

# Mother's Day 2018

Pastor James Foley – Sunday, May 13, 2018

Main Theme – Considering the following Mother's Day theme – “Lessons My Mother Taught Me”

## WORSHIP & PRAYER

## WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Upcoming Events (REGULAR)**
  - Post-Service Prayer – Imm. After Service
  - Men's Breakfast – Saturday, June 9 (9–10:15am)
  - WM – Tuesday Evening, June 12, from 6:30–8:30pm
  - Potluck – Sunday, May 27, Following the AM Service
  - CC Training – Sunday, May 27, During Potluck Supp.
  
- **Upcoming Events (SPECIAL)**
  - Membership Packets – See the Pastor Following Service
  - Memorial Day Observances – Monday, May 28 (9am & Noon)

## MORNING OFFERING

At this time, I want to call forth our ushers. There will be two offerings collected this morning:

- The FIRST offering is our regular weekly offering (support of this local assembly/ministry)
- The SECOND offering is our special monthly offering (support N. L. sponsored missionaries)

Thank you for your faithfulness in giving to the Lord and His work. It fuels the work of God in a truly global manner. Ushers, please begin to collect the offerings (one right after the other).

## VOLUNTEER UPDATES

We need to collect CORI/Background Check-related information from any volunteers who serve within a ministry dedicated to infants, toddlers, children or teens. If you have NOT yet completed the necessary forms, see me or Elysia following service.

## CHILDREN'S CHURCH

Ginger and I have decided to keep the children in the adult service because of Mother's Day. I trust that you children are able to give the Pastor—and the Lord—the best of your attention. If at any point your child (I/T) doesn't enjoy the sermon, there are nursery rooms downstairs! TY 😊

## FAMILY UPDATES

I want to say a special word of thanks to Taran for covering service in my absence last Sunday. It has been a very challenging time for me and for my family. I would like to give a brief summation of what has transpired and where things stand.

On Thursday, May 3, my father was brought to the ER around noontime. Since Misty and my brother were with him, my sister and I planned to head down once he was settled in a room. I was back at work (writing a sermon I have not yet preached) when Misty called me, saying, “James, you should get down here. The doctor just said he wasn’t going to make the night.”

As you can imagine, I flew down. When I arrived several members—including Misty—were with my father. He was being transported from the ER to a room. I was told he was essentially comatose for some time, but when I saw him he was beginning to stir. He was saying: “Where am I? I had a dream that I was dead and in heaven.” Probing a bit on this, we asked him how long he felt ‘gone’ for. He said “forever.” We asked him how it was. He replied: “Wonderful.”

Within an hour, the entire family seemed to be there. We all took our time in saying our goodbyes to a man we deeply love and respect. We expected him to pass at any moment (per the doctor’s comments). We lingered and waited for a moment that never came. Surprisingly, over the course of the day he rallied a bit. He continued to do fairly well over the course of the next day or so...

My father was sent home on Saturday afternoon (comfort measures – hospice care). Misty and I spent some quality time with him and my mom before deciding to get dinner with friends and return home (church comes early). In the midst of time with friends, Taran called me. He said he would be willing to take the service so that I could be freed to be with family. I declined, saying I planned to be at church (things seemed stable enough). Moments later my family contacted me. My dad had taken another turn for the worse. Some felt he wouldn’t make the night. I decided to take Taran up on his offer and went back to my father’s house.

It was another long night. We said our goodbyes—again. We prepared to lose him—again. No one really slept, waiting for a moment that—again—never came. After a sleepless night, Misty and I left for home on Sunday around 6:30am (to rest, feed Lucy, etc.). We eventually spent a good portion of the day with my dad and mom from the afternoon onward.

My father—as of the time of this message—is still with us. He is not really in pain, but he is often very confused. It is difficult to see him in this condition. The family is doing as well as can be expected. Everyone is a bit tired. I don’t know what is in store for him. But let me tell you what I have come to know (afresh and anew):

- The beauty of family
- The beauty of church family
- The beauty of having eternal life

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## OPENING REMARKS

As always, it is wonderful to see you. I look forward to these weekly moments of worship and instruction. I pray that you are ready to receive what God has for you today! Please have your Bible at the ready and be prepared to take some notes.

## HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY

Allow me to wish you all a HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY! Mothers – today, we celebrate you. Whether you are a mother biologically, adoptively or spiritually, we pay tribute to you, your work and your ongoing influence! We say THANK YOU and HONOR you as creations that reveal the particular genius of the Lord God. May the Lord bless you all as we gather in His precious and holy Name!

It has been said that making the decision to have a child is life-changing: i.e., “It is the decision to forever have your heart walking around outside of your body.” And it is clear that a mother's affection and attachment never ceases. I will be forty-years old in a few short months, and I am STILL my mom's baby boy. “Mother's hold their children's hand for a while, but their hearts forever.”

