

Happy Mother's Day!

- I. Today is Mother's Day. We are very grateful for the ladies of our congregation who have mothered us personally, or who have served beside us men as the mothers of our children. It is undoubtedly true that you have the most important job in society. You are managers, teachers, pastors, doctors, referees, counselors, mechanics, chefs, and so forth, all within the context of the miracle we call "motherhood"
 - A. But the essence of motherhood doesn't grow out of the moment in the delivery room when the doctor says, "It's a boy (or girl)!", or even from 9 months of pregnancy; but rather from the moment you **yourself** are conceived in the mind of your Creator, and the womb of your own mother, as a female, a girl, a woman. I believe the essence of motherhood is not maternity, but womanhood.
 1. In the past 5 years or so, Ginger has been a caregiver to a few little girls from the church. After she had raised four boys in a world consisting primarily of wrestling matches, burping contests, and action movies, a "splash of pink" was a welcome addition to our home, and in her life personally.
 2. In all of these little girls, I have noted that all the characteristics that make a great mom are already being formed in them - in the way they "tick". You see it in their unique communication, the way they play, the tenderness of their emotions and affection, and in their infectious laughs and radiance of joy.
 - B. So, with this idea that "womanhood is the **essence** of motherhood", I would like your permission to address all of the women of our congregation today; young and old, married and single, moms and not-yet-moms.
- II. We are a church that is committed to preaching the message of Jesus Christ (Gospel) and only the gospel. You won't find pithy motivational lectures here, or helpful hints to be a better you, or have a more successful or happy life because we believe firmly that none of those things are even possible without a full surrender to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, which scripture describes as "dying to yourself",
 - A. Though we don't apologize at all for this position, one of the challenges that such a commitment presents is that there are often things happening in the culture that need to be addressed within the context of the scriptures and the body of Christ, so we must discern how to do so in light of the Gospel; not just giving you just our opinions, because, frankly, those aren't worth much.
 1. So today I'd like to attempt to address the culture of misogyny, sexism and the abuse of women that the Lord has allowed to be exposed in the recent months, and try to address you directly with the heart of God the Father.
 2. I say "that the Lord has allowed to be exposed" because the Bible is clear:
 - a) "...you have sinned against the Lord, and **be sure your sin will find you out.**" Numbers 32:23 ESV
 - b) "For God will bring every deed into judgment, with **every secret thing**, whether good or evil." Ecclesiastes 12:14 ESV
 - c) "**Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known.** Therefore whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed on the housetops." Luke 12:2-3 ESV

3. I will try not to be a “downer” on this precious holiday, and will hopefully leave you with a sense of security, love and hope, but this has become a cultural epidemic too big for the church to ignore.
- B. None of you, unless you have been living under a rock, are unaware of the problem that has spawned the #metoo movement. [vox.com](https://www.vox.com/a/sexual-harassment-assault-allegations-list) maintains a list of 211 celebrities, politicians, and others accused of sexual misconduct since April of 2017, barely a year ago¹.
 1. Everyone is familiar with the sordid details of the escapades of Bill Cosby, Harvey Weinstein, and Kevin Spacey in the world of entertainment.
 2. The news media saw giants like Matt Lauer and Charlie Rose accused and removed from their positions as a result of the fallout.
 3. We were all horrified to hear of the criminal actions of Larry Nassar, formerly a doctor for the US Gymnastics team, who molested dozens of innocent girls during his tenure in the world of athletics.
 4. Minnesota Senator Al Franken was ousted from his seat as many women came forth complaining of his sexual impropriety. President Trump was caught red-handed bragging about his assault of women like a 13 year-old boy in a locker room, using the most vulgar terms; and is currently embroiled in a scandal where he is accused of having a sexual relationship with a porn star while married to his wife, and paying her to keep quiet.
- C. If we are indeed the people of God, all of these things should grieve us, and fill us with a sense of righteous anger, for those who are victimized and exploited. But is that what has happened, especially in the church? Sadly, I say no.
 1. When the entertainers and news media personnel are exposed in their sin, we often merely say that we expect that kind of behavior in Hollyweird and the Liberal media.
 2. When **our** President is caught with his mouth open and his pants down, we say “boys will be boys”, or that his sexual dalliances don’t matter because his policies are good! Sadly, some of the loudest voices defending Mr. Trump are the same people who were nearly apoplectic 20 years ago when another president was accused of some of the same behaviors, shouting, “Character matters!” Does it still? Did it ever, or was that just a political attack strategy?
- D. And the watching world waits for the response of the people of God. Would there be a healing word, a place where the dignity and honor of the image of God seen in the female side of the human race would be defended, vindicated, treasured, and celebrated. But what do they see? Apathy. Silence. Political posturing. Brothers and sisters, these things ought not to be.
- III. I wish I could stand here this morning and tell you that the church has done a better job reflecting the heart of God toward women, but sadly I cannot.
 - A. May of us were horrified to hear of Paige Patterson, president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, describing (in a sermon!) a 16 year old girl as “built”, and his advice to a woman who had come to church with two black eyes; advising her to continue to submit to the ape that beat her.

