

Mother's Day

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[0 : 0 0] Happy Mother's Day. I wonder if all of you were even aware that it was Mother's Day. It's not that big a deal in Scotland, though maybe it's becoming a bit more of a deal, certainly in the media. It is referred to much more often than perhaps it would have been in the past. And as I mentioned in the intimation sheet, some of you may have had a chance to just glance at the editorial there. This is in stark contrast to other parts of the world. And as you know, we as a family are particularly familiar with Latin America and Peru in particular, where just to confuse matters, Mother's Day is on a different day. But leaving that aside, it is a huge deal in Peru. I recall on one occasion, the young folk in the church in Moyabamba, they were feverishly raising funds in the days that were leading up to Mother's Day. And it turned out that the reason for this was that they decided that they would buy roses and that every mother, indeed they extended it to all the women, as they came into the morning service would be presented with a rose by one of the young folk.

So there's a wee idea, the YF for next year. Roses are quite expensive, so you maybe need a bit of a lead-in time to achieve that. It was also the case that for a minister to allow Mother's Day to come and go without an appropriate sermon was almost grounds for dismissal. And old habits die hard. And so this morning I want to do something that relates to this theme of Mother's Day or mothers. I want to think about an example we have in the Scriptures of a godly mother and a godly son. And I'm thinking of Eunice and Timothy. We have read there in Paul's second letter to Timothy, where he makes reference to Timothy's mother, and to his grandmother also, Lois and Eunice. We could call the sermon, like mother, like son. And maybe it would be helpful to just remind ourselves of what Paul does say there in 2 Timothy chapter 1. We can read from verse 1 and read through to verse 5. We've read these verses just a moment ago, but they're just brief verses, and we'll read them again as we embark into what we want to say about this godly mother and her godly son. Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, according to the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus, to Timothy, my dear son. Notice the language that Paul uses here concerning Timothy, my dear son. Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. I thank God whom I serve as my forefathers did with a clear conscience.

As night and day, I constantly remember you in my prayers. Recalling your tears, I long to see you so that I may be filled with joy. I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded now lives in you also. A godly grandmother, a godly mother, and a godly son, but we will be concerned with the mother and the son today.

We're going to begin with the son. That may not seem the most appropriate way, but for the purpose of what we want to say, it's probably the more helpful way to begin. Now, what we want to say about Timothy as a son will come largely from the passage that we've read, but it will be supplemented by a couple of other references that we have in the New Testament to Timothy, and in that way, providing a picture of him, a partial picture, but a picture nonetheless, and a picture that is painted of a godly young man. As we do identify and notice some of the characteristics of Timothy as a godly young man, indeed as a godly son, I trust that it can serve as a challenge to us who are sons and daughters, and, as we will see in due course, a challenge to mothers and fathers.

What's the first thing that is said about Timothy in our passage? Well, the first thing we notice is the manner in which Paul addresses him. There in verse 2, to Timothy, my dear son. We're speaking of Timothy as a godly son, so where better to start than this designation or this description that Paul uses to speak of him, to Timothy, my dear son, or my beloved son, my loved son. Now, of course, here, the language that is being used is being used by Paul of Timothy, and clearly Paul is using the language in the sense of his spiritual paternity. He is Timothy's spiritual father, and so speaks of him as his dear son. Paul makes that point explicitly in the first letter that he writes as he addresses Timothy in 1 Timothy chapter 1 and verse 2. In the greeting also, there is a similar greeting, but with a little bit more explanation. To Timothy, my true son in the faith. My true son in the faith. I'm not your biological father, but I consider you my son, my true son, my dear son, my beloved son. And we can be sure that as Timothy was a dear son to Paul as his spiritual father, we can be very sure that he was also a dear son, a loved son for his mother, Eunice. So, this is the first thing we see about Timothy, that he was a dear son, a loved son. And before we just consider that a little more and continue to think about Timothy, allow me to just pause for a moment and maybe take a step back and make a comment that I hope will be helpful for some. Notice how this reference by Paul to Timothy as his spiritual son can serve as a challenge and an encouragement to those who, like Paul, have no children of their own. Now, we know that this is a delicate matter and can be, and rightly so, very painful for some not having children of their own. And God knows the reasons why, and we don't have trite answers always to those who maybe suffer in this particular way. And yet here we have Paul who is able to enjoy, and I use the word enjoy very deliberately, Paul is able to enjoy the genuine pleasure and satisfaction of parenthood as a spiritual father of Timothy. And that opportunity is there for us also, those who do not have their own children, if we want to use that language, but indeed also those of us who are blessed with our own children, the opportunity to experience and enjoy spiritual parenthood. This was true of Paul who could speak to Timothy and speak to him in this way, to Timothy, my dear son. But back to Timothy, why was he a dear son or a loved son? If we maybe think of how he was a dear son to his mother, as I'm sure he was, we might say, well, to ask why he is a loved son is a silly question. Is it not the case that mothers love their children unconditionally? Is it not the case that mothers will often love their children even when that love is neither deserved, appreciated, nor reciprocated? We think of that especially as children grow older, become teenagers, become adults, and children are not always what they ought to be.

