

## *She Has Risen*

First Congregational Church Branford

John 14:25-29; May 12, 2019

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Jesus assures the disciples that after he goes, God will send the Holy Spirit to be with them.

<sup>25</sup>”I have said these things to you while I am still with you. <sup>26</sup>But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. <sup>27</sup>Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.

<sup>28</sup>You heard me say to you, ‘I am going away, and I am coming to you.’ If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I. <sup>29</sup>And now I have told you this before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe.

This is the word of God for the people of God.

I keep a mileage notebook in my car because the church pays mileage for trips to the hospital, other visits, clergy meetings and such. A week or so ago I was coming to the last pages of a leftover spiral notebook of Abe’s from probably 8 years ago, and I came upon these two pages: The first one I’ve written at the top of the page, *I will respect my mother*, and underneath it the instructions, *25 times*, which Abe has done here. However, in defiance and laziness, he shortened mother to mom, and I counted yesterday how many - 24. The second sheet says *I will not snap my fingers at my mother (25 times)*, which he shortened to *I won’t snap my fingers at mom*, but he wrote it 25 times. I found this particular punishment very effective, however, in the heat of the moment, I’d forget to use it. I mostly yelled and sent Abe to his room. Sending to their room is good - without electronics these days.

So... this is my first Mother’s Day without a mother on earth. Many of you already know what that feels like. I’ve heard from many of you in the form of cards, emails, texts, in person condolences - you know, where you’d lock into my eye to let me know you were acknowledging the deep sadness in my loss. Thank you. Thank you so, so much.

And, now we've lost a beautiful mother, grandmother, great-grandmother in our Claire Bennitt. So, that smarts, too. Claire was on my Interim Search Committee, so I got to know her pretty well.

I'll be away this Thursday through Sunday for my mom's memorial service, which will be held at an Episcopal church in North Myrtle Beach on Friday at 5:00 pm, after which we'll head over to mother's beloved Sunset Beach to spread her ashes. That was her one wish.

My mom died on April 3. On Easter Sunday I had 3 services. Do you recall what 3 words I repeatedly pronounced that Easter morning?.. *He is Risen...* over and over - *many times*. After the 9:00 service, I greeted people in the narthex, and the Potters were some of the last ones out. Don caught my eye and with soft, bright eyes and an easy smile he said, "*She has Risen.*" Now, he doesn't know this - it all happened in just a few beats in my brain - I thought, oh, wow, look at Don using inclusive language - how sensitive of him to realize what it must be like for me as a feminist clergywoman to have to say *he is risen* over and over, year after year. I just sank into his affirming the feminine face of God, until it dawned on me.... he meant my mom... she has risen... well, I tell you, it caught me by *such* surprise - I caught my breath, and teared up. She'd only died 11 days prior.

God is good, assuring me through the Potters, through you, and others, that the Holy Spirit is here and will comfort me.

Isn't God amazing, aren't people amazing? How they say the right thing to you at just the right time? Maybe God whispered into Don's ear, tell her she has risen....

*Then*, after everyone had left from the 9:00, I went up to the chancel, and extinguished the candles - I promise you I know how to extinguish candles. I then walked down the stairs to say something to someone, after which I turned and they were lit up again! I was like, what... and I heard heaven say, *you can't put out the light that shines in the darkness*. Then, I laughed and wondered if someone had switched them out for those party candles that reignite! What a wonderful trick on Easter. Anyway, it was quite a morning.

Jesus said, "I have said these things to you while I am still with you." To laugh a little, like mother said *these* things while she was still with us - "if you sit too close to the tv you'll go blind; close the door behind you-were you born in a barn?; if you go outside with a wet head, you'll catch a cold; starving kids in Africa would eat what you're about to throw away; if you can't say anything nice... don't say anything at all; what if everyone jumped off a cliff, would you do it, too?; how many times do I have to tell you-don't throw things in the house; don't put that in your mouth-you don't know where it's already been; you can be

anything you want to be...if you just set your mind to it; I don't care what everyone is doing-I care what you are doing; I hope someday you have children just like you!; don't talk with your mouth full; always put on clean underwear in the morning in case you're in an accident; I'm not just talking to hear myself talk; I'm going to give you until the count of three; don't cross your eyes or they'll stay that way."

But, she may have also taught and reminded you to love God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength. Peace I leave with you, my child.

It took awhile for my mother to have that peace - somewhere between the ages of 50 and 60. My mother hadn't been cut out for the traditional mom role. She would've been happier, and the family would've, too, if she had pursued her talents and worked outside of the home right after marriage. But, that wasn't the usual route in the 1950's. She ended up having four children. And, many, many, migraines. But, she had a huge spirit - she introduced me to the church, took me to every movie musical, left biographies and autobiographies from the library on my bed, and oh, how we shared a love of a good thunderstorm, particularly at the beach.

After 65 she learned the value of slowing down - walking on the beach, picking up stones and shells, watching birds, napping, volunteering, entertaining, dancing - even up through this past December at 89. Before her short-term memory loss dementia, she often sent instructive e-mails to all 4 of us, like this one, whose subject heading was "Enjoy": "Darlings - this is one of those 'mother' messages: Please remember to enjoy your time on this earth. It's hard to find good in every moment, but try. I certainly wish I had done more of that years and years ago, and not worried so much. A friend's husband died recently. The memorial service reminded me once again of the shortness of this life and the joy we fail to recognize -- how can we when we are so worried about the cares of everyday life? Try, darlings, try. And me, too. I love you, Mom."

Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.

She says these things while she is still with us.

*"If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to God because God is greater than I."* That was hard for the disciples to hear - and it would be a hard thing to hear from your mother. But, what a great gift to leave behind - to point to something greater than yourself.

May mothers always point to **God** as the sustaining factor in her child's life. May she say, "Don't hold onto me, hold onto God. I'm with you for a short time, imparting what I can, but your Holy Mother/Father God, who knows you even better than I, **will** abide and guide. Keep your hand in Hers."

I'd like to play a song now written by Fred Small called "Everything Possible," sung by The Flirtations...

(lyrics)

We have cleared off the table, the leftovers saved  
Washed the dishes and put them away  
I have told you a story and tucked you in tight  
At the end of your knockabout day  
As the moon sets its sails to carry you to sleep  
over the midnight sea  
I will sing you a song no one sang to me  
May it keep you good company  
You can be anybody that you want to be  
You can love whomever you will  
You can travel any country where your heart leads  
And know I will love you still  
You can live by yourself, you can gather friends around  
You can choose one special one  
And the **only** measure of your words and your deeds  
Will be *the love you leave behind when you're gone*  
Some girls grow up strong and bold  
Some boys are quiet and kind  
Some race on ahead, some follow behind  
Some grow in their own space and time  
Some women love women, and some men love men  
Some raise children, and some never do  
You can dream all the day never reaching the end  
Of everything possible for you.  
Don't be rattled by names, by taunts, by games  
But seek out spirit's truth  
If you give your friends the best part of yourself  
They will give the same back to you  
You can be anybody that you want to be  
You can love whomever you will  
You can travel any county where your heart leads  
And know I will love you still  
You can live by yourself, you can gather friends around  
You can choose one special one

And the **only** measure of your words and your deeds  
Will be *the love you leave behind when you're gone.*  
*the love you leave behind when you're gone....*

Happy Mother's Day.  
Amen.