

“My Mother’s Apron”- 1Peter 5:1-7, Ephesians 4:12,13

My mother has been gone now for 23 years. Through most of her adult life she was a housewife. She took care of my father, my siblings, and me. She took care of the house. I don’t ever remember my mother desiring to be anything but a housewife because that is what most women did in my mother’s generation. She was very satisfied and fulfilled as the support for our family.

I don’t remember much of the day to day or even year to year moments of my mother living out her role as a housewife, because unfortunately like many things of life, I took it for granted. I knew when I got home from school each day my mother would be at home perhaps vacuuming, dusting, washing clothes, and fixing dinner. Our home was always clean, warm, and inviting. My mother would always stop what she was doing and sit down with each of us with a snack to see how our day had gone. She was our listening post both in the good times and in those frustrating and challenging times. She was often the go between us and our father. But the one thing I distinctly remember about my mother’s role as housewife and mother was that she always wore an apron. She had more than one apron and every one of her aprons had pockets in which when her grandchildren came to visit, they could find candy somewhere in one of those pockets. From the time, she got up and got dressed in the morning to the time she went to bed, she always had an apron on when she was at home.

I know that my mother wore an apron as a practical article of clothing to keep food from falling on or splashing on to her clothes. She never was as well dressed as June Cleaver in the old television show, “Leave it to Beaver”, complete with high heels and pearls, but my mother always dressed nicely while doing the housework. So she obviously did not want to get her clothes dirty by stray food.

My mother saw her apron as a practical part of her everyday dress, but I now see the apron as having had a much deeper meaning. During my last Sundays with you we are again looking at and singing the hymn, “Walk with Me” as a reminder that during the last three years we have walked together in ministry.

Last week we looked at verse 1 which is the calling of Moses. Moses had a reluctant answer to God's calling. I believe that God has a calling for all of you here at Peace Church that you need to listen to and respond to. This week we look at verse 2 which is Peter's life in the hymn and his initial failure to become a leader for God, but did indeed become just that. He became Peter the rock who went on to strongly lead the early church and in his letters taught the early church and teaches us about servanthood and leadership. Leadership qualities not just for the pastor but for those in lay leadership.

Peter wrote two books found in the New Testament and he wrote these letters to a suffering church scattered all about Asia Minor. He writes to them with the love of a pastor who is caring for his flock as a shepherd does with his sheep and as a mother cares for her children. He offers hope and encouragement by offering practical advice reminding the churches of what salvation is all about, what Christian living is all about, what being good is all about, what suffering is all about, and what Christian leadership is all about. Peter in a sense was wearing the apron of love, care, and concern.

In the first four verses of our lesson from the section on leadership in Chapter 5, Peter outlines that a good Christian leader is to shepherd people. Don't drive people but lead by gentle example. Leading by example means caring for and loving people. As a Christian, I am reminded of the words that Peter wrote in the passage that was read this morning. In this passage Peter is writing to his readers about priorities for being a good Christian leader. A good leader knows how to motivate people to do great things for in this case for God. Peter also goes on to say that a great Christian leader is one who is an eager servant. One who is eager to bring out the best in people. One who is eager to be certain that those they have been entrusted with that their physical and spiritual needs are being met. First, are we people, ourselves who are inspired to work for God in the church and in the world? Are we people who inspire and motivate others to work for God? Do others look up to us and say, "I want to be like them because of their witness and walk with God?" Is Peace Church a church I might visit because the leaders and the people will not only be friendly and caring about me as a person, but also want to give me opportunities and help me to grow in Christ?

Peter goes on in the passage to remind leaders that great leaders happen because they are willing to be humble. Getting back to my mother's apron again, in verse 5 in the Today's English Version of the Bible, the passage goes like this: "Put on the apron of humility to serve one another". To me an apron represents a loving reaching out to make sure that the needs of others are met. The apron represents us seeking first not to receive, but to give. That was my mother's role and she did it well and with great love. The needs of my family were always met with great love and humility by the woman wearing the apron. My mother rarely bought anything for herself, but always made sure that our needs and even some of our wants were met. My father used to have to almost drag her out to shop for herself. In other words, an apron represents servant hood done with humility.

Humble servant hood requires no unique skill or education. Humble servant hood just asks us to reach out and love those that are overlooked. Humble servant hood requires us to have the Spirit of Jesus because Jesus was the greatest model of humble servant hood. As Paul wrote to the church at Philippi, "Jesus humbled himself to the point of death, death on the cross."

Humility is essential for us to live as Christians. Only when we wear the apron of humility can we come to know Christ better and to become more like him. Proverbs says, "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble."

I come this morning to thank you many of you in the church who understand fully what it means to wear the apron of humility. Many of you literally wear the apron when you serve those in need in the food pantry. Many of you wear the apron when you serve in other ways: Trustees, staff parish, teaching, and sharing your faith. Many of you have lived out those prophetic words given by Jesus as Matthew records them, "Whenever you did one of these things to someone overlooked or ignored that was me you were wearing the apron for and you did it for me."

Peace Church more than ever needs strong Christian leadership. Leaders that are committed to the works of Jesus. Leaders that sacrifice time and even resources so that the church can be strong in its witness. I am reminded of the passage from Ephesians 4 that was read that we are being prepared to do works

of service so that the body of Christ-the church can be built up. Paul writes that the church is for the perfecting of the saints for the work of ministry. Then as verse 13 says then there will be unity in faith and everyone will know and understand Christ and be full in Christ. In other words, you the leaders of the church can help everyone to be involved in active ministry and helping them to grow up in Christ.

God will bless the ministry of this church as you all put on the apron of humility, servanthood, and caring. We live in a world today where people need to belong. People want to belong where everyone knows their name. That place can be right here. Make it happen.