## DIRECTIONS

This morning there were many DIRECTIONS that I actively considered. In fact, I had quite a few notes outlined for a message I was going to bring (i.e., a message of encouragement and comfort to you moms who always feel so inadequate and insufficient). Perhaps I will—Lord willing—bring that message in 2019.

I have chosen to touch upon a topic/theme I have NOT touched upon in some time—a very personal theme (as what you will hear is based upon my mom in many respects). I don't know why I am inclined in this direction today. Maybe it is because the events of the last week have caused me to be a bit NOSTALGIC. My family and I have talked at length recently about times gone by. We have also talked about how blessed we are to have Ken and Betty Foley as our parents, in-laws, grandparents, etc.

Thus said, this morning I want to touch upon LESSONS that I learned from my mother. I want to share with you—as I have noted from this pulpit from time to time—invaluable life lessons instilled in me by my mother. Some knowingly (deliberate teaching moments) and some unknowingly (learned in the course of her daily example). I pray that these lessons—ultimately founded upon Scripture—will speak to us all!

## LESSON 1

Let me take you back in time a bit. The year was 1990...

Having successfully completed 6<sup>th</sup> grade at the local elementary school, my summer break was rapidly winding to a close. The dreaded first day of school had come on that dark September morning.

**NOTE** – It was bad enough that school was back in session. In those days, I despised school! But what made matters WORSE was that it was to be my first day at a new school (Middle School). For 7<sup>th</sup> Grade I would transition from Burncoat Elementary to St. Peter Marian: i.e., a transition into the UNKNOWN!

As you can imagine, this was a FRIGHTENING time for this young fellow. After all, I had grown accustomed to my old school (e.g., facility, teachers, friends, etc.). I was a 6<sup>th</sup> Grader – King of the Mountain! Yet now, as a new 7<sup>th</sup> Grader, I was back at the bottom of the ladder, only to make the long climb up again.

When it was time to get up in the morning, my mother burst into my room. With that explosive entrance came some words I will never forget: “IT’S TIME TO BEGIN A NEW JOURNEY!”

You see, I didn’t realize it at the time, but my mother (knowingly or unknowingly) was communicating a vital lesson: life is SEASONAL in nature, with one season ending and a new season beginning. Life is constantly moving us to new beginnings, which we must view as new JOURNEYS/ADVENTURES.

This sentiment of the seasonal nature of life is beautifully captured by King Solomon (son of David), who was granted extraordinary wisdom by the Lord. Consider the following, from Ecclesiastes 3...

**Ecclesiastes 3:1–8 (NIV)**

- 1 There is a time for everything,  
and a season for every activity under the heavens:
- 2 a time to be born and a time to die,  
a time to plant and a time to uproot,
- 3 a time to kill and a time to heal,  
a time to tear down and a time to build,
- 4 a time to weep and a time to laugh,  
a time to mourn and a time to dance,
- 5 a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them,  
a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing,
- 6 a time to search and a time to give up,  
a time to keep and a time to throw away,
- 7 a time to tear and a time to mend,  
a time to be silent and a time to speak,
- 8 a time to love and a time to hate,  
a time for war and a time for peace.

What is Solomon noting herein? Life is seasonal by nature. It is NOT static, but incredibly dynamic and ever-changing (even if we don't want it to be).

Now we can choose to reject and resist new seasons OR we can see them as God-appointed beginnings. i.e., New journeys and adventures which will fill the wondrously unwritten chapters of our life! The choice is ultimately yours!

It's safe to say that I survived the first day of 7<sup>th</sup> Grade (and the many first days which have followed). But make no mistake: my mother's wisdom has inspired me through many of life's seasons (e.g., first day of HS, college, first sermon, pastorate and more).

**Q.** What do you think was on my mind when I first stood before you?

**A.** Here's the beginning of a new journey. And what a lovely journey it has been!

## LESSON 2

Allow me to put forth another lesson I learned from my mother...

There are CONSEQUENCES FOR POOR DECISIONS. This was a lesson I learned in a painful way!

Let me take you back in time a bit. The year was 1991...

It happened upon a spring day that the idea came into my head that I needed a HAIRCUT. My hair has always been a bit bushy when it gets long – especially when I had a bit more to go around.

For some reason beyond my memory, a visit to the local barbershop was NOT possible. So, being the radically compulsive person that I am, I decided to give MYSELF a haircut. My friend had a new electric shaver and it couldn't be that difficult. What could possibly go wrong!

