

Fifth Sunday after Resurrection/Mother's Day Sunday  
 Lectionary Title 23: **Mothering as a Messianic Function**

*Old Testament: 1 Samuel 1:9-20* (NRSV)

<sup>9</sup> After they had eaten and drunk at Shiloh, Hannah rose and presented herself before the LORD.<sup>2</sup> Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat beside the doorpost of the temple of the LORD. <sup>10</sup>She was deeply distressed and prayed to the LORD, and wept bitterly.

<sup>11</sup>She made this vow: 'O LORD of hosts, if only you will look on the misery of your servant, and remember me, and not forget your servant, but will give to your servant a male child, then I will set him before you as a Nazirite until the day of his death. He shall drink neither wine nor intoxicants,<sup>3</sup> and no razor shall touch his head.'<sup>12</sup> As she continued praying before the LORD, Eli observed her mouth.<sup>13</sup>Hannah was praying silently; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard; therefore Eli thought she was drunk. <sup>14</sup>So Eli said to her, 'How long will you make a drunken spectacle of yourself? Put away your wine.'<sup>15</sup>But Hannah answered, 'No, my lord, I am a woman deeply troubled; I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been pouring out my soul before the LORD. <sup>16</sup>Do not regard your servant as a worthless woman, for I have been speaking out of my great anxiety and vexation all this time.'<sup>17</sup>Then Eli answered, 'Go in peace; the God of Israel grant the petition you have made to him.'<sup>18</sup>And she said, 'Let your servant find favour in your sight.' Then the woman went to her quarters,<sup>4</sup> ate and drank with her husband,<sup>5</sup> and her countenance was sad no longer.<sup>6</sup> <sup>19</sup>They rose early in the morning and worshipped before the LORD; then they went back to their house at Ramah. Elkanah knew his wife Hannah, and the LORD remembered her. <sup>20</sup>In due time Hannah conceived and bore a son. She named him Samuel, for she said, 'I have asked him of the LORD.'

*New Testament: Matthew 23:37* (NRSV)

The Lament over Jerusalem

<sup>37</sup> 'Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!

*General Concept: Mothering is a way of witnessing to God.*

*Key Concepts in the Different Age Levels in Sunday School*

N/K/YE: **God is like a loving mother.**

ME/OE: **God cares for and nurtures us like a loving mother.**

Y: **God is known through our caring mothers.**

A: **Mothering is a way of witnessing to God.**

*Exegesis of the Biblical References*

In the biblical drama, women are said to be designed to give birth and those who cannot do so are considered cursed or not blessed by God. To give birth was considered as a sign of God's blessing. According to the story in our text, there was a man from the tribe of Ephraim whose name was Elkanah. He had two wives; Hannah and Peninnah. Peninnah had children but Hannah had no children. Though Hannah had no children her husband loved Hannah more compared to Peninnah.

Every year the family of Elkanah would go to Shiloh to worship and sacrifice to the Lord in accordance with the Mosaic Law. According to their common belief and practice, Peninnah knew that Yahweh was pleased with her and she thanked God for giving her children. After they worshipped and offered their yearly sacrifice, the family of Elkanah would eat together. Peninnah would insult Hannah. The happy family fellowship over food

was affected by the weeping and walk-out of Hannah. Peninnah was also actually in pain because her husband loved Hannah more than her. Elkanah would assure Hannah, "Why do you weep? And why do you not eat? Am I not more to you than ten sons?" Hannah had expressed her bitterness before God at Shiloh to the extent that even Eli the high priest suspected her of being drunk. She then made a bargain with Yahweh, that if Yahweh would give her a son, she will offer him to serve Yahweh all of his life and no razor shall touch his head. Eventually Hannah gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, who later became a prophet and the last judge of Israel's tribal confederacy.

