated from Pratt Institute with a degree in dietetics. After graduation, against public opinion, she moved to Jersey City, New Jersey and worked in a hospital. Young women were not encouraged to live alone at that time. Against public opinion, she began working on her Master's degree. Her future in the New York area seemed bright, but one night everything changed. On that night, the work and the studies were placed to the side. She attended a social gathering at the Marble Collegiate Church. The Second World War had just ended, and dances were held so returning soldiers could meet single women. She met a young, dark-haired man named Ronald from Ohio. At first, she wasn't interested in him because she thought he was Catholic. She was suddenly interested in him when she found out he was Protestant. Against public opinion, in time, they married and moved to a magical place called Warren, Ohio. In more time, they had three children and their simple house became a home. I am comfortable saying the most important thing in her life was her children. Nothing else really mattered. She would be the first one to admit it; she was not a perfect person. She made mistakes and she knew disappointment. However, I can testify today that she was a good mother, and I am reaping the benefits every day.

When my father died in 1996, my mother didn't do well. She never adjusted to being alone. Her world began to shrink. She moved out of Warren and went to Copeland Oaks. I would like to say she was happy in Sebring, but I can't. Her knee was bad, which made her nearly immobile. But, it was her mind that was more disturbing. My sister and I would take her out to lunch weekly. She loved being with us, but struggled to keep up with the conversation. When I would return to the church, I would tell people it was like being on a really bad date. If I didn't laugh, then I am sure I would cry. When my mother died, everyone wanted to know the cause of death. I simply responded, "A broken heart."

On Tuesday, I attended a funeral. My sister's mother-in-law died. Mrs. Naylor was 92 years old and she was part of my life for decades. When the service was over, I drove to the cemetery. The parting words were given in the mausoleum. It was not my first trip to that mausoleum. It is the same mausoleum that holds the remains of my parents. Ironically, Mrs. Naylor was placed near my parents. As I stood by my parent's graves, three things struck me. First, time goes fast. My father died nineteen years ago. How could it be nineteen years? How fast will the next nineteen years go? Second, my

parents did their best. When you are young, you look for perfect parents. Time teaches us, the best you can do is your best. Perfection is impossible. I'm doing the best I can with my children. I hope they don't look for perfection. Third, my mother was the greatest influence on my life. She loved me unconditionally. She never demanded straight A's. She said it a million times, just do your best. I like to think she knew our best would be good enough to be a success in the eyes of God. Writer Adriana Trigiani said, "*Motherhood changes everything.*"

Will you pray with me?