[8 : 55] Sons and daughters are not always what we ought to be in relation to our parents, and yet a mother's love will continue and will persist even when it is not reciprocated as it ought to be. Well, that is so, and yet in the case of Timothy, there is, as we will go on to see, much that feeds and stokes the flames of a mother's love and indeed of a spiritual father's love, as in the case of Paul. So, of Timothy, we can say this, that he was a dear son, a loved son, but also we can say that he was a remembered son.

Then in verse 3 we read, I thank God whom I serve as my forefathers did with a clear conscience, as night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers. Then again in verse 4, the language of remembrance recalling your tears, a remembered son. Now, the first reference to remembering that Paul makes is in the context of remembering in order to pray for Timothy. That in itself, as we address both sons and daughters and mothers and fathers, and many of us are both at the same time, that in itself.

We wouldn't want to miss the application or the challenge. That in itself is a prod to us as parents, that we too would know what it is to remember our children as we pray for them, maybe especially for those who have left home and who have formed their own families and perhaps live far away, as was the case with Paul, remembering Timothy, who was distant from him, but constantly remembered in his prayers. But as we think a little bit more about this idea of Paul remembering Timothy, as no doubt his mother Eunice would also have remembered Timothy. I wonder if that remembrance was a source of pleasure and satisfaction for Paul as spiritual father and for Eunice as Timothy's mother. We know that the remembrance of sons and daughters is not always, sadly, a source of pleasure and satisfaction. Sons and daughters are not always fondly remembered. For many mothers, if we think of mothers especially today, to remember a son, it can be a very painful experience. What of ourselves, as sons and daughters? Do we give cause to be remembered fondly? Those of us who are blessed with parents who are still alive, do they remember us fondly? I am sure that Paul, as he remembered Timothy, that was even the remembrance of him would have been a source of satisfaction, and indeed also for his mother. But what more can we say of

Timothy as a godly son? Well, we can say also that he was a loving son. Notice in verse 4 what Paul says, recalling your tears, I long to see you. Now, the word loving isn't found here to describe Timothy. Of course, the word loved is in a dear son, but the word loving isn't found. But nonetheless, this reference to Paul recalling Timothy's tears surely points in the direction of a young man who loved deeply. The question that immediately emerges is, well, what tears will Paul have been referring to, recalling your tears? We're not told to what tears he refers. It seems reasonable to imagine that perhaps these were the tears that accompanied their parting. When having ministered together for a considerable length of time in God's providence, they had to part one from the other. And no doubt, that parting was accompanied by tears. Tears for Paul and for Timothy. We find in the book of Acts how the parting of Paul from believers often was accompanied by tears, and we can be sure that that would have been true of his parting from Timothy. So these tears that Paul speaks of speak of a young man who loved Paul deeply, and a man who we can be equally sure loved his mother with similar intensity and depth. And notice, just in the passing, how this love of Timothy does find outward and visible expression, in this case in the tears that are shed. And there is not even the slightest suggestion that such outward expression of his love is unbecoming of a grown man, as we in our own culture have sometimes come to wrongly imagine that outward expressions of love for those whom we love are inappropriate or unbecoming. There is no suggestion of that here in Paul's view of the world and of human friendship.