In the Gospel of Matthew, when Jesus was near the City of Jerusalem he lamented the historic and bloody end of prophets in Jerusalem. He used the metaphor of a hen in gathering her chickens under her wings as a kind of protection against any dangerous threat. But as far as Jesus is concerned, Jerusalem has not learned much throughout her historical experience. Jesus expressed his own feelings and concerns as he uses the lesson that can be learned from what the hen regularly does to her chicks. For Jesus, mothering is a kind of sacrifice. A sacrifice that needs compassion and dedication. A sacrifice of even life itself if it is needed for the protection of the beloved. God in Jesus Christ proved His love even in a very critical situation.

Peninnah out of her love for her children and her right in accordance with common belief and practices, confronted and even insulted her rival Hannah before the eyes of her husband. Peninnah may just have been asserting her rights and fighting in behalf of the rights of her own children. The hen too has that readiness to fight in order to protect the brood. It is difficult to witness faithfully to God! There are a lot of challenges that may shake us to the core of our being. But there will always be the need for compassionate and caring love to endure the pain and even to give a life which only a mother can give. Mothering is a metaphor for faithfully bearing witness before our God even in the face of enormous challenges knowing that the God we serve is a God who will also fight for us and care for us in a manner only a mother can truly understand and approximate.

#### *Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users*

Mothering and fathering represent the two-sided nature of caring for a young child. It has been used as a metaphor for God's care. However, it is inevitable that the patriarchal culture of the biblical times has determined the one-sided dominance of the paternal role especially when it is employed in religious language. Actual experience, however, shows that even in patriarchal cultures mothers play a much greater role in the raising of children and even when they are grown up. This is borne out in the stories of Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Jesus, and others.

Recent studies on the changing nature of the family also indicate that mothering and fathering are not necessarily the respective roles of mothers or fathers. Each may be doing both roles together with the other partner. They represent two complementary ways of providing children the full extent of parental care. This has become an accepted reality to progressive couples to the point that gender-based roles are getting diffused and overlapped.

The new consciousness in family relationships has exerted a game-changing impact on theological articulation. But this early shift is fraught with danger owing to the fact that the gender discourse has yet to complete its circle. On the other hand, by its very nature theological articulation is unable to keep up with the pace of cultural developments. But some very preliminary statements can be made.

Mothering is being recognized as a more apt metaphor for the tenderness of God's love and compassion. On the other hand, the severity of God's justice and rule appears more as a function of a fathering figure. And yet, God's forgiving love is shown by the father of the lost son in Jesus' parable. There is also ambivalence in describing the role of the shepherd

who risks danger to find one lost sheep. In other words, there is no hard and fast rule for attributing specific actions of God to either male or female. Although distinct from each other, the mothering and fathering roles complement to offer a fuller view of how God relates to us.

If we take the current progressive concept of the mothering-fathering distinction, Jesus was a male person who demonstrated a stronger mothering than fathering instinct. He was tender and welcoming to the vulnerable and marginalized, like women and children. But at certain moments he was harsh on the scribes and Pharisees and even to his disciples. What is clear is that in the totality of his life and work, he demonstrated God's mothering care underlying the divine-human relationship.

## Nursery/Kindergarten/Younger Elementary Levels

### I. Objectives

At the end of the session and with the consistent example shown by parents and other significant adults, the children will be able to:

1. talk about what mothers do for them;
2. compare how Jesus showed his love for us like what mothers do; and
3. demonstrate how to thank God by following one's mother.

