

Mother's Day is a day when we think about our mothers, and, as our liturgy said "those who mother us". As we matured and moved out our mothers called us on the phone, wrote cards and letters, and they most likely expressed a longing to see us; something along the lines of, "I Miss You So Much It Hurts."

Today I think about mothers (and fathers) who have lost sons and daughters prematurely; by accidents, disease, or wars. There are a multitude of aching hearts all over this world. Their voices echo the sentiment, "I Miss You So Much It Hurts."

And I think about all of the would-be (wanted-to-be) mothers, who held dreams and said prayers for children that never came. Their voices also cry out "I Miss You So Much It Hurts."

And then there's you and me, many of us having lost our mothers and the women who cared and loved us deeply. Our hearts ache too. We miss them So Much It Hurts!"

When we're sad, grieving the loss of someone we loved, someone who loved us -- we often fail to hear God speaking to us. God's voice seems silent; we push aside God in our grief while struggling against the other voices clamoring for our attention. Even then, we might hear our own voice crying out, "O God, I miss you so much it hurts!"

During a normal day we are bombarded by voices -- but the one, soothing voice, the one voice of encouragement that I want to hear today is my mother's voice. Forgive me but I want to shut out the other voices, especially the politicians, newsmakers, and advertisers, even God!

If I'm honest though, I want to hear myself. I believe we want to hear our own voices. **We want others to hear us! -- They want us to hear them!**

When someone doesn't hear what you're saying, it can be frustrating, maddening -- certainly not affirming. We forget how easily we lose interest in someone's story and don't listen. An opportunity to show our love and affirmation for them goes awry.

Being "unheard" is painful. Being unheard makes us sad. The one person who listened to our stories when we were young; the one who heard our laughter and our cries; the one who heard the first words we ever read -- was our mother. Maybe it was a favorite aunt or grandmother. That's why, when they're gone we miss them so much it hurts.

During the past couple of weeks, we have been using the Book of Confessions to highlight the scripture and proclamation of God's Word. Today, I will introduce The Theological Declaration of Barmen: a confession from the era of the Second World War. It was written in Germany.

As Hitler and the Nazi's ascended to power in the early 1930's, they wanted their voices heard. The National Socialists imposed strict laws and intervened in the affairs of the Christian churches. For Christians in Germany they wanted God's Word to be heard. The Nazi's and the German Christian churches clashed.

The worst law was known as the Aryan Paragraph, which called for the exclusion from the church of all Christians with Jewish ancestry. Thus, race became criteria for church membership. Aren't we descendants of Jesus, a Jewish carpenter?

The Nazi's also mandated that The State was the head of the Church in Germany. In essence, *der Fuhrer* (Hitler), not Jesus Christ, became the head of the church.

Thousands of German pastors opposed this at the risk of their own lives – their voices cried out -- **they missed Jesus Christ so much it hurt**. They missed the church they knew so well, “now not protected by the State, but under the influence of the Nazi State, and not God.” The situation was intolerable for the German Christian leaders and pastors.

All these years later it still seems unbelievable to us today, yet we have ISIS wanting to destroy Christians and Christian places of worship.

The pastoral resistance in Germany did not last long. Their leader was imprisoned. By May of 1934, they renewed their defense of the faith by calling for

a “free and confessing” church that would unite the Christian churches in Germany by what they believed.

139 delegates met in Barmen, 82 years ago. They confessed that their purpose in uniting the German churches was to be in obedience to the Word of God by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The first affirmation by the confessing church in The Declaration of Barmen is this, “Jesus Christ, as he is attested for us in Holy Scripture, is the one Word of God which we have to hear and which we have to trust and obey in life and in death” (Barmen 8.11).

The confession of Jesus Christ as Lord and the one Word of God (pause) **led to the rejection of the false doctrine that there are “still other events and powers, figures and truths” that qualify as God’s revelation other than the one Word, Jesus Christ.** In other words, Jesus Christ was head of the Church, not any state or anyone representing the State.

Do you hear the voices crowding out Jesus in this false doctrine of the Nazi’s and how the same happens in our busy lives today? Barmen does not deny that Christians can, do, and indeed must listen to the many words spoken in their surrounding culture. **What Barmen does deny**, however, is that any of these other words can in themselves become the source of gospel proclamation. We preach only Christ, Christ alone, Christ crucified!

What I hear from this confession is, “Jesus, we miss you so much it hurts. We will take a stand, no matter the cost and defend our faith. We will ensure God’s voice is heard and never silenced.”

In the passage from Isaiah and from the confession we hear how God includes us in his plans; how God redeems us; how God created us for his glory; how God made us precious in his sight and loves us and when Jesus Christ is taken out of the church, when people abandon Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, how much it hurts!

Isaiah 43:1 -- “But now, this is what the Lord says...” 400 times in the O.T. we hear these words from God. God is always speaking to us.

“I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior” (Isa. 43:3). Do you hear Jesus’ voice in these prophetic words from our passage? God is clearly saying, I am giving you a savior so, “Fear not, for I have *redeemed* you; I have *called* you by name; you are mine” (Isa. 43.1).

God **redeemed** you – God saves us through the life and resurrection of Jesus Christ; our sins are forgiven – a new life, a transformed life awaits believers.

God says... “I have **called** you by name – you are mine.” God’s imprint on our lives is woven into the very fiber of our being. Are we listening to God? Will we continue to grow and be formed by God? When we listen to God’s call on our

life, our precious life, we begin to feel honored by God and loved by God. **Our lives are not our own – we belong to God.**

On this Mother's Day I'm reminded of a mother's love; a soothing voice, a warm embrace, busy hands, and smiling eyes. A mother's love for a child is, "you are precious in my sight and honored and I love you." God's love for us is the same. We are as much God's child as we are our own mother and father's child. Today's passage is about divine love. And for many of us, our mother's love was nothing short of divine.

I believe that through our faith we recognize the presence of the God who wills only to love and to be loved in return. When we wander away from God's path, God cries after us, "I Miss You So Much It Hurts." This is God's lament and it acknowledges the pain of separation and loss, but it also entails a complete embrace of love. God loves you! Amen.