

Emmanuel Ev. Lutheran Church—Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod  
Easter 6 / Ascension / Mother's Day  
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Sermon by Pastor Gary A. Pufahl  
**A mother's prayer to the ascended Lord**

This is why, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, <sup>16</sup> I never stop giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. <sup>17</sup> I keep praying that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, will give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in knowing Christ fully. <sup>18</sup> I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know the hope to which he has called you, just how rich his glorious inheritance among the saints is, <sup>19</sup> and just how surpassingly great his power is for us who believe. <sup>20</sup> It is as great as the working of his mighty strength, which God worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, <sup>21</sup> far above all rule, authority, power, and dominion, and above every name that is given, not only in this age but also in the one to come. <sup>22</sup> God also placed all things under his feet and made him head over everything for the church. <sup>23</sup> The church is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

—Ephesians 1:15-23

From the moment a Christian mother hears the news that she is having a child, she starts praying. Moms, you know this. You say a prayer of thanksgiving. You ask the Lord to be with you and the child you are carrying. It is your prayer that the Lord keeps you and your child safe. Once the child is born, the prayers keep coming. You give thanks for the Sacrament of Baptism. You rejoice that God has made your child to be his child. You pray that God will protect your child throughout his or her life.

Moms do a lot in the lives of their children. That is very clear. But they can't do it all. Your child falls off the bike and scrapes the knees, and you know that you can't protect your child from all injury and harm. Your child comes home from school with tears streaming down the face, and you know that you can't stop other kids from hurting your child.

You pray that you have taught them what they need to know. You pray that you have been a good model for them throughout their years of growing up. When they are confronted with temptations, you pray that they will make the God-pleasing choice. But it all is really out of your control. When you hand them the car keys to go out with some friends, you are praying the whole time that the Lord is with them and that they will be sensible as they are driving. But you are not with them to protect them and guide them.

You become older, and it's your prayer that the kids won't forget you. You pray that they will bring the grandchildren by. You pray that the way you raised your children will have a positive influence on the way they raise their children. You pray.

A mother prays, and she knows the one to whom she prays. She prays to the ascended Lord. He sees everything. He knows everything. He has all power and might to do everything. The ascended Lord Jesus is in a position to protect. He is in a place to help. Moms can't do it all, but Jesus can. So you can picture mom in her bedroom silently praying for her children. She can't always be there, but Jesus can. He opens the door to heaven and invites her to come in through her prayers. I don't know exactly what those prayers sound like, but today I would like to place before mothers, and all of us for that matter, a prayer that the apostle Paul prayed on behalf of Christians living in Ephesus. It is my prayer that these words will be a prayer we all pray.

Paul writes, **"I keep praying that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, will give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in knowing Christ fully."** I often times catch myself praying that God would not allow any harm to come to my children. I'm going to guess that is a frequent prayer that moms pray, too. And certainly that is an important prayer to pray. We pray in the Lord's Prayer, **"Deliver us from evil."** We are asking God to keep evil away from us. But I have only a very narrow perspective on life. So do you. We can only see what is happening today. We can't see how things connect. We may not be able to see how a seemingly bad thing in our lives is actually for our eternal good. You see, our perspective is limited. We cannot always see how all things work out for our eternal good. But our ascended Lord can see things differently. He sees things from a position of power and authority. He knows exactly how things will affect other things.

So, Paul doesn't pray that God will take all pain and hardships and difficulties away. He prays that the Ephesians will know Christ fully. His prayer is that the believers will know how he operates and what he does better. It's a great prayer for moms to have, too. Pain is going to come to our children. They will experience the heartache of not being picked for kickball. They will have their hearts broken as a boyfriend or girlfriend dumps them. They may even experience something so severe like an injury or worse.

And no matter what, moms can't stop those things from happening. So what's the prayer that moms say silently in their bedrooms? Might it be: "Lord, please send the Holy Spirit into the life of my children so that they may know you fully."

Now you notice that Paul prays that God would give the Spirit of *wisdom* and *revelation*. The way that God operates in our lives is not natural for us to understand. His ways of doing things are not like our ways of doing things. So we need the Holy Spirit to bring us wisdom and revelation. Quite a few times in the Scriptures, God teaches us that **"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom"** (Proverbs 9:10). As a young child, a person may refrain from doing things because mom or dad is watching them. I'm sure you can relate to the little child who wants to grab that extra cookie. He reaches very slowly, keeping an eye on mom, making sure she isn't watching. And when she looks up at him, he pulls his hand back and smiles. Right? He does that because he has a fear of mom. He's not afraid of her. He knows how much she loves him. But she's watching him. He knows her. He knows that if he grabs that cookie and disobeys her, he may not have cookies for a week. So to keep his sinful nature in check, there is a proper fear instilled in him. But why doesn't mom want him to have another cookie? It's not because she is mean about it. It's not because she's hard-hearted. She doesn't want him to have that extra cookie because she cares about him. She doesn't want him to get a stomach ache or to ruin his appetite for supper.

It's the same for us as God's children. We pray that God would send his Holy Spirit into our lives to give us wisdom. We need to have a proper fear of the Lord. We need to see just how much he hates and despises sin. We pray that the Lord instills that fear of the Lord in our hearts. But we also want to know why he hates sin so much. He knows that it hurts us. He knows how disobedience to him will cause harm to us. And it isn't just a stomach ache from an extra cookie. It can cause eternal harm in our lives. And no parent would want that for their child. So, a mother prays. She prays that God would send the Holy Spirit to bring true wisdom. True wisdom comes from the revelation of God's Word.