### II. Concept: God is like a loving mother.

**Materials:** *The Holy Bible* (NRSV), song chart, tracing and coloring sheets, crayons, blanket for game

### III. Learning Experiences

#### A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time: Greet the children warmly as they arrive.
2. Opening prayer: "Dear God, we celebrate today Mother's Day and every day we want to celebrate by loving our mothers who love the way you love us. Teach us today to show our love for them so they will always have wonderful days in their lives. Amen."
3. Opening songs: "Alive" and "This Is the Day"

#### B. Getting Ready

Before the lesson, play "Follow the leader." Place a sheet or blanket over your shoulders and around your arms to look like wings (a cape). Tell the children that you are going to pretend to be a mother hen. Spread out your arms and show them your wings. They are going to pretend to be your chicks. They are to follow you around the room and do what you do. When you say, "Cluck, cluck, cluck." They should all come and hide under your wings. Walk around the room acting like a chicken: scratch on the floor with your feet like you are looking for grain, flap your wings up and down while you walk around chairs, pretend like you are trying to fly, etc. then say, "cluck, cluck, cluck" and open your arms for all the children to come to you and give them a great big chicken hug. Have the children sit down. (<http://www.daniellesplace.com>)

#### C. Learning Time

1. Tell the pupils to bring their pictures with their mothers. They can also bring pictures of their pet animals and their young. If possible, have the class watch different animals.
2. As the children present their pictures, let them say something about them. Say: When your mother and father take care of you and treat you tenderly, that is called "mothering".
3. Tell stories about parents and their young.
  - a. Before a person is born, he or she stays inside his or her mother's womb for nine months. After he or she is born, his or her mother takes care of him or her with the help of his or her father. The baby is helpless and cannot live without the help of a parent. The mother usually feeds the baby with her milk. She makes the baby comfortable by bathing and giving comfortable clothes. She talks to the baby. She does this until the child is able to do these for herself or himself.
  - b. Dogs, cats, pigs, and rabbits take care of their babies when they are born. Puppies, kittens, piglets, and bunnies are also helpless after they are born. They cannot see right away. Their mothers feed them with her milk until they are able

to eat solid food. Their mothers also keep them warm. Their fathers help by looking food for their mothers.

3. Say: "Our stories tell about the love of parents for their children. God gave our parents. God made our parents love us because God loves us."

*D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time*

Ask these questions to the learners:

1. Do you believe God loves us? (Yes) Why? (God gave us our parents.)
2. Do you believe your mother and father loves you? (Yes) Why? (Our parents took care of us. Our mothers fed us with her milk. Expect other things parents do for their children.)
3. Do you believe that the way our parents do the mothering role is a way of witnessing to God's love for us?
4. Do you believe that God also loves the rest of creation? (Yes) Why? (God created everything. God takes care of other things God created. God gave us sunlight and rain. God gave us land, mountains, and rivers. God gave us plants and animals.)
5. We say that God loves us when God made everything and gave us everything we need. Can we say that God is like our mother or father who love us and take care of us? (Yes)

*E. Discovering the Biblical Truth*

Ask: "How can we feel God's love through our mothers and fathers?"

*F. Applying the Biblical Truth*

1. Say: "God loves us and the rest of creation. God gave us mothers and fathers who will love us and take care of us. God gave us plants and animals. We shall show our love to everything God created. That way, we can become caring to others."
2. **N/K Creative work.** Prepare dotted images of a mother taking care of a son or a daughter (singing lullaby and putting him or her to sleep, feeding a son or a daughter, taking a son or a daughter to school) .Tell the class to trace and color the image. Help the children to read the label "God is like my mother."
3. **YE:** Ask: "How can we show our love for God when we treat the following?"
  - a. Our parents
  - b. To our pet animals
  - c. To the plants around us
4. After the two activities, discuss the work of the children. Emphasize their parents' role in telling about God's love for us.

*G. Closing Worship*

1. Offering
2. Closing song: "I Have a Joy"
3. Closing prayer: "Dear God, thank you for loving us like our mothers do. Thank you for our mothers and fathers who care for us and protect us from harm. Please take care of our parents always. This is our prayer in Jesus' name. Amen."

## Middle and Older Elementary Levels

### I. Objectives

At the end of the session, the learners are expected to:

1. talk about what parents do for them;
2. compare how Jesus showed his love for us like what mothers do;
3. compare how Jesus showed his love for us like what fathers do; and
4. demonstrate ways on how to thank Jesus through one's relationship with parents.

