

May 9, 2010

Acts 16:6-15; John 19:26-27

### Here is Your Mother!

When my son Matt was in high school, he had a good friend named Becky. Her mother, Terri, was my friend. We lived close together and spent time together at marching band performances and we all went to the same church, so the relationships were on a number of different levels. I kept an eye out for Becky, and Terri watched out for Matt.

And motherly advice went from both of us moms to both of the kids on a regular basis.

I didn't pay much attention to this myself. It was so natural the way this happened that I just didn't think anything of it.

Until the day Becky introduced me to another of her friends as her “other mother.”

And then another one of Matt’s friends, a young man I had known since before he was born, referred to me the same way.

And I started to worry if I was being a bit too free with the motherly attitude. So I asked Matt if his friends thought I was out of line in the way I talked to them.

No, he said, they love having you as their other mother. Their mothers are my other mothers, too!

In the Gospel according to John he paints us a picture from the crucifixion, a picture that shows the three women standing at the foot of the cross along with the “beloved disciple,” who is presumed to be John.

As he is dying and his mother stands below him, grief-stricken and horrified,

Jesus says to his mother, “He is your son.”

And he says to John, “Here is your mother.”

Mary became John’s “other mother.” He took her home and took care of her from that day on. In this last act of his earthly life, Jesus made sure that his mother would be cared for in her old age. An unselfish act, to be sure. One that I’m sure benefited both the other mother and the other son.

When I think back to when I was growing up, I had “other mothers” too, although I didn’t use that term for them. Back in the day, when all the women in the neighborhood knew each other and all of us kids spent hours and hours in and out of all the other homes, all those women were, to some extent, our other mothers. They gave us snacks and monitored our tv watching and kept an eye out for all of us as we played.

Some of those other mothers also went to church with us, and “church family” was very deep and all week long.

I had other grandmothers as well, women who were more elderly but who took the time to invite me over to “help” bake cookies or just sit and chat.

Just spending time together and listening to their stories and comments broadened my world to include places I had never been to and opened my mind to ideas that I would otherwise never have known.

All of these other mothers and other grandmothers nurtured me, both in the world and in faith. Even though my own mom is the best mom ever, these other women have played key roles in my life.

Women who, if I listened, Jesus would point to and tell me, "Here is your mother."

All of you know what I'm talking about. In addition to all of the blood relatives, there are also the other mothers who are not related to you by blood but are definitely related to you by love.

Some of you have other mothers who are your same age. A few other mothers are younger than their other children. There are even men who are "other mothers" because of the way you care for and watch out for others.

Because this is that kind of church. One where everyone watches out for everyone else, where people nurture each other. You are generous with yourselves, sharing your time and your affection,

caring for each other in ways that are not common among people who are merely acquaintances, but are almost taken for granted here at Linda Vista church.

And so I say to you today---look around at each other.  
Here is your mother! Get up and move if you have to, and tell your  
other mothers Happy Mother's Day!

Whether a woman has biological children or not, whether or  
not a woman has any living children of her own, she can nurture  
and guide and teach and LOVE other people. And when she  
does, Jesus points to her and says, "Here is your mother!" and  
points to the ones she cares for and says, "Here is your son or  
your daughter."

In our scripture lesson from the Book of Acts today, we  
heard the story of Paul dreaming of a man from Macedonia calling  
to him, "Come over and help us!" When Paul obeyed this vision,  
he was literally breaking new ground----

it was his first visit away from the continent of Asia---the middle East is considered to be Asia---it was the first time he ventured into Europe!

It's interesting and kind of puzzling that the first person that he meets and converts in Europe is not a Macedonian man at all, despite what he saw in his vision.

Instead of a man, he finds Lydia, who is involved in a prayer meeting with a group of women down by the riverside. She is already a religious person, open to God, and when she accepts Jesus Christ as her Lord and Savior, she brings her whole family to be baptized.



Then she puts her gift of hospitality into action, inviting, actually insisting, that Paul and Luke stay in her house. She provides a base for him to work from, a place to stay and eat and sleep while he does the work of building the kingdom of God.

She cooks for him, cleans for him, provides for him, gives him the stability of a home away from home.

She becomes his other mother. Who else but a mother insists on you coming to visit and then takes care of you while you're in her home?

I can hear Christ saying to Paul, "Here is your mother!" and see him pointing to Lydia.

Lydia is “other mother” to many others as well, and in a different capacity.

As the first European convert to Christianity, she can be thought of as the other mother to all Christians of European descent.

And since many non-Europeans were brought to Christ by Europeans, many, many people around the world can trace their faith lineage back, ultimately, to Lydia.

That makes her “other mother” to a whole lot of people—millions of us!

Our other mother in the faith!

And it all started because Paul had a vision of a man from Macedonia!

Paul wasn't praying for someone to be his other mother, but that's what he got.

Other mothers are not usually something we know we need. But God knows we need them. John didn't know he needed an "other mother" and Mary didn't know she needed an "other son," but Jesus knew, and he gave them the gift of each other.

So on this Mother's Day when we are all about giving our mothers flowers and candy and other gifts, I want us to be grateful for the gifts God has already given us---the gift of other mothers in our lives, those people who nurture and care for us, who are generous with their time and their love.

And we also need to be grateful for the gifts we RECEIVE by being other mothers---the love we get in return, the care and support, the gift of being listened to and the gift of being important to someone else.

So if you are one of the other mothers, know that you are appreciated and loved. And if you have an other mother, know that you are also a gift in return.

And let's all be aware that there are many opportunities to be other mothers, and other fathers, too! Don't hold back, thinking you don't want to intrude or impose yourself on someone. Don't think you are too young or too busy or too uninteresting.

On this Mother's Day, let's share the gift of each other **with** each other---determining to love and care and keep an eye out for each other, getting each other's backs, and caring unconditionally and without worrying about failure or rejection.

Just listen and you will hear the words of Christ saying, "He is your son. She is your daughter." Followed by "Here is your mother." Thank God for our mothers, our grandmothers, our aunts, and our "other mothers." Amen.