Despite my mothers' repeated warnings and godly counsel, I decided to take matters into my own hands. I still remember it like it was yesterday. I recall telling my friend (with the razor), as he was setting up his kit and pulling out the varying attachments: "Give me the setting that will leave the most hair behind." UNFORTUNATELY, he heard, "Give me the setting which leaves the least behind." Only the Lord knows to what degree he "misunderstood" ...

In my youthful ignorance, I lifted the shaver to the back of my head—with NO mirror, mind you—and heard the sound of blades hitting hair. I unfortunately heard the corresponding words of my friend, "OH NO!"

By the time I was finished, I had removed all the hair—to the skin—off the bottom two inches of the back of my head. JUDGMENT DAY came when I showed my mother the result...

Let's just say that when my mother saw her son—whom she had warned—with a ridiculous haircut, she was livid. That day, I did NOT learn grace and mercy. As I recall, she threatened to BAN me from the upcoming family vacation.

Upon my father's return from work, they caucused and levied out my punishment. Namely, I had to go to school like that before they would take me to the barber to repair the damage.

Now that might sound like cruel and unusual punishment to you. Such a stunt might even get the authorities involved these days! But in that instant, I learned a life-long lesson: POOR DECISIONS ARE OFTEN ACCOMPANIED BY PAINFUL CONSEQUENCES.

We live in a world that says, “Live for today and forget about tomorrow!” A world which lives oblivious to the inevitable cost of poor choices. You can spend what you want, drink what you want, eat what you want, inject what you want, snort what you want, sleep with who you want, etc., WITH LITTLE TO NO THOUGHT OF THE LASTING AFTER-EFFECTS...

...And when things fall apart, we learn to blame others or expect someone to bail us out.

**ILL** – There’s a story of a pig that ate his fill of acorns under and oak tree before starting to root around the tree. A crow remarked, “You really shouldn’t do that. If you lay bare the roots, the tree will wither and die.” “Let it die,” remarked the pig. “Who cares about the tree as long as there are acorns!”

**KEY** – God has built blessing and consequence into obedience and disobedience...

### **Galatians 5:19–21 (NIV)**

19 The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; 20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions 21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

### **Galatians 6:7–8 (NIV)**

7 Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. 8 Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.

Years ago, my mother taught me this lesson. Though the discipline and consequence was harsh, it kept me from far worse later on!

## **LESSON 3**

Moving along, my mother taught me RESPECT for godly authority (particularly in the home).

From an early age, I KNEW that my father was deserving of respect and reverence. The amazing thing about this lesson is that it was NOT instilled in me by my father, but by my mother.

You may ask, “How did you mother instill this lesson in you?”

The only answer I have in reply is that she demonstrated such respect herself.

Long before my parents were believers, they demonstrated many traits of a godly home:

- My father lovingly adored my mother
- My mother deeply revered my father

**KEY** – Without even knowing it, the operation of godly principles brought a stability to my home. They were applying Ephesians 5:33 without knowing of Ephesians 5:33!

**Ephesians 5:33 (NIV)**

33 However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

- I am convinced I learned to love a woman through the example of my father
- I am convinced I learned respect for godly authority through that of my mother

Though I knew they disagreed at times (even sharply), I CANNOT REMEMBER a time when I ever saw her disrespect, deride or put down my dad. Such a thought was utterly foreign to her makeup. Our society, which loves to diminish men and fathers, could learn much from her. So can the church! I am often appalled at how children talk to and about their fathers. Dare I say it, but I am often appalled at how wives talk to and about their husbands. But I digress...

The amazing thing about this: once I learned respect in the home it SPILLED OVER into areas outside of the home. I learned to respect other God-ordained authorities (e.g., adults/elders, teachers, police officers, clergy and more).

**NOTE** – We must remember that the Lord works through human leadership and structure. Don't believe me? Read 2 Kings 2 on your own time, and consider what happened to some youths who mocked the prophet of God! Consider the following texts:

**1 Peter 2:17 (NIV)**

17 Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honor the emperor.

**Romans 13:7 (NIV)**

7 Give to everyone what you owe them: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.

**Hebrews 13:17 (NIV)**

17 Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you.

**1 Thessalonians 5:12–13 (NIV)**

12 Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, to acknowledge those who work hard among you, who care for you in the Lord and who admonish you. 13 Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other.

In a world of irreverence, my mother taught me respect for godly authority!



## LESSON 4

As we begin to make our way to a close, allow me to share another lesson exemplified by my mom: THE BEAUTY OF A SERVANT'S HEART.

My mom is not one to sit around and talk about getting things done. She is a worker; a doer; a servant. Thus, her catchphrase, "Roll up your sleeves!"

This was something instilled in her at a young age. You see, at the age of nine she was cooking for her entire family (7 total children and two parents) and raising her younger brother while her mother worked the family store.

As she matured, that servant's heart only matured. I have seen her, time and again, selflessly serve her husband, children, family, church family, and more). She served even when it was not easy, fun or recognized.

