

FOR EVERYONE BORN
Lexington Presbyterian Church
Mother's Day - May 12, 2019
Isaiah 66: 12-16
Sarah L. Hill

I would like for everyone who is a Mother to raise your hand. Now for all that Mothers do and are and put up with – we give you thanks and appreciation. (Applause) Now will all those who have or had mothers, please raise your hand. This just shows that Mothers are pretty important. Even Isaiah had a mother. In fact everyone born, had a mother.

Becoming a mother means that you instantly have a relationship. The relationship between you and your child is like no other relationship. And though it may resemble the relationship you had with your mother, the shape of the love connection with your child is unique. Within that relationship, from the moment of birth, expectations are beginning to evolve; future scenarios are being set and the onesie has been bought in maroon and orange.

Isaiah, speaking of God, brings us these words: “As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you.” These words echo the beginning words of the 40th chapter of Isaiah, “Comfort, O comfort my people, says the Lord.” That is where we would like this day to stay with feelings of comfort and love shared between mother and child; father and child; God and us.

But the world and the Gospel don't let us stay there. For as much, on this day of days, we want to focus on comfort and love, reality brings us daily, moment by moment, in our faces with evidence completely to the contrary. Not counting the multiple natural catastrophes across the country of floods, fire and damaging wind, injustice and human willfulness pervade our society as the “just the way things are.”

We will now sing the first two verses of Hymn 769 – “For Everyone Born a Place at the Table.”

For everyone born, a place at the table,
for everyone born, clean water and bread,
a shelter, a space, a safe place for growing,
for everyone born, a star overhead,
and God will delight when we are creators
of justice and joy, compassion and peace:
yes, God will delight when we are creators
of justice, justice and joy!

For woman and man, a place at the table,
revising the roles, deciding the share,
with wisdom and grace, dividing the power,

for woman and man, a system that's fair,
and God will delight when we are creators
of justice and joy, compassion and peace:
yes, God will delight when we are creators
of justice, justice and joy!

(After the Hymn) –

A man walked into the church a few weeks ago. He was by all definitions “off the grid.” With help from our staff and others, a birth certificate was obtained (which he lost when his backpack was stolen), an identity card was ordered from Georgia, within a few hours he got a job. However, he had no permanent place to live. He was homeless. I have heard, many times repeated, that we have no homeless problem in Lexington. I have lived in Richmond, Louisville and near Harrisonburg, those cities all have homeless problems. Lexington may not have the same size problem as those larger cities, but I dare to say we do have a homeless problem. Within one day last week, a congregation member, a non-Presbyterian pastor in town, a staff member from another church in town, and Outreach committee members brought up – independently – the need to house people for more than a few nights as we do through RARA. As we sing this song, we are encouraged to seek out justice when and where we find it. Isaiah says: “You shall be comforted... You shall see and your heart shall rejoice.” We sing this song promising “a place at the table” – I often think of that as the communion table, but surely if we feed people as Jesus told us to do, it is also the dinner table.

And perhaps many other “tables” such as the bargaining table, or certainly the community table.

Please now let us sing the third verse of “For Everyone Born.”

For young and for old, a place at the table,
a voice to be heard, a part in the song,
the hands of a child in hands that are wrinkled,
for young and for old, the right to belong,
and God will delight when we are creators
of justice and joy, compassion and peace:
yes, God will delight when we are creators
of justice, justice and joy!

Relationships like the ones between mother and child, parent and family, God and God’s children are sometimes not easy. We have the just and the unjust, those who cause harm and those who try to protect us. There is always the need for forgiveness even as we have been forgiven. In following the way that Jesus leads us, we find temptation to look to our own needs first before we consider the needs of others. We can easily ignore the injustice that sits on our doorsteps every morning. But Jesus also

calls us to work against the problems that plague society. Justice is changing the system rather than punishing the guilty. And for those of us who are complicit in the guilt that is Good News.

What does every mother want for her child? A fair chance at life, a system that values the worth of the individual while upholding the best interest of the whole. Special privileges gained by bribes, trickery, intimidation, or simply by birth set up a world that is unjust. An unjust world is not what God intended. What makes God happy is when we are creators of justice and when society is filled with compassion which brings peace. And the end result is joy for God and God's children.

Let us sing the final two verses of "For Everyone Born."

For just and unjust, a place at the table,
abuser, abused, with need to forgive,
in anger, in hurt, a mindset of mercy,
for just and unjust, a new way to live,
and God will delight when we are creators
of justice and joy, compassion and peace:
yes, God will delight when we are creators
of justice, justice and joy!

For everyone born, a place at the table,
to live without fear, and simply to be,
to work, to speak out, to witness and worship,
for everyone born, the right to be free,
and God will delight when we are creators
of justice and joy, compassion and peace:
yes, God will delight when we are creators
of justice, justice and joy!

And may it be so. Amen.