### II. Concept: God cares and nurtures us like a loving mother.

**Materials:** *The Holy Bible* (NRSV), song chart, activity sheets

### III. Learning Experiences

#### A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time: Smile and greet the children as they come. Check the attendance.
2. Opening prayer: "Dear God, every day we want to celebrate the love of our mothers and fathers who take care of us. We know that they love us the way you love us. Teach us today to show our love to them so will always have wonderful days in their lives. This is our prayer, in Jesus' name. Amen."
3. Opening song: "I Am Yours, O Lord" HFJ # 283

#### B. Getting Ready

Write different names of animals in meta-cards (You may choose anyone of the given animals.). Display on the bulletin board the names of their young. Give the meta-cards and let them pick the names of their young.

| Animals      | Their Young | Animals      | Their Young |
|--------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|
| 1. Hen       | chick       | 13. Goat     | kid         |
| 2. Duck      | duckling    | 14. Rabbit   | kit         |
| 3. Cat       | kitten      | 15. Deer     | fawn        |
| d. Dog       | puppy       | 16. Sheep    | lamb        |
| 5. Frog      | tadpole     | 17. Cow      | calf        |
| 6. Butterfly | caterpillar | 18. Donkey   | foal        |
| 7. Buffalo   | calf        | 19. Horse    | colt        |
| 8. Spider    | spiderling  | 20. Elephant | calf        |
| 9. Pig       | piglet      | 21. Lion     | cub         |
| 10. Owl      | owlet       | 22. Monkey   | infant      |
| 11. Kangaroo | joey        | 23. Tiger    | cub         |
| 12. Giraffe  | calf        | 24. Fish     | fry         |

#### C. Learning Time

1. Say: "Today's session is about the love of God like that of your mothers and even fathers. This love of God can be described like that of the love of a hen to her chicks.
2. Invite the learners to listen to a short story where Jesus cried.

#### Jesus Christ Cries

(Based on Matthew 23:37)

Jesus goes to many places to teach about God's kingdom and God's love. He heals the sick and feeds the hungry. He tells people God does not want them to be lonely and hungry.

One day, Jesus feels angry with the scribes and Pharisees. He does not like their insincerity. Whenever they work they want people to praise them. They teach about loving God and doing good things to people. Yet they do not care about the poor and the sick. So Jesus tells people to do what scribes and Pharisees say but not what

they do. He compares them to tombs which are clean outside and yet dirty in the inside.

He feels so sad that he cries and says, "I am sad! I cannot imagine Jerusalem destroyed because of the wrongdoings of its leaders. I always want to keep people under my care and protection, like a hen who gathers her brood under her wings."

People are startled and not a single word is heard said. Jesus goes away with his disciples following him.

#### *D. Deepening Activity/ Sharing Time*

Ask these questions to the learners:

1. Do you believe God loves us? (Yes) Why? (No) Why not?
2. Do you believe your mother and father loves you? (Yes) Why? (No) Why not?
3. How do your mother and father show their love to you? (They feed us, clothe us, send us to school, nurse us always, discipline us, etc.)
4. Why did Jesus cry based on the story? (He is sad about Jerusalem and the wrongdoings of its leaders.)
5. To what animal is Jesus' love compared? (Hen)
6. How does a hen love her chicks? (She gathers her chicks under her wings to protect them.)
7. When parents love us tenderly, we call that "mothering". When Jesus showed his love to God's people and compared this love with a hen, can we call that mothering, too? (Yes) Why? (No) Why not?
8. When parents do mothering, does that mean they reflect God's love? Why?
9. How do you show your love to your parents who care much about you? (Say thank you to them, obey their instructions, hug and kiss them.)

#### *E. Discovering the Biblical Truth*

Ask: "How does God nurture and care for us like a loving mother?"