And it would be perhaps something we should consider and learn from. But when we think of those tears that Paul recalls, I wonder if we can go further and say, well, not only the tears of parting, which I imagine are in Paul's mind, but I wonder if there is not also in Paul's mind, as he recalls Timothy's tears, tears that we might describe as gospel tears. Timothy, as we know, accompanied Paul on some of his missionary journeys. And as a dear and trusted fellow worker, Timothy would have, I am sure, accompanied Paul as he shed many what we're calling gospel tears. If I can just give one example where we're told very explicitly of Paul shedding what we're calling a gospel tears. In Acts chapter 20 and verse 31, what do we read there? He's in the context of this farewell to the Ephesian elders, and of course a very emotional occasion. But there as he recalls his ministry among them, what does Paul say? He says, so be on your guard. Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears. Now my point is this, that Timothy, as he accompanied Paul, would Timothy not also have shared in those tears with Paul? Tears of sadness when believers suffered or fell. Tears of gladness when lost men and women embraced the Savior as their own Savior and Lord. Tears of gratitude to God for help given and prayers answered. Gospel tears shed by Paul and, I am sure, shed also by Timothy. And Paul recalls those tears. Timothy was a loving son, a son who loved his spiritual father, Paul, and a son who loved his mother, a young man who loved the Lord. A young man who loved the Lord, and a young man who loved the Lord's people. And this love was the source of many tears, tears recalled by Paul. We don't need to labor the application. I wonder if this describes us in any sense at all. Do we know something of the tears that are an expression of love? Love for others, love for the Lord, love for the work of the gospel and for

[17:19] God's people. A loving son. But we can say something further about Timothy. We can call him and describe him as a highly regarded son. Now, in this case, we will make reference to another passage, not anything we find in 2 Timothy, but if we return to the book of Acts and chapter 16 and verses 1 and 2, notice what is said there of Timothy. This is as Timothy joins Paul to work with him in the missionary enterprise.

We read there in verse 1, he came to Derbe and then to Lystra, where a disciple named Timothy lived, whose mother was a Jewess and a believer, but whose father was a Greek. And then in verse 2, we're given this detail, the brothers at Lystra and Iconium spoke well of him. They spoke well of Timothy.

Is that not a real source of satisfaction for parents when we hear others speaking well of our children? You know, it sometimes happens. Maybe it's the football coach, or maybe it's a teacher, or maybe it's another parent when they've been around playing, and they say something nice about our children, something that speaks well of them, and we feel a sense of satisfaction when they are spoken well of. Well, Timothy was certainly a young man who gave every cause for others to speak well of him, and very particularly here we're told of the believers speaking well of him. Why did they speak well of him? Well, because he was a dutiful son. He was a serious and committed disciple. He was a faithful and loyal friend. He was a man of integrity, of moral integrity and purity. He was a man who could be trusted, and so they speak well of him. They recommend him to Paul. And these reports, these kind words, but true words concerning Timothy, I wonder, did they reach the ears of Eunice? I'm sure many of them did, and I have no doubt that as they did, they warmed her pious soul as others spoke well of her son, for here was a highly regarded son. Again, we ask of ourselves as sons and daughters, do we give the brethren, do we give others cause to speak well of us? But we notice also one further thing. There's actually two more things we want to say about Timothy, so this is the penultimate thing, and then we'll move on more briefly to speak of his mother. But the penultimate thing we want to say about Timothy is that he is a son who brings joy. We return to the passage in 2 Timothy, and there in verse 4 of chapter 1, Paul says as follows, recalling your tears, I long to see you so that I may be filled with joy. Paul is in chains, very probably during a second Roman captivity with execution on the horizon. It's difficult to know with absolute certainty the circumstances or the timing of Paul's penning of this letter, but that seems a reasonable scenario. His circumstances are very difficult and trying ones, and in such trying and sad circumstances, even remembering