**NOTE** – You see, many people are willing to serve God and others, but only if it's in an advisory capacity. Now many are willing to do the work of a genuine servant. But such service is at the core of our Christian faith – taught and exemplified by Christ Himself!

### **John 13:1–5, 12–17 (NIV)**

It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

2 The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. 3 Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; 4 so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. 5 After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

....

12 When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. 13 "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. 14 Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. 15 I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. 16 Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. 17 Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

**NOTE** – I think in many ways the command of Jesus Christ sounds eerily familiar to the words of my mother: "Roll up those sleeves!"

## LESSON 5

The next and final lesson my mother taught me is the natural overflow of what we just discussed. My mother taught me the importance of SELFLESS LOVE. I would like to consider a text from the Gospel of Matthew...

### **Matthew 14:13–21 (NIV)**

13 When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place. Hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns. 14 When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick.

15 As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, “This is a remote place, and it’s already getting late. Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food.”

16 Jesus replied, “They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.”

17 “We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish,” they answered.

18 “Bring them here to me,” he said. 19 And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. 20 They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. 21 The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children.

**NOTE** – The amazing thing about this text is NOT the healings of Jesus or the feeding of the 5,000, etc. The most amazing part—to me—is the part that’s the easiest to overlook. Consider verse 13:

### **Matthew 14:13–21 (NIV)**

13 When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place.

**Q.** What happened?

**A.** In context, Jesus had just learned of the death of John the Baptist: his cousin.

**Q.** How might you feel if a relative of yours was just murdered in the cruelest of ways?

**A.** Like Jesus, you’d probably want to pull away, lick your wounds and prayerfully regroup.

**KEY** – Why do you think Jesus hopped on a boat and went to a solitary place? To do exactly this!

But when He arrived at His destination, what did He find? People in need. And the most amazing part of the story IS THIS: despite His weariness and pain, His LOVE compelled Him to a point of sacrificial service.

Jesus performed the multiplication of food at a point of great difficulty and sorrow. Why? Love...

**NOTE** – I believe I was thirteen-years old when my grandmother had a debilitating STROKE. It's amazing how fast life can change (in an instant). One moment my mom is feeding my niece (Meghan) and cousin (Katie) while her mom is doing cross-word puzzles, and the next my grandmother is on the ground. We had no idea how much this would affect us – for 6 to 7 years.

LONG STORY SHORT, my grandmother moved in with us. My immediate family became her primary caretakers. My father was incredible. My uncle and aunt were amazing as well. But the lion's share seemed to FALL ON MY MOM. She had to learn to become caretaker, nurse, counselor, etc.

I CAN'T tell you how many nights I'd be trying to fall asleep on the living room couch (my new room), listening to my grandmother call for my mother. Afraid to be alone, she would beg my exhausted mother to sit by her side and hold her hand. "Betty, don't leave me; I don't want to be alone; I'm so afraid." And my mother would sit with her, until 3, 4, 5am.

Many times, she would go to bed just in time for her alarm clock to go off...

It was in these moments (and there were many) that this young boy came to know what it meant to SERVE; what it meant to SACRIFICE; what it meant to put the needs of others FIRST; what it meant to LOVE.

**NOTE** – And, honestly, I am seeing this now. I am seeing all of this again in the way she cares for my ailing father. The way she does everything she can—regardless of personal cost and well-being—to make sure his final moments are as comfortable and love-filled as can be.

What I saw several decades ago—and what I am seeing again, now—are the greatest acts of love I have seen. And make no mistake, Christ sees them too.

## CONCLUSION PT. 1

I have shared with you an array of principles/lessons I learned from my mother:

The SEASONAL nature of life and living  
 The CONSEQUENCES of bad/poor choices  
 The need for godly RESPECT and reverence  
 The glory of sacrificial SERVICE & godly LOVE

I can only pray that these lessons—instilled by my mother and affirmed by the Word—would speak to your hearts today. May her wisdom and example somehow inform and impact the life you are living in the Lord!

I CLOSE WITH THIS...

-Everything wonderful and dear to me about my mother...  
 -Everything wonderful and dear to me about you mothers...

...Is wonderful and dear because they reflect the wonder of the God we serve. The motherly characteristics (e.g., nurture, compassion, discipline and love) are but SHADOWS of the PERFECTION found in the Lord.

So, on this Mother's Day as we celebrate you, WE CELEBRATE HIM.

## CONCLUSION PT. 2

Thank you for taking the time to worship with us today. May the Lord bless you all on this Mother's Day! As a small token of our love and appreciation, EVERY woman here will receive a small token of our affection. It's not much – just a loving gesture.

**NOTE** – The Ushers will stand at the stairwells (1x/person until all have been served).

CLOSING PRAYER