#### *F. Applying the Biblical Truth*

1. Facilitate the learners to prepare a short skit depicting how mothers and fathers show their love for their children. Process their presentation. Ask them to explain their feelings and thoughts before, during and after the presentation.
2. Let the learners choose for themselves the best presentation by raising their hands in voting. The group with the majority number of votes will have a chance to present their skit during the worship service next Sunday.

#### *G. Closing Worship*

1. Memory verse: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!" (Matthew 27:37b)
2. Offering
3. Closing song: "I Am Yours, O Lord" HFJ # 283
4. Closing prayer: Each learner says a thank you prayer to Jesus for his love to people. He/she also promises to relate with her/his parents in a loving and caring relationship.

## Youth Level

### I. Objectives

At the end of the session, the learners are expected to:

1. describe how Jesus showed his love for his people when he compared himself to a hen;
2. explain the significance of the mothering function of Jesus;
3. deduce from the Scriptures how Jesus used his mothering-fathering function to do his mission, and
4. list creative ways by which one can show God's love by being caring mothers or fathers to others.

### II. Concept: God is known through our caring mothers.

**Materials:** *The Holy Bible* (NRSV), hymnal, activity sheet, song chart, manila papers and pentel pens.

### III. Learning Experiences

#### A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time
2. Opening prayer: "Dear God, as we study our lesson today, let us be mindful of Jesus who concretely showed God's love to all of us. Teach us today to show our love the way Jesus showed God's love to people, especially the least, the lost, and last. Amen."
3. Opening song: "I Am Yours, O Lord" HFJ # 283

#### B. Getting Ready

Tell the class to recall experiences when they cried over some problems. Let the students share how they felt and the reasons for shedding their tears. Process the answers of the students. Emphasize the role of their mothers and fathers in responding to their needs.

#### C. Learning Time

1. Say: Today's session is about knowing God through our caring mothers. How could that be? How can we know God's love through our mothers?
2. Ask the learners to read silently Matthew 23:37.
3. Let them explain the metaphor of Jesus likened to a hen keeping her chicks under her wings. Allow a few minutes for learners to reflect on the meaning and message of the Bible reading and the meditation.
4. Invite learners to listen attentively to a short reading of the following meditation:
 

Women's experience is intimately related to life's mystery, hope amidst suffering, comfort and assurance amidst perplexities, courage and faith amidst death. When a woman gives birth to a new life she actually and symbolically celebrates life's mystery and nature's way of creating and recreating. For nine months she patiently waits for the coming out of a child like a farmer who waits for a harvest season. As she nurtures the life in her womb, life-giving bonding is reinforced and validated. Her womb serves as the world of a child and indeed the child's protection and sufficient shelter. Bearing a child teaches wisdom that in waiting there develops a sense of cooperative and active participation with nature's rhyme. Anguish and suffering during labor is replaced by joy and celebration when she beholds a newborn baby. Such experience is an indispensable episode in the life of the community. That is why we celebrate with her in this powerful event. (Kalinangan 1994)



5. Discuss the mothering-fathering function of Jesus. Emphasize that this mothering-fathering function reflects His messianic function.

*D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time*

1. Ask these questions to the learners:
  - a. What is meant by the above meditation for you?
  - b. Can you say that Jesus reflects his mothering function when he compared himself to a hen? Why?
  - c. What is the significance of the mothering function of Jesus?
2. Divide learners into four small groups. Each group draws a Bible text and discusses how Jesus used his mothering-fathering function to do his mission. Ask the groups to act out the text and briefly explain.
  - a. John 10:1-30: Jesus as the Good Shepherd
  - b. Matthew 23:1-36: Jesus criticizes the Scribes and Pharisees
  - c. Matthew 14:13-21: Feeding of the Five Thousand
  - d. Luke 15:11-32: The Parable of the Lost Son

*E. Discovering the Biblical Truth*

Ask: "How do you feel when your parents reflect God's love for us?"

