

God's Gift of our Mothers The Good Stuff!

During this time when we cannot worship with each other together in our church building, we look for other ways to appreciate each other and be together. One idea is to feature stories from different church members, and today Rosse Hemeon has sent us his favorite story about his mother. So we feel like we get to have Rosse here with us and learn a little more about him.

We have been blessed by the ways Rosse Hemeon has shared his gifts with us since coming to GUMC about 5 years ago and becoming a member in 2017. He shares his gifts of organizational and marketing skills, diplomacy, finance, and artistry with us. His background includes being an Eagle Scout, serving on Session of the Presbyterian Church, teaching Sunday School, and serving as Moderator of the United Church of Christ. He has studied world religions at Oxford. He's the proud father of 5 children, and he has 11 grandchildren and 11 great grandchildren! He was married to Shirley, a registered nurse, for 45 years before she died in 1998.

At almost 85, Pastor Dawn Boyd officiated when he married Margaret Regan in the Gavilan Chapel. He'll be 90 in November. Rosse has a secret skill that many don't know he has: he is a wonderful storyteller! He tells about his mother in a story he calls:

A Mother's Love
"To thine own self be true."

I can still remember when the kids were youngsters, and they would make breakfast and bring it to my wife Shirley as she lingered in bed on that special day, once a year. She loved her presents and cards, especially the ones our 5 kids made themselves. They often complained that there should be a "children's day," and Shirley would explain that every day was "children's day."

My own mother was an immigrant. She was born and raised in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, and came down to New York in 1924 to visit her two sisters and her brother. At the time, she was engaged to a chap in Toronto, but never returned to marry him because she fell in love with my dad one night on the Henry Hudson Day Liner coming from Poughkeepsie to New York—so the story goes.

"To thine own self be true." My mother would frequently repeat that marvelous phrase. She was a good woman who cared deeply for my father, sister, and me. I was very fortunate to have loving parents who had great respect for each other.

My mother taught me to respect other people and always tell the truth and to be true to myself. There is one story that I have never shared. I believe this story surely tells of a mother's love. When I was about 3-years-old, my eyes crossed. It might have been caused by a blow to my head when I was standing too close to a girl on a swing. I'll never know. One eye would look straight ahead and the other eye would look at my nose. I was a freak, and this abnormality troubled my mom greatly because the children at school would tease me. Kids can be cruel sometimes.

Since I was growing up in the Great Depression, there wasn't much money, even though my father had a good job during those dreadful years, when most of our nation was out of work. In spite of this, mother was determined to fix my eyes. She took me to numerous eye doctors, but none of them were sure they could straighten my eyes. When I went to visit the doctor's office; I was made to peer into a machine and encouraged to put the parrot in the cage. I was never successful. That [darn] parrot just would not go in that blasted cage! Once, I almost lied so I could stop that insane exercise.

One day in 1937, mom heard about a Dr. Spaith, a renowned eye surgeon, practicing at Wills Eye Hospital in Philadelphia. In those days, it was a forty-minute train ride from Trenton to Philadelphia. After numerous visits to Philadelphia, Dr. Spaith felt confident that he could perform a muscle operation on one eye and straighten them. I believe Dr. Spaith performed the operation one morning in the summer of 1939. He straightened my eyes. My mother's persistent love and devotion for her son made the rest of my life so much easier. My mother sacrificed many material things, so they could afford the operation.

“In you, Lord, I have taken refuge;
let me never be put to shame;
deliver me in your righteousness.”

In the Psalm, David is trying to work through a problem in his life with the Lord's help, a very serious problem with his own son. And so, David invokes and expresses his confidence in the Lord.

God is David's bedrock assurance and confidence. He trusts in the Lord. No one and nothing else – not his military strength or wisdom or anything. The Lord, alone, is his trust. He comes to Him with his problems.

“Turn your ear to me,
come quickly to my rescue;
be my rock of refuge,
a strong fortress to save me...
deliver me, Lord, my faithful God.”

And this is how we ought to pray, too. God is our provider. And yet, we also ask him to provide our daily bread. And so, David asks God to bring him to a place of safety – of which place the Lord is pictured as actually *being*.

Like the Psalmist in today's scripture turns to God when he feels trapped in his time of need, knowing that his God is faithful and unfailing in His Love, so it was that when Rosse was in great need, that God came to his rescue through the efforts and determination of his mother to find that doctor for him. He was delivered from his enemies and saved from teasing and torment of other kids and possible rejections all his life through his mother, a gift from God. God's gift came through her. Don't you find that it is often through the people around us that God gives us the best things in our lives?

A while ago, Rosse's oldest daughter, Kathy, gave him a CD by the popular country singer, Kenny Chesney. The CD is called, “NO SHOES, NO SHIRT, NO PROBLEMS! One of the songs on the CD (written by Craig Wiseman) is called “The Good Stuff.” The song reminded Kathy of her dad's life with her mother.

Kenny explains how the “good stuff” can't be found in a bar, but rather—the good stuff is found in things like a first kiss, eating burnt supper the whole first year you're married and asking for seconds to keep your wife from tearing up, the sight of her holding her baby girls, a son marrying his high school love, the cancer and holding hands when the good Lord calls her home, a new t-shirt saying “I'm a grandpa,” looking into eyes so deep in love, hearing, “I'm sorry” and saying, “I'm sorry too.” The song entreats us to drink up life's unique times—the good stuff!

During his career with General Electric, Rosse was Manager of Nuclear Power Plant Services Marketing, Worldwide.

Rosse says, “When I was traveling, I would frequently set up “premium bars” for our customers in various hotels around the world. We would order Beefeaters Gin and Chivas Regal Scotch—the ‘good stuff.’ But as I get older, I'm finding that my good stuff--like the song says--is no longer in a bottle. It is right here in Village Green.

“The good stuff is growing roses, listening to the sound of rain, sitting in the hot tub with my grandkids, reading a book or eating my sandwich by the fountain with the sun on my back, driving along and seeing the folks smile and wave to me, watching the good people of Village Green walk their dogs in the noon day sun. I guess one of the nicest things happens every evening. I can stand by the west fence and look out across the field and over the hill and watch the sun set. As the earth rolls away from the sun, the spring sky lights up with a show of pinks, oranges, and reds. That’s the good stuff!”

Benediction

Rosse says, “I hope this little story about my mother prompts you to think fondly of the good years you had with your mothers. Mothers are special people.”

As David says in Psalm 31,
“My times are in your hands...
Let your face shine on your servant;
save me in your unfailing love.”

We are so happy that each one of you was with us here today virtually! Our hearts are with you and we love each one of you dearly!