

**PARK HILL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
MOTHER'S DAY
REV. JOHN L. THOMPSON
"LOVING DEEPLY"
May 8, 2011
1 Peter 1:17-23
ALL SERVICES**

It isn't easy being a Mom. Mary Jane Kurtz, a single mom with four children, says that when she was young, it was difficult to get them all ready for church on Sunday. One particular Sunday morning as the children started to complain and squabble, she stomped from one room to the other, saying out loud why it was important they go to church as a family and have a good attitude. Suddenly, she noticed all four children huddled together and laughing.

"What's so funny?" Mary Jane asked.

"Mom," they said, **"every time you slam down your foot, smoke comes out. It must be the wrath of God!"**

In reality, it was the powder Mary Jane had sprinkled in her shoes. But it worked. She says they made it to church on time that morning and practically every Sunday thereafter. (1)

This is not a day to take Moms for granted. Therefore, since this is Mother's Day, I want to draw your attention to our lesson from the Epistle, particularly the twenty-second verse, where we read these words, ***"Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart."*** What a perfect text for a day when we honor our Moms. ***"Love one another deeply, from the heart."***

It is worth noting that these words are directed at the community of faith, not at the secular community. Listen to what the writer says: ***"Since you call on a***

Father who judges each man's work impartially . . .” And later he says, “For you know that it was not with perishable things . . . you were redeemed . . . but with the precious blood of Christ . . .” And finally there are these words: “Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart. For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.”

These are not words that the secular world would understand. These are words written for the community of faith. It is the body of Christ to whom he is saying, *“Love one another deeply, from the heart.”*

Love is the glorious burden of the Christian.

As Christians, we disagree about all kinds of things. We disagree on social issues, for example. Some Christians are teetotalers when it comes to alcoholic beverages; others see no problem with drinking in moderation. We argue over how people are to be baptized and whether Christ is present in the Eucharist. Christians subscribe to both liberal and conservative political philosophies. We have all kinds of differing interpretations of Scripture. But the one thing that defines us as Christians is love--deep, persistent, sacrificial love. We are a people who claim that God is love and we are called to model that love in the world.

This is not to say that love does not exist in the secular world. It does.

Larry Doby, from South Carolina, was the first African American baseball player in the American League. He followed Jackie Robinson by only 11 weeks. Doby played for the Cleveland Indians in the nineteen forties and fifties.

In his rookie season, he was reputed to be a good player, and an excellent hitter. He came to bat in his first game, and the fans waited to see what he could do. It was a disaster. He swung at the first three pitches and missed them all by a least a foot. He struck out. The fans **“booed”** him off the field.

Larry Doby stared at the ground as he walked back to the dugout. He went to the end of the bench, sat down, and put his head in his hands. The next batter was

second baseman Joe Gordon, an All Star hitter, who had always hit this particular pitcher well. Everyone knew he could not only hit the ball, he could put it out of the park. Joe Gordon stepped up to the plate, swung at the first three pitches and missed each pitch by at least a foot. The fans could not believe it. A huge silence fell over the crowd.

Joe Gordon stared at the ground as he walked back to the dugout. He went to the end of the bench, sat down by Larry Doby, and put his head in his hands.

That is the stuff of which baseball legends are made. Even today people wonder, did he strike out on purpose? Of course, nobody knows for sure, except Joe Gordon. But, here is what is interesting: It is reported that from that day on, Larry Doby never went on the baseball field but that he did not reach down and pick up the glove of his teammate, Joe Gordon, and hand it to him.

Larry Doby was the driving force behind the only Cleveland World Series Championship in the last half century. He also led the heroic drive to the pennant that year. In a race that came down to a playoff with the other Boston team, the Red Sox, Doby paced the team with a .396 batting average over the last 20 crucial games. His season average was .301. All of this resulted from love. We see love lived out in many areas of our secular world.

A man tells a delightful story about an occasion when his cell phone quit working. This occurred just as he was trying to let his wife know that he was caught in a freeway gridlock and would be late for their anniversary dinner. He wrote a message on his laptop asking other motorists to call her. He printed it on a portable ink-jet that he had in the car and taped it to his rear windshield.

When he finally arrived home, his wife gave him the longest kiss ever. **“I really think you love me,”** she said. **“At least 70 people called and told me so.”**

We see love lived out in many areas of our secular world. The difference is that for the world, love is the exception, not the rule.

Diane Carman wrote a column in the Denver Post about an 85-year-old woman, Ellie Lindecrantz, who was flying to Florida to stay there for a few months. She

was to be met in Florida by her husband, who had driven the family car there. After arriving at DIA, 85-year-old Ellie had asked for a wheelchair to take her to the gate. She was waiting under the departure/arrival screens. Suddenly, she started to feel chest pains. She is quoted as saying, **“I hurt a lot. I knew I needed help.”** A young man stopped to look at the screens above her. She told the man she had severe chest pains and really needed some help. He said, **“I hope you feel better,”** and walked away.

She called to another person nearby, asking for help. She just needed to get to the airport’s urgent care facility. The woman kept walking.

By this time, Ellie had taken two nitroglycerin tablets. The wheelchair still hadn’t arrived. She took a few steps toward a uniformed woman monitoring lines at the ticket counter, and said she really needed someone to help her. The woman looked at her ticket and said, **“You should ask American Airlines to help you.”** The American Airlines counter was nowhere in sight.

Ellie sat down, took another nitro. In severe pain, she called her daughter, Greta, on her cell phone. Greta was in her car in Golden, Colorado but called 9-1-1 immediately. The dispatcher there patched it through to Denver, which transferred her to the Denver International Airport dispatch. Greta relayed all the information about her mother, and the man on the phone said, “We haven’t had any emergency calls.”

“This is an emergency call,” Greta said. **“My mother needs help.”**

“What do you want me to do about it?” said the man at DIA.

Finally, after four nitro tablets, and after almost 30 minutes had passed, the wheelchair attendant arrived. Ellie told him she needed to go to the medical part of the airport right away. But the attendant didn’t understand English. He could tell that something was wrong, though, so he took her to a friend, another airport worker, who translated for them. As soon as he figured out what was wrong, the attendant sped her through the crowds to the infirmary, where Ellie was stabilized and taken to the hospital by ambulance. Ellie said later from her bed at Exempla St. Joseph Hospital, **“It was not a good experience.”** Of course, the worst part for

Ellie was a sense of abandonment.

For those of us in the church, love is not the exception, but the rule. Jesus says in **John 13:35**, ***“By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”*** Jesus said we are to even love people who are mean to us. That means loving people who offend us, and even those who bully us.

My first week here at Park Hill I went to visit Don Craig in the hospital. That’s where I introduced myself as his new pastor. From that moment till now, I have never felt more love from two people than I did from Don and Lois Craig.

As another expression of love let me read to you a card I just received: **“Dear Pastor John, We appreciate so much the wisdom of your sermons, the kindness of your care for your flock, and the light that shines in all you do. Easter blessings!”** Signed: SPRC.

What a blessings on this Mother’s Day!

For Christians, love is the rule. There are no exceptions. Jesus says in **John 15:12**, ***“My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.”***

Today is Mother's Day. Have you told your mother that you love her today? I hope so. A mother's love is a lot like Jesus’ love. Jesus loved people with His words and with His actions. He told people that He loved them, and He also did loving things for them. He went about healing people and forgiving their sins. He treated people with respect and kindness, just like mothers do.

On this Mother’s Day, I would love to be your pastor. I would love for this to be your church.