Timothy is a source of joy for Paul. I wonder if that is true of us as sons and daughters. Do we bring joy to our parents? Maybe some of you are thinking, well, what's the point of asking that question when the children are at Sunday school? Well, I think most of us have the privilege of having parents to whom we can still bring joy. Or might it be that we could be a source of joy if we were a little more willing to make that phone call or pay that visit or spend time with them? Timothy was a son who brought joy.

He brought joy to Paul, and we can be sure he brought joy to his mother also. But the final thing we want to say about Timothy as he is described for us, as this portrait is painted for us, is that he was a faithful son. In verse 5 again we read, I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded now lives in you also, reminded of your sincere faith. Now that sincere faith, we can be sure, is a faith that as Paul makes clear in his first letter in chapter 1 and verse 5 would have been a faith that was accompanied, accompanied as we read there in verse 5 of chapter 1. In the first letter, the goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. Notice these three things that can't go together, they live together. A pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith from where blossoms a Christian love. And this was true of Timothy. His was a sincere faith. He was a sincere believer in

[23 : 05] Jesus Christ. His faith was heartfelt and genuine. And it was a sincere faith that I am sure commended the faith to those who saw and witnessed the manner in which he lived and served the Lord that he loved. This was a faithful son, one who owned a sincere faith, as Paul notes. Well, again, we ask ourselves the question, is that true of us? Can it be said of us that ours is like Timothy, a sincere faith? So, we have this portrait then of Timothy, a godly young man, loved and loving, remembered, highly regarded, a source of joy, faithful and sincere.

What Christian mother would not wish for such a son? We maybe say, well, what's the secret? Is there a secret? Well, I don't think there is a secret, and there's certainly no mechanistic formula for raising a godly children. But there is no doubt that Timothy was who he was in great measure because of the mother he was blessed with.

You see, when Paul speaks of his sincere faith there in verse 5, he immediately goes on to declare, as we have read, the fact that you know, the fact that Timothy was in great faith, the mother he was blessed with. And it is undoubtedly the case that Paul is stating, if you wish the obvious, that there is this very live and real connection between who Timothy is between who Timothy is and the mother that he had been blessed with. His sincere faith, the very same faith, had first lived in Lois and in Eunice. As we said at the beginning, like mother, a like son.

Well, what can we say of Eunice and of her sincere faith that Paul makes reference to? Well, I just want to say two things about Eunice. Now, the amount of things that are said bears no bearing on the importance of them. We said more things about Timothy. But of Eunice, we want to say two things, and both of them in relation to the faith that Paul refers to.

The first thing that Paul refers to. The first thing that Paul refers to. The first thing that I want to notice is the language that Paul uses. He speaks of a faith that lives. Then in verse 5, I have been reminded of your sincere faith which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice.

[25 : 53] The first thing that I want to say is the first thing that I want to say is the faith that I want to say to do. It's a faith that you have first lived. It lived in your grandmother. It lived in your mother.

A faith that fed land. It lived in your mother. It lived in your motherome. It lived in your mother. It lived in your grandmother. I wanted to say to do. It lived in your mother feelings. All sicknesses had never got a breakthrough.

This was the kind of faith that was a characteristic of Lois and of Eunice. A living faith in the living God. A living faith in the risen Savior when they first were confronted with the good news concerning a risen Savior.

a living faith that begets new life in others, or is certainly instrumental in begetting new faith in others. This was a faith that found expression not only in the performance of religious duties or the reciting of religious mantras, but a down-to-earth, everyday faith that impacted on and influenced every aspect of the life of Eunice, of Lois and of Eunice, how she lived as a wife and as a mother, no doubt with difficulties being married to a husband who was a Greek and who everything would suggest did not share her faith. And yet her faith was a strengthening for her in those difficult circumstances. And this everyday faith influencing certainly, as we've noticed, the manner in which she performed her duties as a mother, how she related to others, maybe difficult neighbors, how she responded in times of sadness and in times of stress, how she trusted in God when maybe money was tight, how she shared with others the little that she had or maybe sometimes from the much that she had. And Timothy saw all of this. He witnessed, and he didn't just witness, he experienced from the womb the living faith of a faithful mother. He witnessed also, I am sure, how his mother prayed for him and with him, and how, I imagine, those prayers were often accompanied by tears.