But there's more that Paul prays. **"I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know the hope to which he has called you, just how rich his glorious inheritance among the saints is, and just how surpassingly great his power is for us who believe."** For most of us, it happened at a very young age. Our parents brought us to the baptismal font where God the Holy Spirit brought us to faith. He put a trust inside our hearts. He called us to follow him. And when he reveals his truth to us, we can clearly see that this world is not our eternal home. There are a lot of things happening in our world that can cause alarm in our lives. Our children are going to face a barrage of attacks from the culture around us.

It's no wonder why Paul would encourage us to pray that we would see the eternal hope that is ours in heaven. We need God to keep our eyes focused on our heavenly home. The pain, the ridicule, the mockery will not last. As hard as things may get, we keep our eyes on the goal. And moms pray that their children will stay focused on that goal for their whole lives, too. The certain future of heaven also keeps us focused on the riches of our glorious inheritance. Sadly, we know how easy it can be to get so involved in the things of this world that we lose sight of the real treasures of heaven. We can all think of people in our lives who were too quick to chase after the things of this world that they lost the inheritance of heaven. Instant self-gratification is a temptation we all face. We desire heaven on earth. We want pleasure and treasure now.

Moms have those concerns weigh on their hearts for their children. How painful it is to see children chase after the pleasures and treasures of this world at the expense of pushing God out of their lives. When worshiping God and growing in faith and understanding of his Word is replaced with other things, that breaks our hearts. Jesus once warned, **"What good is it for a person to gain the whole world, and yet forfeit his soul?"** So a mother prays. She prays that the ascended Lord would enlighten the eyes of our hearts so that we can see the riches of heaven that are worth waiting for.

Now how do you know that you are going to receive this inheritance? How can you be absolutely certain of future hope of heaven? Paul prays that we would know the incredible power of God and what he is capable of doing. We rely on the Lord. We need to see what he can accomplish. And Paul points us to the ascended Lord Jesus to see the amazing power that he has to accomplish what he has promised. **"[That power] is as great as the working of his mighty strength, which God worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule, authority, power, and dominion, and above every name that is given, not only in this age but also in the one to come."**

Just look at what Christ is able to accomplish. Hey, nobody rises from the dead! We don't have the power to make that happen, as much as we would love to. When your mom grows old and dies and is placed inside a casket, you can't bring her back to life. But God will. He has the power to raise the dead. When the flesh decays and a body returns to dust, God has the power to restore that body as a glorious body. He did it with Jesus. Everybody in Jerusalem knew that Jesus was really dead. These guys were death experts. When the soldiers came to Jesus,

they didn't have to break his legs to quicken the dying process. He was already dead. And so they laid him in the cold, dark grave for three days. But on the third day, he's alive. God has the power to raise the dead.

Some of you moms have placed your child in a grave. It's heart-breaking. But it's not hopeless. In fact, we look at the power of our Lord Jesus Christ who has power even over death. The thing that keeps us going, the thing that gives us hope is our Lord Jesus Christ who rose from the dead.

He's alive. He has promised that he will be with us, and since he is alive he can keep that promise. In fact, Paul reminds us where Jesus is right now. **"[God] seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places."** Jesus did not come to be an earthly king. He didn't come to build elegant buildings made out of crystal and glass. He did not come to establish a kingdom on earth with a huge fortress. He came to build a building of people. He came to bring people to his Father. He came to bring you and a multitude of others to heaven. But even though his kingdom is not of this world, that doesn't mean he isn't ruling in this world. Right now Christ is ruling over everything in this entire world. He is now and he will always be above any person who has a position of power. He is over every president, every king, every soldier, every single ruler that has ever lived. And the really neat part of his ruling is that he is ruling everything for our benefit. **"God also placed all things under his feet and made him head over everything for the church. The church is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way."**

The ascended Lord uses his power for the good of the church, his body. Oh, does he sometimes allow bad things to happen in our lives? Yes. Sometimes. But this is our Savior who says that he will work everything out for the good of his believers, his body. So a mother prays. She prays to her ascended Lord who loves her children more than she does. She prays that her ascended and ruling Lord Jesus will continue to do what is in the best interest of her children, even when it doesn't always look like that is what is happening.

You can picture a mother doing this, can't you? She goes in her room, silently to herself. And perhaps she is saying words like these:

"Lord Jesus, you have made my child your own through the waters of baptism. You have brought her to faith in you as her Savior. You have used me to show her that it is better to love and serve than it is to hate and be served. I pray, dear Jesus, that you would continue to give my child the Spirit of wisdom and revelation. I pray that you will lead her to know you better. Keep her close to you in your Word. Increase her knowledge, faith, and understanding of who you are and what you have done. Open the eyes of her heart so that she knows more clearly the hope that is hers in heaven. Living in this world is so short. Our time goes by in a moment. Help my child to see what you have prepared for eternity. You have given us riches that far exceed anything in this world. I pray that you will help her see your power. That power raised you from the dead. You are now ruling over all things. And you have promised that you use your power and rule for the benefit of your people. Please keep my child close to you. She is a part of your family, your body. Even though you are sufficient and need nothing, you show us that you long for the day when we will be with you in heaven. We long for that, too. Please bring our family safely home. For your name sake. Amen."