

**May 8, 2016**  
**2 Kings 11: 1-3**  
**“The Bible’s Worst Mother”**

On this day we come to honor our moms. And as we do this we recognize that for some of us our moms were just like June Cleaver – they were loving, supportive, always there – they were supermoms. But for some of us our moms were not that. For some of us we come to this day with sadness as we grieve our mom who has passed away, or we grieve with moms who have lost children or who couldn’t have any. What is clear is that there are many situations moms but also dads, brothers and sisters, families of all shapes, sizes, and configurations face.

So, this can be a tricky day to preach because you want to honor where everybody is on their journey. So, we will be doing something different on this Mother’s Day as we talk about the Bible’s worst mom. [Read 2 Kings 11: 1-3]

[Powerpoint slide – Jezebel – horrible and evil queen – killed anyone who got in her way – definition “Shameless or immoral woman” - Athalia – killed all sons and grandchildren to consolidate power – became her mom – ruled as queen united kingdom for 6 years – Next woman would lead united Israel – 1200 years later – Golda Maier]

The good news we take is that no matter how many mistakes we have made as parents. No matter how guilty we may feel in our parenting decisions – we can say – “At least I’m not like Athalia”. So, Athalia becomes without a doubt the Bible’s worst mom.

Well, let’s turn to the Bible’s best mom. There are lots of moms in the Bible – Sarah – Rebekah – Hannah – but by far the one mom, the best mom, who showed what sacrifice, humility, and selflessness looks like was Mary, the mother of Jesus. We see glimpses of Mary through the Gospels – most prominently at Jesus’ birth, of course. And what we see through

Mary is a life ruled and guided by compassion, faith, trust. And at the end of Jesus' life when Mary stood at the cross to watch him die. Her dedication and love for her son is inspirational to all of us.

But as wonderful and dedicated as Mary was - we do have one scripture of Jesus as a young boy. In our Gospel Lesson we read how, when Jesus was 12, his family made the long trip down to Jerusalem from the Galilee region to celebrate Passover. And when the festival was over they started back – only to discover that they were missing someone – Jesus was nowhere to be found.

In my life, this happened once when our family was a little bit smaller. We went on a trip to Wisconsin Dells to a hotel with one of those huge waterparks. Our son Connor was a baby, so Audra was taking care of him and Alyssa was with me in the water-park filled with people in all directions. And so I turned to Alyssa and told her to stay right by me as we made our way to the smaller pools. We made our way from one end to another and she keeping right with me, until I look down and she's nowhere to be seen. All I see is crowds of people. And in that moment you feel what every parent does, you are scared, worried, upset. Well, it turns out that Alyssa just wandered off to another area that was more interesting. She wasn't worried, she wasn't scared, she wasn't upset because in her mind she wasn't lost – she had a purpose.

An interesting side note is that I never told Audra this happened until I preached about it in a sermon at my first appointment – that made for an interesting lunch.

Well, just like Alyssa – Jesus wasn't lost either – he had a purpose to. It took three days but his parents found him in the temple teaching and amazing the teachers of the Law with his knowledge.

And so the point is – even for Mary & Joseph, parents of our savior, there are no perfect moms and dads. If you measure yourself against perfection you will always fall short - every time. So there are no perfect parents or grandparents or families. [Show video – favorite video watch every year to remind myself of this]

So, there is no perfect families but at least we can say – “We are not as bad as Athalia”. No matter how much we screw up at least we are not that bad. And so on this day as we focus on our families we recognize that we are not perfect, our families are not perfect – and so if today we are holding onto any bitterness or hurts with our moms, our dads, our brothers or sisters or even ourselves - then we need to forgive – And forgiveness is if we imagine we are out hiking with a back pack and as we walk we pick up various stones – little ones, big ones, light ones, really heavy ones – so that carrying the back pack is almost impossible because we are weighed down so much. To forgive is drop the back pack filled with all the stone of our hurts and regret and pain – to let it go and put in the stronger hands of God. Is this easy? No. But is it necessary? Definitely. And what better day than today when we are focused on families to begin the process of healing any old wounds and putting things to rest and letting God heal and transform our hearts and lives.

But our story isn't finished quite yet. [Show slide] In this family – Athalia's daughter, Jehoshaba, breaks the chain of her mother and grandmother's violence - she knew this was wrong and so she saved her 1 year old nephew, Joash. At great risk - for if Athalia had found out she wouldn't have had any qualms about killing her daughter.