¹ <https://www.vox.com/a/sexual-harassment-assault-allegations-list>

- B. These comments prompted renowned Bible teacher Beth Moore to write a blog² detailing her own treatment in the many parts of the church.
1. While she made no allegations of sexual harassment per se, she told of multiple instances where she was subjected to misogynistic mistreatment.
 2. She even detailed an instance of a well-known theologian (whom she did not name) saying, “The instant I met him, he looked me up and down, smiled approvingly and said, ‘You are better looking than _____.’ He didn’t leave it blank. He filled it in with the name of another woman Bible teacher.” I literally wept when I read this.
- C. In the Chicago area, best-selling author, church growth expert and mega-church pastor Bill Hybels was forced to resign from his church under a cloud of multiple allegations of sexual inappropriateness. He had planned to retire in the fall after a storied career in ministry, but resigned early in shame instead.
- D. How many more stories could I tell? How many more stories of injustice, mistreatment, abuse, and the dishonoring of women. Many, I’m afraid. You may think that I am going to far. It’s one thing to talk about Harvey Weinstein and Matt Lauer, but why air our dirty laundry on a Mother’s Day Sunday morning?
- IV. **“For *it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God*; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? 1 Peter 4:17 ESV** Paul said to the Corinthians, “...what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? God judges those outside.” (1 Corinthians 5:12-13)
- A. Judgement of our sin must begin because of the way the Father regards his daughters! Genesis 1:27 tells us that the image of God was made “male **and** female”. The woman was created “absolutely equal in essence, dignity and value and...complementary by divine design”³
- B. Judgement must begin because the one God has provided as a “helper” has too often been denigrated into sexual plaything, a procreative accessory, a caricature of shallow thought, materialistic value, and unbridled emotion.
1. But the Hebrew word translated “helper” is the same word used to describe God himself in scriptures such as **Psalm 124:8 ESV Our *help* is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.**
 2. The implication seems to be that the unique role of the woman is not merely to be our sidekick, or assistant, but quite often (reflecting the image of her creator), to be our savior! Can any husbands testify that this is true?
- C. Judgement must begin because the men of the Body of Christ have failed miserably in their role as head, protectors, and shepherds. **Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity. 1 Timothy 5:1-2 ESV**

² <https://blog.lproof.org/2018/05/a-letter-to-my-brothers.html>

³ ³ “The Role of Women”; The Village Church, Pg 1, https://d1nwfrzxhi18dp.cloudfront.net/uploads/resource_library/attachment/file/937/Institute_-_2017_-_The_Role_of_Women_at_The_Village_Church-Long-Paper.pdf

1. Let's start here: According to some studies, up to 77% of Christian men regularly look at pornography⁴. I am not trying to shame you, men, but porn is absolutely inconsistent with following Jesus. It brutally dishonors every woman. But there are men at NRLC who have been freed by God's grace. Talk to someone. Get help. You won't regret it.
 2. But often even those who have not been caught in porn's deadly web have dishonored women with their tongues and hearts. They have failed to love them as Christ loved the church. They have not served her, elevated her, and respected her, and faithfully led her (Ephesians 5:25-). They have spoken harshly, and made demands instead of sacrifices.
 3. Thirdly, some have twisted or "over-interpreted" certain scriptures to deny women opportunities for meaningful service in the work of the Kingdom. This is not to say that scripture does not define roles for men and women in specific duties and situations in the church, but if you have disregarded or vetoed the input of your sisters in Christ on the basis of your understanding of "submission", you are in error and must repent of your sin.
- V. And I as I review that list of atrocities committed against the sisters in Christ, I am horrified to note how bloody my own hands are. I cannot demand that another man in this room turn to you and repent, but would you allow me to do so? If there is some man that has hurt you in the past, and yet has never repented, will you let me bear their sin this morning? Will you receive my words as their own?
- A. I repent to you for the times in my life that I have objectified your kind for either sexual gratification, or some other selfish agenda. You were not my toys, or my slaves. I'm sorry for the times that I made the women in my life feel that way over the years. Will you forgive me?
 - B. I repent to you for the times that I have made jokes about the things that make you both beautiful and unique; those things that I was too thick-headed to see were the very image of God. I was impatient with your emotions, your insights, and often even your warnings. I was a fool. Will you forgive me?
 - C. I repent to you for the times you brought your gifts into the church but we ignored or overlooked you, spying out men who may have been less qualified or godly instead of you letting you adorn the Body of Christ with your gifts, skills and talents. I am sorry for the times we relegated you to "girl stuff" denying ourselves another powerful channel of the Spirit's power. Will you forgive me?
 - D. As a sign of my repentance, I want to pledge to you that I will do everything I can to lead NRLC as a place where you and your sisters are always honored. That we will lead you in gentleness and respect, in purity preserving your dignity.
 - E. We also pledge our protection. If you are disrespected, harassed, put aside or abused in anyway, you have our word that from this day forward you will find shelter here. If you inform any of us of the mistreatment, inside the church or outside, we will come to your defense to the best of our ability.
 - F. Lastly, we commit to honor you as the very image of God, our mutual creator. We will look to you to fulfill your role as our helper; not in the "sidekick",

⁴ <http://www.christiannewswire.com/news/3446774899.html>

accessory, or administrative assistant sense, but as someone who is anointed to display the rescuing, delivering saving power of God himself in our midst.

G. (Invite men to stand and join in the repentance.)

VI. We are about to come to the Lord's table and remember the healing and unity purchased by his broken body. We will celebrate the cleansing of his precious blood.

A. If you are a woman here who has felt the sting of the things I've spoken about today, come to the table in faith that God can heal your broken heart and work genuine repentance in you. Come be washed and cleansed of your sorrow and shame.

B. If you are a man, perhaps your sin has been exposed in way or another. Come and receive forgiveness. That's exactly what these elements represent - a forgiveness purchased for you that you did not have to earn!

C. 1 Corinthians 11:23 ESV For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." 25 In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

VII. Announcements:

A. Mother's Day gifts in the Foyer

B. Ladies Camping Trip: Friday the 18th (806)928-6903 or ginger@northridgelife.org

C. Next Potluck: June 3rd at 5:30pm

D. Lunch today at Red Zone on Slide