**MOTHER’S DAY**

Mother’s Day is not a spiritual day commanded by God, as is the call to assemble with the saints or take the Lord’s supper (Heb. 10:25; Acts 20:7). But it is a good day established as tradition in America (and now in over 40 other countries of the world) to honor our mothers. For those who don’t know the history of this day, let me recite it and then pay tribute to our moms.

While the actual history of honoring mothers goes back to the Greeks and Romans when they paid homage to their maternal goddesses like Rhea and Cybele centuries before Christ, the modern version of Mother’s Day is far better. In 17th century England there was a tradition called Mothering Sunday celebrated on the fourth Sunday of Lent (which was the 40-day period leading up to Easter). Children brought their mothers gifts and a special fruit cake. This custom seemed to die out by the 19th century.

The idea of having an official national celebration called Mother’s Day in America can be traced to the persistence of two women. Julia Ward Howe, who wrote the famous Civil War song *Battle Hymn of the Republic*, first suggested this annual tribute to all mothers in 1872, seven years after the Civil War ended. It was to be dedicated to peace, not war. If you can imagine how many women lost their sons and husbands during the war, with between 600,000 to 750,000 deaths, you can understand why there was a surge to honor them. Ms. Howe initiated a “Mother’s Peace Day” that went on for many years. She championed a draft to make an official Mother’s Day throughout the restored Union. It never happened in her lifetime.

Anna Jarvis picked up this cause a few years later and is today known as the Founder of Mother’s Day. Anna never married or had children, but she had fond memories of her own mother from her cherished childhood. Her mom was an activist social worker who had done many things to help others. She remembered how often her mother used to say that someday Americans should have a special day to honor their mothers, both living and dead. After her mother died in 1905 Anna resolved to fulfill her desire for an official Mother’s Day. She began sending carnations, her mom’s favorite flower which she felt symbolized a mother’s pure love, to all the mothers in her church. This caught on. Soon they began petitioning politicians to declare an official day for their mothers. By 1911 Mother’s Day was celebrated in virtually every state. On May 8, 1914 (106 years ago today) Woodrow Wilson signed a joint resolution declaring the second Sunday in May to be Mother’s Day. Here we are now sending flowers, cards and much love to mothers everywhere.

Both the Old and New Testaments call upon children to “*Honor your father and mother*” (Exo. 20:12; Eph. 6:2). How do we go about honoring that special woman in our life who changed our diapers, washed innumerable loads of clothes, played taxi for countless rides to ballgames, school functions, scouts and who-knows-what-else? She is the lady who kissed our owies to make them better, then taught us about God to make us better. There are four ways I can think of to honor our mothers:

**HONOR # 1 – TIME**

It is interesting that the Greek word for *honor* is *TIME*. It is pronounced tee-may. But we can see that spending time with our parents is crucial to saying “I honor you.” We all have busy lives, whether we still live at home or not. Busyness is no excuse to not honor her with our time. As for myself, I have been out of my mother’s care for nearly 50 years, living a busy life far from her presence. But in our day of telephones, texts, emails and old-fashioned snail mail, we can always “be in touch” to tell her how our life is going. That is honor, because our life is what she lived to create, and seeing us happy and living godly is what truly honors her. Stay in touch. For those who have lost their moms, there is honor in memory. To give thanks for their memory is perhaps their greatest honor.

**HONOR # 2 – GODLINESS**

There can be no greater way to show honor to my mother than by upholding the name of God and Jesus. Eunice, the mother of Timothy, must have been terrified to see her son leave Lystra with Paul, knowing full well he could be stoned and left for dead just like Paul had recently been in their hometown (Acts 14:20; 16:1-3). But she had raised him to serve the Lord, therefore must have been so proud to see him go preach the word, and then hear of his work bearing fruit for God’s glory (Acts 16:5). Bearing the fruit of the Spirit in our life is the greatest way to honor our mothers, whether living or dead.

**HONOR # 3 – LISTEN**

“*Listen my son to your father’s instruction and do not forsake your mother’s teaching*” (Prov. 1:8). “*My son, keep your father’s commands and do not forsake your mother’s teaching*” (Prov. 6:20). “*A wise son brings joy to his father, but a foolish son despises his mother*” (Prov. 15:20).

In other words, “Listen to your mother!” Solomon’s words, and history’s record, bears out the wisdom of such advice. A mother’s love has her child’s best interest at heart.

**HONOR # 4 – BLESS**

Proverbs 31 is often titled “The Worthy Woman.” It tells of a wife’s and mother’s commitment to family. At the end of a long catalog of her virtues, it concludes by saying “*Her children rise up and call her blessed* … *Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her own works praise her in the gates*.” (vs. 28,31)

I hope today, and every day, you rise up and “bless” your mother. May she be praised in the gates by the life you live and the gratitude you show her.

*​“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise: that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.”* (Ephesians 6:1-3)

Mothers, we rise up to honor you,

and to call you blessed

and to praise you in the gates.

With love,

Rick