

St. Andrews Lutheran Church, Tallebudgera QLD

10<sup>th</sup> May 2026 – Sixth Sunday of Easter

**John 14:15-21**

**ALWAYS LOVED. ALWAYS LOVING**

It is very hard, if not impossible, to talk about Mother's Day, or even mothers in general, without mentioning the word 'love', or referring to something which can only be described as love. Have a think about it. Without using the word 'love', what do mothers do? They care for us. Make lots of sacrifices for us. Keep us safe. Teach us how to live in the world, how to relate to other people, etc. Do everything they can to ensure we grow up to be as fulfilled and as happy as we can be. And, why do they do that? Well, we can't get around it, we have to use that word; they do it because they *love* us. That's the only possible explanation for what they do and why they do it. There are many examples of great mothers in the natural world, alongside some which are not so good, but it hit me this week that while as humans we are at the top of the tree in being able to control and manipulate the world and its creatures to our way, we are also one of the most helpless and vulnerable creatures when we are born. How do we get from the bottom to the top? One big reason is the love and care of our mothers.

But despite this, even those of us who have had good mothers, and good relationships with them, can probably relate to a quote I read this week: 'The greatest acts of love provide sacrifice and service. The greatest acts of love are not always fun and are not always met with great thanks.' How does that sit with you as one description of the love mothers have for their children? It is a love which is sacrificial. It's a love which does the hard stuff as well as the good stuff. And it's a love which doesn't at all times get the thanks and response it deserves. And that's why we have days like today, Mother's Day, when we do stop, reflect, and show our thanks to our mothers for all they do for us.

Looking at it, this quote not only reflects very well on the love of a mother, but it's also a good description of God's love for us. We can see the truths of what is here in both the history of God and His people, and also in our relationship with God today. Love in sacrifice and service; we see this in what God does for His people in the Bible, culminating in sending His own Son to be the Saviour to die for all people. We experience this aspect of God's love in how He provides and cares for us each day, including giving us mothers to love and care for us, as well as the forgiveness and life we receive through Jesus. And what about the 'not always fun' and 'not always met with great thanks' bit. We don't always appreciate or respond to the 'tough love' that God, like our mothers, puts on us, do we? We try to water down His commands, change them to 'suit our times', justify why we don't always follow even the basics of 'Love God and love others' all the time. And thanks, well, how often do we forget to see our life and everything in it as a gift from God, and something to respond to in thanks? Love is always given, but not always responded to.

Our theme for today of 'Always Loved. Always Loving', focuses first of all on God's love for us, and as part of that we can use the love of our mothers as both one way God shows His love to us, and also what it means to really show love in our lives. Just like we can't talk about mothers without using the word 'love', the same is true about God. It is knowing that we are always loved by God, and being called to now be always loving (although we know we don't always do this perfectly), that Jesus talks about in our reading today. Have a look at what Jesus says here. In reminding us of God's love for us, He reminds us that as a perfect loving response to that we will follow God's way in our lives. In knowing God's love, we know that His way is the best way for us, and so the natural response is to want to go that way. Of course, as people, we know that this doesn't always happen. When we were younger, and even older, we knew our mothers loved us, and had a wisdom beyond our own, and yet we still didn't always follow what they said. Despite them telling us that jumping off the top of a swing wearing a tea towel as a superman cape wasn't going to make us fly, some of us still had to try it out, and learn the hard way mum's way was right. As we got older many of us made even bigger mistakes because we knew better than mum. We do the same with God.

We do love God, but we don't always do what He has commanded or said, instead, as Paul puts it so well, 'the good we want to do isn't what we do, but the bad we don't want to do is what we end up doing' (Rom 7). But God, like in many cases our mothers, still loves us, forgives us, and helps us to get on track again. We are Always Loved, but the Always Loving bit is both a call to us and something we are always working on.

As well as that call to love God, which includes following Him, as we are loved, Jesus also gives us the assurance here that in His love God will never leave us alone. For many of us we know that we carry our mothers with us, in our memories, in the things we do and say which remind us of them, when we make a decision based on what they taught us; we carry them with us both when they are not with us, and also when they have left this life. Their love, and all that means to us, gives us comfort and strength throughout our lives, so that they remain a part of who we are and what we do.

Jesus goes even further than that, telling the disciples, and us, here that as He leaves them they will have the Holy Spirit to be with them always. This reading again comes from the teaching Jesus gave the disciples on the night He was arrested, the night before He died. They had spent nearly a week in Jerusalem with tensions being high, and Jesus instead of keeping a low profile deliberately stirring His enemies up more and more. The disciples were afraid; Jesus had been talking of His death and the way He was going they knew that time was getting close. Where would that leave them?

More than a memory, Jesus promises them the Holy Spirit's presence in their lives, just like the Holy Spirit is with us now. The Spirit coming to us in the promises of our Baptism, the Spirit coming to us in the promises and guidance of God's Word, the Spirit coming to us as we share in Jesus' death and rising again in Holy Communion. The promise of the Holy Spirit is a promise of God's presence with us always, wherever we are and whatever we go through in our lives. This promise of Jesus reminds us that we will never be alone in anything we face, that there is nothing we can do which will cause God to stop loving us, that He is always there to help us to respond to His

love by loving Him, and that Jesus has done everything needed to bring us back to God and His love. For many of us, the memories of our mothers, or grandmothers, or adopted or foster mothers, are memories which remind us of total and unconditional love and sacrifice, memories which may still help us today. Through the Holy Spirit, we are also reminded of the strength, the depth, the sacrifice of God's love, and of how this love both carries and leads us in our lives now.

Mother's Day. It is a day which means different things for different people. For many it is a day to remember our mothers with thanks and love, and to thank God for the gift they are to us. For others, it is a reminder that their relationship with their mother is or wasn't as God intended it to be. Some get to spend this day with their mothers, others contact them from afar, and then for many their mothers are no longer with them. For us all, we probably have either a mother or a person who filled that role for us, and who showed us unconditional and sacrificial love in our lives. As we thank God for mothers, we can also thank Him for His unconditional and sacrificial love for us; shown to us in Jesus, continually brought to us through the Holy Spirit. As we know, as we are shown, by God that we are always loved, in remembering His love and with the power of the Holy Spirit may we also go out to be always loving to both Him and to others. Amen.

### **FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION/REFLECTION**

- What kind of relationship did you have/do you have with your mother? If it was a loving relationship, thank God for that. If it wasn't so good, did you have another person who filled that 'mother' role for you?
- In our Bible reading Jesus reminds us that we are Always Loved; nothing can change that. How do you experience this love of God in your life? Are there ever times when you doubt it or it feels a long way from you? If you do ever feel a long way from God's love, pray about this, remember the promises of your baptism and the way He comes to you in Holy Communion, and read of God's promises of continual love in the Bible.
- We are also called to be Always Loving, something we know we don't do perfectly. Are there times when you don't respond to God with the same love He shows to us? Are there situations, or particular people, in which or to whom you find it hard to show God's love? Pray for both God's forgiveness and His strength and guidance in helping you to be Always Loving.

Pray: thank God for the gift of mothers, for the love they show us, and how they reflect His sacrificial and total love for us. Ask God to help us to love both Him and others in the same way He loves us.

*Pastor Andrew R. Koehler  
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