

Empire Church of the Brethren

Sunday Service Sermons

14 May 2023

The Feminine Side of God

Have you thought about the feminine side of God?

In my thinking and belief God encompasses both.

Could it be that God divided himself in two parts when he created mankind in his image after his likeness.

He was already plural.

It is written; Let us, it is not written; let me.

Today we are considering the characteristics of God that we describe as feminine.

“Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing.” *Luke 13*

“Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Does she not light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.’ In the same manner, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.” *Luke 15*

What do these two texts have in common?

They both describe the compassion of God in feminine terms.

Has it occurred to you that Jesus understood God in a feminine as well as a masculine dimension?

Most often Jesus taught us that God is Father; a loving, caring, patient Father, who desires good things for his children and longs for them to put the kingdom of God first in their lives.

But Jesus also used, at least twice, feminine analogies to illustrate God’s nature toward his people. Perhaps Jesus took his cue from *Genesis 1:27*.

Or perhaps he simply believed that the marvelous fullness of God’s nature required a variety of human analogies to help us understand God’s greatness, his compassion, his will for the people of earth.

It is well known that Mary, as the virgin mother, provides the image of mothering warmth for those in the Catholic tradition, almost to the point of deification.

But we need not go to extra biblical sources to find the feminine, mothering aspects of God’s nature.

Jesus himself provides them for us in our Scripture reading for today.

God as a mothering hen. *Luke 13:34*.

Jesus knew that his destiny could not be worked out unless he went to Jerusalem.

But he knew that the record for God’s people in Jerusalem was not good.

With just a hint of satire in his voice, he insisted to his disciples that he must go on to Jerusalem, because, “Surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!”

But in spite of Jerusalem’s record with the prophets, Jesus loved that wayward city.

In a voice clouded with deep sorrow and pathos, he cried, “how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing.”

The Jews were a displaced people in Jesus’ time.

They belonged with one another, but conquest and God’s judgment on their sin had left them scattered across the Roman Empire.

Jesus yearned to bring them together in his messiahship.

Jesus knew also that the storm was gathering.

It would not be long until another judgment would fall upon Jerusalem, and in that storm Jerusalem would be lost to the Jews for all the centuries until now.

So Jesus used the feminine image of a mothering hen who protects her scattered chickens.

God as a seeking woman. *Luke 15:8-10*

In the famous trilogy of parables concerning God's nature, Jesus speaks of a woman seeking her lost coin, of a shepherd seeking a lost sheep, and of a father seeking his lost son.

The woman had lost one of her ten coins.

It was a serious loss.

Perhaps it was a treasured coin that had been given to her in her dowry.

Its value was more than what it could be used to buy.

It stood for all the good memories of her life and her hopes for her own children.

Or perhaps it was a coin that represented savings for a treasured purchase for her family.

In any case, the coin was lost, and the woman would not give up until she had found it.

Perhaps the coin represents the children of God, meaning that God does not want to lose even one of his children to the evil one, each child is important.

The woman did not say, "Well, I only lost one; I have nine left."

She was not satisfied until the treasure was complete.

So it is with God.

We may appear to be one of many and not worth very much to some who would set a value on our lives, but to God we are extremely valuable.

We are worthy of the search.

Not one of us can slip through the cracks of life without God's knowledge.

We can be sure that anytime we become lost in sin, God will search for us to bring us back to himself.

Jesus' regard for women.

Jesus' respect for women does not seem so radical today, but in his day Jewish men prayed, "Praise be to God that he has not created me a Gentile. Praise be to God that he has not created me a woman. Praise be to God that he has not created me a slave or an ignorant man."

The Manichaeans, one of the most popular religious groups of Rome, prohibited women from membership.

The place of women, most often in pagan religions, was as temple prostitutes.

But Jesus changed woman's standing.

A woman's place. *Luke 10:38-42*

The Jews believed that a woman was not worthy to handle the Law.

Her place was as a house servant. But in this remarkable incident, Jesus clearly indicated that a woman's place is not only in serving, but in learning.

One of the highest signs of respect that someone can give another is to take his or her mind seriously and attempt to teach truth.

Jesus taught many women, including Mary.

Notice that Mary was not a mother, so he was not teaching her for her children, but for herself.

He taught her for herself.

There is no double standard with Jesus.

A woman's sin. *Luke 7:36-50*

There is not a double standard with Jesus.

He accepted the woman who poured perfume on his feet.

Her repentance and sorrow were great; she wept and poured out an expensive gift.

She was greatly forgiven.

Those who have hit bottom know how to glorify God most fully.

A woman's gift. *Luke 21:1-4*

A poor widow gave two copper coins that far surpassed the rich offerings of those who had more left than they gave.

Jesus praised the woman for her willingness to be generous with what she had.

A woman's distress. *Luke 21:20-24*

In times of warfare, women have suffered particularly brutal treatment.

Our Lord's compassion for women in the days of destruction of Jerusalem serves as a model for all people.

A woman's witness *Luke 23:55-24:11*

Who had the love required to go visit the tomb and bathe the dead body of the Savior with spices and ointment?

Who had the courage to go and see if anything could be done for Jesus with Roman soldiers everywhere around?

Who was the first to say, "Jesus is risen from the dead"?

The disciples thought they were hearing an "idle tale". But that only reveals their reluctance to hear what God had ordained to tell them through women.

It is no wonder Paul could say, "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male or female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus". *Gal. 3:28*

The gospel for women is that God cannot be fully understood without the feminine dimension.

He came to seek and to save that which was lost, both men and women.

God's respect for persons applies equally to male and female.

Because of his great love for us, God, like a mother hen, seeks to draw us near to himself.

He will seek until we are safely under his wing.

All of us!

How wonderful and loving is that!

Praise God for His loving-kindness.

Aint the something?