And so Jehoshaba, who we know is married but doesn't have any kids risks her own life to become a mother to Joash. And for six years she lives with this secret –every day in fear she

would be found out – and possibly lose her life – she raises and nurtures and loves this little boy. And when he is seven – they take him to the temple and announce that he is the heir to the throne, he’s anointed with oil and they put the crown on him and with his adopted mom and dad – his uncle and aunt watching he becomes king. And the people who have suffered under Athalia brutal and bloody reign are so thrilled that she is arrested and overthrown.

And so here’s the point - there are people who have been in our lives just like Jehoshaba – maybe they were a teacher in school, a camp counselor, a friend, an aunt – somebody who took an interest in us, cared about us, poured themselves into our lives. And not only do we have a Jehoshaba in our lives we are called to be Jehoshaba to others. For, there is child, teenager, college student, younger parent, somebody who needs us to pour our lives and invest in them And this doesn’t have to be in any dramatic way. In 2010, Bea Salazar had undergone back surgery and was on disability. She was depressed and just trying to get through each day. One afternoon, while putting out the trash, she noticed a little boy digging in a dumpster for food. She took him inside, made him a peanut-butter-and-jelly sandwich, and sent him home. Fifteen minutes later, there was a knock at her door. She opened it to find six more kids standing there. Is it true that you're giving away peanut-butter-and-jelly sandwiches? one of them asked.

The next day, more children showed up, and more arrived the day after that. When school began again, kids came and asked for help with homework. Volunteers and supplies from local churches and schools poured in. Her landlord donated an apartment, and soon she had 100 children coming to visit each day. Ten years later, five of the kids have begun community college.

She later reflected that “Those kids pulled me out of myself. There was a point when I stopped thinking about my own pain and started concentrating on somebody else's. It's true that when you help others, you help yourself. Would have thought that making one peanut-butter-and-jelly sandwich would grow into something that would affect so many lives - especially mine.”

Sometimes making a sandwich and feeding a hungry child is more than it seems. It is bringing about the kingdom of God. It is feeding and noticing Jesus in our midst. It is about noticing and pouring ourselves out into another person's life. Because there is no greater legacy we can leave this world [because our stuff will not last- it is our relationships that last] than investing our time and love and attention with another person. And so the question we need to ask this morning is are we paying attention? Whose Jehoshaba are you? And who is our Jehoshaba?

And so as we leave here today to honor our mothers in a variety of ways, to think about our families, I want us to think about family in a larger way. That our family is not just who shares our name or our blood or is related to us. That we are called to a larger vision. So, I want to urge us all to think about the people who may need a father or mother figure, a big brother or sister in their life. As tutors, coaches, someone to lean on and turn to. I want to urge you to pray for families today that are broken by violence and abuse, by divorce and neglect. Pray for a way that we can reach out as a community. I want to urge us to reach out to those who may be lonely today, those who live alone after losing a spouse, who are sick, who are lost and in need. Pick up the phone, walk across the street, knock on the door. To be a family is messy at times, to reach out is messy at times, to live out our faith is messy at times. But we are called to a

mission to widen the circle and claim one another. [can't tell you how many times someone shared with me that they could have never made it through – death of loved one, illness, hard time without church family – we need to be that for the world around us for those we have not met but God has put in our path]. I hope today you will think about who is your Jehoshabah and how are a Jehoshabah to someone else.

And so, as we wrap up - the story of Joash has a happy ending. He was one of the most faithful kings who reigned for 40 years returning Judah to the way of God. And he could have grown up to become like Jezebel or his mother, Athlaliah – but he didn't – he broke the chain – he could have grown up angry and bitter at God – mother killed – father died when he was baby – siblings all killed – he could be self-absorbed and selfish – but he wasn't - How did this happen? It was Jehoshabah. It was her faithful, prayer filled teaching and modeling that shaped and guided his life.

On this day we recognize that being a mom, being a dad, being there for someone else is hard. And that's why we need grace. That's why we need to remember and be reminded of our need and our call to be the family of God – to love and nurture other, to practice forgiveness, to invest in another as we respect and honor and help those put in our path with their burdens. For when we do this – when we walk humbly with others and worship with others as Christ did – then we are the family of God for the world around us to see and experience through us.

For who is my mother? who is my brother? but all those who gather around Jesus. Spirit blown people, born from the Gospel sitting at the table around Jesus Christ. Differently abled, differently labeled widen the circle round Jesus Christ. We are one in Christ. We are the family of God. Embrace your family, love your family, and God will take care of all the rest. Amen