*F. Applying the Biblical Truth*

Using the abbreviation JESUS, ask the same groupings to list creative ways by which one can show God's love by being caring mothers or fathers to others. Present a sample. Talk about the work of the class.

**J - ust** in dealing with others

**E - ncouraging** those who lose hope

**S - upportive** -of a good cause

**U - nderstanding** of others' limitations

**S - ympathetic** to others' joys and pains

*G. Closing Worship*

1. Memory verse: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!" (Matthew 27:37b)
2. Offering
3. Closing song: "I Am Yours, O Lord" (HFJ # 283)
3. Closing prayer: Each learner says a thank you prayer to Jesus for his love to people like a hen. He/she promises also to relate with others like a caring mother-father.

## Adult Level

### I. Objectives

At the end of the session, the learners are expected to:

1. describe how God answered Hannah's desire to be a mother
2. explain the metaphor of the hen when Jesus lamented over Jerusalem
3. talk and compare the mothering or fathering ways of Jesus to show God's love for us
4. share one's experience in witnessing to God by performing either mothering or fathering roles to others in need

### II. Concept: Mothering is a way of witnessing to God.

**Materials:** *The Holy Bible* (NRSV), hymnal, activity sheet, song chart, manila papers and pentel pens

### III. Learning Experiences

#### A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time
2. Opening prayer: Dear God, we are parents in one way or the other. We have known your mothering-fathering love in Jesus Christ who gave his life so we may live. We gather today to remember as well the joys and pains of mothering-fathering. Be with us once more in this moment of learning and reflecting. In Christ' name we pray. Amen.
3. Opening song: "I Am Yours, O Lord" HFJ # 283

#### B. Getting Ready

Allow a period for learners to recall fathering-mothering experiences. Ask: "Which mothering or fathering experience do you like best?"

#### C. Learning Time

1. Have the learners read individually the first reading 1 Samuel 1:9-20.
2. Share insights from the Exegesis of the Biblical References.
3. Facilitate the learners in doing the Somebody... Wanted... But... So... activity. Discuss the character, goal, conflict, and resolution with the class as you fill in the SWBS chart on a manila paper.

| SWBS     |           |     |    |
|----------|-----------|-----|----|
| Somebody | Wanted to | But | So |
|          |           |     |    |

4. Read aloud the second reading Matthew 23:37. Point out that Matthew 23:37 tells about Jesus' lamentation of the historic and bloody end of prophets in Jerusalem. He uses the metaphor of a hen in gathering her chickens under her wings as a kind of protection against any dangerous threat. But as far as Jesus is concerned Jerusalem has not learned much throughout her historical experience.

Jesus expresses his own feelings and concerns as he uses the lesson that can be learned from what the hen regularly does to her chicks. For Jesus' mothering is a kind of sacrifice, a sacrifice that needs compassion and dedication and even life itself if it is needed for the protection of the beloved. God in Jesus Christ proved His love even in a very critical situation.

*D. Deepening Activity/ Sharing Time*

Ask these questions to the learners:

1. How did God answer Hannah's desire to be a mother?
2. What conclusion can you draw from God's answer to Hannah's desire to be a mother?
3. What is the meaning of the metaphor of the hen that Jesus used when he lamented over Jerusalem?
4. What is the significance of the mothering function of Jesus?
5. Can you share an experience in witnessing to God by performing either mothering or fathering roles to others in need? Please describe.

*E. Discovering the Biblical Truth*

Ask: "In what way does mothering become a witness to God?"

*F. Applying the Biblical Truth*

1. Talk about and compare the mothering or fathering ways of Jesus to show God's love for us.
2. Ask the learners to share an experience in witnessing to God by performing either mothering or fathering roles to others in need.

*G. Closing Worship*

1. Offering
2. Closing song: "I Am Yours, O Lord" (HFJ # 283)
3. Closing prayer: Ask each learner to say a short prayer of commitment to witness to God's love as they continue to perform mother-fathering roles to their loved ones and neighbors.