And so we have in this living faith, this faith that lived in Lois, that lived in Eunice, a challenge for mothers and, of course, for fathers also. Does your faith live in you? Is it a living faith that your children see and experience? And are you engaged in what is a noble and a wonderful task of bringing up a future Timothy, a faith that lives? But the other thing I want to say briefly about this faith of Eunice as a godly mother is that this faith was a faith that was taught or inculcated in her son.

[29 : 09] Now, that's something we've, in a sense, already made reference to, but I want to very explicitly make this point that this faith that this faith was taught. You know, we have spoken of Eunice's faith, as Paul does, as a living faith. And so in his mother, Timothy had an example of faith. But that faith also found expression in a transmission of the content of the faith. Indeed, that living faith was an expression of a life grounded in the content of the faith, those truths that constitute the Christian message. And Eunice made very sure that Timothy was instructed in the faith from his infancy. We're told that explicitly in chapter 3 of this same letter and in verse 15, when Paul again is speaking to

Timothy, and he speaks in this way, and how from infancy you have known the holy scriptures. And how did he know them from infancy? Well, because of his mother. Eunice would have had no time, no time at all, for the the, often heard conventional folly of letting children decide for themselves when they get older.

They're a little older. Don't we hear that so often in regard to matters of faith? Well, yes, faith is, faith is okay, and everybody should have a faith, or it's good to have a faith. But as for our children, well, I want them to decide when they get a little bit older. I want them to decide for themselves.

Well, Eunice would have had no time for such folly. From his infancy, from his infancy, Eunice was teaching her son, whom she loved deeply, the faith, the truths concerning a God, the living and true God.

I can imagine Eunice, who of course in her home would have had no Bible, as we have the privilege of having no colorful Bible storybooks, no Bible videos to stick into the TV. And yet, I can imagine her taking Timothy on her knee and telling him of how God created the world, of telling him of Adam and Eve, of the fall, of Noah, of Abraham, of Moses, of the Passover, of King David, of the exile, of the return from exile, the whole story of God and of His care for and salvation of His people. And she would have told him of the promised Messiah. She would have, I am sure, taken Timothy to the synagogue and sought to surround him by godly company and conversation. And Timothy was not only instructed, but we are told in that same passage in chapter 3, that he became convinced. He became convinced.

[32 : 15] Notice there in verse 14 of chapter 3, but as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of. And why was Timothy convinced? Well, not only by the coherence of the message, but by the coherence of the lives of those who communicated the message. See, when these two things come together, they are a powerful combination, a message that is coherent. We believe the gospel message to be true, to be coherent, to be powerful. But when that is combined with the coherent lives of those who communicate the message, and very particularly, as we're thinking this morning, of parents, of a mother, or a father, or if God grants us this privilege of a mother and a father, communicating this message, well, it's not surprising that Timothy was convinced. He hadn't been brainwashed. He became convinced. The message that he was presented in word and in deed convinced him as to the truth of the truth of it. And of course, that forms evidently a great challenge to us. Do we, as Eunice did, instruct our children in the Holy Scriptures? Do our lives confirm or undermine the message we declare? Is your faith a convincing faith? As it is evident, was true of Eunice, like mother, like a son. But what about you as a mother or a father? What about you as a son or a daughter?

May it be the case that the families of this congregation, the families of Bonacord, be led by godly mothers and godly fathers, and may we be blessed by godly sons and godly daughters.

Let us pray.