

Mother's Day – 2003

By John Van Sloten

May 11, 2003

Happy Mother's Day! Today we're going to talk about the nature of a mother's love, and how that nature can teach us about the love of God. We're going to focus on one aspect of that nature in particular... its unconditionality. If ever there is a human being that most demonstrates, most often, what unconditional love is all about, it's a mother. This week I experienced several stories that reinforced that fact.

The first story taught me the 'unconditional love' lesson by contrast. I learned that I don't have a mother's unconditional love as much as I thought I did. I realized this fact when I picked up the Wednesday morning paper and read about the Dar Heatherington story. You know the one I mean, the Lethbridge City Counsellor that went missing in Montana. Well, that morning the news was that she had finally been located in Las Vegas. While the details were scant as to why she was there, at least they had found her. At least her husband and three kids knew she wasn't dead. At least we knew she wasn't dead.

No sooner had I scanned the headlines that morning and I found myself feeling ticked off! "I knew it.... even as I watched the news last night... And the police reported that they had had previous contact with the family... "They were **known** to police..." And then when the husband got on the news and did this 'crocodile tears' plea, which seemed so inauthentic... I thought something is not right about this... It seemed suspicious then... And by the next morning it was definitively exposed as such! "What a crock!" "I knew it!"

And in my heart I wrote the story off... Honestly, I wrote Dar Heatherington off... "How dare she act so irresponsibly? How dare they air their dirty laundry for all the world to see... For me to start to care about?"

Here I was beginning to care for this family... Worry a bit about some people I didn't really know... maybe even say a prayer for their safety... and then to realize they were just messing around... making bad choices... in a way, abusing my compassion... I just tossed the paper down and said, "forget it!"

I said to Fran, over our morning coffee, "I guess its easy come, easy go when it comes to my ability to care for people. Here there's this person I didn't know at all, who's in trouble, and I start to care, show a little love and compassion, and as soon as I discover that their problems are self induced, even willful, I drop my compassion like a hot potato." "Not a lot of unconditional love there," I thought, but then I really didn't have any kind of relationship to that person. I really don't know the family at all. **LONG PAUSE...**

I came across my second unconditional love story in the foreign film section of Rogers Video. I was doing my annual search for a film that would help me understand the heart of a mother in preparation for this message. As I walked the aisles this film caught my eye, "All about my Mother"... It was the same title I decided to avoid when I'd earlier saw it in the 'Gay and Lesbian' section (which I just happened to be walking through thank you!). I read the back (READ IT)... I thought that it might fit... Sure sounds like unconditional love to me. (Although I was a bit concerned about the appropriateness of the storyline for Sunday morning use.) Watching the film confirmed my concerns... at first I thought, "Ya that's unconditional love... and it is a mother's love... but I'm not sure whether or not it would be a good pointer to the nature of God's love." At first I thought no... Then I thought yes. **PAUSE...**

[The following story has been edited for family listening. All language and subject matter is suitable for younger ears.] The story begins with a mother who lives with her 18 year old, Esteban. From the start we witness a real, and beautiful love and compassion between the two. You can tell that she's a good

mom, you can tell by the amount of freedom she gives her son, the respect she shows and demands, and by the way she would look at her boy, the way she provided for his life with a good job and stable home life. It was a beautiful picture of what love can be.... **PAUSE**... one that you knew was about to be shattered. On the occasion of Esteban's birthday, Mom has taken him to see her favourite play, A Streetcar Named Desire. After the performance, Esteban wants to hang around to get an autograph from one of the actresses. How could she refuse, she loved him so much, and it was his birthday... Then this terrible tragedy occurs... CLIP #1 - 12:30ff Hit by car... mother's screams The depth of her love was evidenced in the heart breaking passion of her cry. And now, her life having been shattered, she had to leave, she had to move on.

She ends up going back to a place she used to live... to some people she used to know... To a life she thought she's left forever. And there she connects with some old friends and some new. One old friend was a transvestite who she found down on the local strip. Another was an older gay actress and her drug addicted partner, whom she met at the theatre (the same actress her son wanted the autograph from). Yet another was a beautiful young nun, played by Penelope Cruz. This nun had gotten herself pregnant, pregnant with a baby and with aids! To each of these broken souls, this grieving mother became a mother. She patched up the wounds of the transvestite friend whom she found injured, at the side of the road, on that strip. She befriended that lost and forlorn actress and brought some wisdom and direction to her life. She took in that pregnant nun, and became a mother to her when the nun's own mother was unable to do so.

[EXCURSUS TONE] Now there was a contrast in mothering... Here you have this mom who's love is so big, she's able to take in all of these badly broken people, some of whom she's just met, and the biological mom of the nun, well she can't even love her own daughter, accept her for who she is... her

own flesh and blood. There's a scene... Where we see the brokenness of their relationship... The nun is bedridden at this point in her pregnancy and she's yet to tell her mom about her condition... A meeting is arranged and this is what happens... CLIP #2 - Is that the way a mom is supposed to love? You can understand some disappointment... but to shun... To be embarrassed... (Which we clearly see later in the film) What's that about? What kind of mother's love is that when how things look are more important than who your child is? This mom didn't even **know** her own girl... And obviously didn't care too much about how she felt... She cared more about what others felt... People she did not know!

Any way, the film showed a very powerful and unconditional love via this mother character. In the end this mom takes in the AIDS baby of the nun (who died in child birth)... she ends up forgiving another transvestite who 18 years earlier impregnated her... This seemingly unending and accepting love flows from her... And the story ends...

And I thought... you can't use a love like that to illustrate the love of God can you? Aren't those people just a little too far out of God's reach? Would he really want his good name associated with them on a sunny Sunday morning? On Mother's day?

Then I began to remember a few scenes from this story **[BIBLE]**... I remember the words of God that were written by the Old Testament Prophet, Jeremiah (DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM IMAGE - REMBRANDT)

Jeremiah 2:fff!!!!

Matthew 23:37

Our hearts... Quick to judge and drop others (Dar)... Perversions that fill our minds... Hearts... "Whomever things it... has done it!"... Lack of compassion/love... Other gods we've chased after

How does God treat us? Picks us up on side of road... in spite of our bad choices... cleans us up (Psalm 51)... Makes us new... cares with an unconditional mother's love... Dares to hug the sexual deviance in us... our lewd hearts and minds...

Prophet words... Isaiah 41:13

© 2003 John Van Sloten

Feel free to use sermons, ideas and illustrations but acknowledge the source of these.

If you know the source of a quote or illustration that is incorrectly acknowledged here, please email me <[johnvs@newhopechurch.ca](mailto:johnvs@newhopechurch.ca)>

Unless otherwise stated scripture references are taken from

The Message® or The New International Version®.