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May 9, 2010 • Easter 6C  
Revelation 21:10, 22 – 22:5 • John 14:23-29

Days like Mother's Day can be difficult ones. Today, and next month on Father's Day, we honor the important role and influence that our parents have in our lives. If our parents are still alive, we thank them for the ways they have shared their lives with us. We also thank God for the ways that God has loved us through them.

We celebrate them, but our moms are still human, as loving as they may be. There are members of our congregation who can not pretend that their mothers are (or were) saints. Some were a long way from loving or perfect.

Moms among us may live with questions or deep regrets about choices made in caring for their families. We have sisters in Christ who continue to grieve, after they had to attend their own child's funeral. Countless mothers grieve the death of children who died in utero, either due to miscarriage or abortion. Countless women grieve that they were unable to bear children of their own flesh.

I say special prayers for my mother today, and I know that some of you are similar. If you were here for Peter's baptism a few weeks ago, you may have met her. She has breast cancer for the third time, and it has moved to other places in her

body. The day brings great appreciation and grief for me. Grief for the suffering she is experiencing.

Mother's Day, and motherhood in general, is sticky. The ideal often appears touched or warped by brokenness and sin, just like the rest of humanity. As Christians, we know that we are all imperfect people – people whom God loves and blesses in our broken world.

Into the sticky mixture of our lives, God breathes a word of goodness and promise. Our gospel lesson appears as Jesus prepares his disciples for his passion and death. In the previous chapter, he foretold Judas' betrayal of him. He points toward Simon Peter's denial of him. We can only imagine the confusion and fear that his closest followers may have felt.

Jesus promised that they would be helped. “[T]he Advocate, the Holy Spirit” would come to be their teacher and encourager. (*Jn 14:26*) They would not be forsaken by Jesus when he leaves.

Like a late-night infomercial: But that's not all! Jesus does not walk away without giving them what their troubled hearts need most. “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you.” (*Jn 14:27*) In that moment, he grants them peace that they could not anticipate – peace that they could not create or find for themselves. They

were humans in crises like we often are: forced to face sin in themselves and in their brothers; thrown into unexpected grief about the coming death of their teacher and Lord. God saw them truly, and did not leave them to be consumed by it all.

The word “peace” could mean so many different things. And it’s easy to say the word, right? We all say it every Sunday, when we share Christ’s peace with one another. What is God’s idea of peace?

Jesus spoke the gift of peace in our gospel, but *Revelation* paints a picture of what Christ’s peace means for human life. The vision shows us how God will transform us and our world with Christ’s peace.

*Revelation* opens for us a window to heaven, ruled by the God’s “shalom” – which means peace with justice. The angel showed the seer “the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb.” (*Rev. 22:1*) The stream waters “the tree of life,” which bears abundant fruit at all times. “[T]he leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.” (*Rev. 22:2*) Sin and brokenness and suffering and death are all gone – they have been transformed in Christ’s peace. There is no more war or violence. No abuse or betrayal. “Nothing accursed shall be found there any more.” (*Rev. 22:3*) The harmony and justice of shalom fills everyone, every relationship, and every nation.

In this place of peace, “his servants will worship [God and the Lamb]; they will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.” (*Rev. 22:3-4*) Seeing faces may not seem like a big deal for us. We look at the eyes of both strangers and loved ones every day. But the Old Testament is clear that humans will not see God’s face. That is one of the separations between the creator and the creation. Moses tried – he specifically asked to see God’s glory. The answer was, “You cannot see my face; for no one shall see me and live.” (*Exod. 33:20*)

When God finishes re-creating everything, Christ’s peace truly takes over our world. The separation that we feel from God will be no more. *Revelation* shows us a picture of close, healthy, loving intimacy. We will see God’s face directly. Each of us will be able to look into God’s eyes – just as only the most intimate relationships do. We may stare like adoring children, or gaze like lovers.

This glimpse of the peace of heaven is a promise for the future, of what will come. It is also a vision of what God brings into our lives now, through Jesus Christ. As disciples, Jesus shares his peace with us. We receive and share it each Sunday, and whenever believers gather to encourage one another. This peace comes amid the imperfection and brokenness in each of us, in our relationships, and in our world. Often the blessing can startle us, when its light appears in dark places. It is

the wonder of: turmoil that calms to quiet; fear embraced with love; stress met with infinite patience; and strength appearing in absolute weakness. The gift of peace is one of the Spirit's ways of bringing surprising life to us now. It births real relationships and fullness of life out of the overwhelming brokenness and death that we experience.

The peace of Jesus Christ is powerful and it's among us on this Mother's Day. May you and your relationships bear his peace to the world. Amen.