

Abide With Me

May 10, 2026

There's an old joke that says, "When your child asks what it's like to be a parent, wake them up at 2 a.m. and tell them your sock came off."

And honestly? That may be one of the most accurate descriptions of parenting ever written. Because parenting is often made up of a thousand tiny acts of attention no one notices.

- The lost sock.
- The forgotten lunch.
- The nightmare at 3 a.m.
- The text that says, "Did you make it home okay?"
- The invisible labor of worrying and loving and carrying people in your heart.

And before we go any further today, I want to say clearly: this sermon is not only for mothers. Because Mother's Day lands differently depending on who you are and what you carry.

- Some of you are mothers.
- Some wanted to be and never could.
- Some are relieved you never became parents.
- Some are grieving mothers.
- Some are grieving children.
- Some had wonderful mothers.
- Some survived mothers who wounded them deeply.
- Some were raised by grandmothers, foster parents, aunties, neighbors, teachers, older siblings, or chosen family.
- Some of the people who mothered you were not women at all.

So in today's sermon, I will not ask you to reveal publicly your relationship with your mother. I will not ask for a show of hands to gauge who has a blissful relationship with their mother and who has a "complicated" relationship.

I will talk about orphans and abiding.

Because at the center of today's Gospel is this astonishing promise from Jesus: "I will not leave you orphaned." Maybe that promise matters because so many of us know what it feels like to be emotionally orphaned sometimes. Not abandoned necessarily. But untethered. Lonely. Unprotected. Unseen.

Anne Lamott once described certain kinds of grief as "sheet metal loneliness." That hard, cold, echoing kind of loneliness that rattles inside you. She posts a piece about Mother's Day every year with her usual holy honesty. In it, she talks about the complicated truth that motherhood is not automatically sacred or fulfilling or healing. She names the grief sometimes carried by non-mothers, grieving mothers, daughters of dead mothers, estranged children, exhausted caregivers. She reminds us that motherhood is not a magical club of morally superior people.

The first time I read it, I said, "Thank God somebody said it out loud." Because churches have not always handled this day gracefully. Too often churches have treated Mother's Day like a

combination of a Hallmark commercial and the Olympics of feminine virtues (whatever those are).

And meanwhile people sit in pews carrying miscarriages. Infertility. Estrangement. Regret. Abuse. Fresh grief. Complicated memories. Or simply the ache of being unseen in communities that assume everybody traveled the same road.

But Jesus does not say: “Blessed are those who had perfect mothers.” Jesus says: “I will not leave you orphaned.” That is a promise wide enough for everybody.

In the passage we read today from John’s Gospel, Jesus is preparing his friends for absence. He knows they are terrified. He knows they can already feel the ground shifting beneath them. And his response is, “You know this love already. You have lived inside it. And even when I am gone, you will not be abandoned.”

The word Jesus uses here, “abide,” is one of the most tender words in scripture. Abide means: Stay. Remain. Dwell. Make a home.

“I abide in God. God abides in me. I will abide in you.”

This is not transactional love. This is not: “I’ll love you if you get your life together.” This is not: “I’ll stay as long as you perform correctly.” This is not: “I’ll remain if you never disappoint me.”

This is abiding love. Steady love. Persistent love. Love that stays in the room.

And maybe that’s what healthy mothering looks like at its best. Not perfection. Not martyrdom. Not Pinterest-worthy birthday parties.

Just presence. Abiding. The kind of love that says: “I’m here.” “You matter.” “You do not face this alone.”

Dr. Danielle Buhuro, a hospital chaplain, wrote these “five texts to send someone who is grieving on Mother’s Day,” which I consider holy theology (and truthfully, these are great texts to send grieving people period).

1. The “no need to respond” text – It’s common for grievors to distance themselves from technology on difficult days. Send a message with no pressure to reply, such as, “Hi. No need to respond. Just sending you love on Mother’s Day and holding you in my heart.”
2. The “story time” text – Many grieving people love hearing stories about their person who died. Share a memory of your friend’s beloved departed to brighten their day, such as, “Hi. I was laughing this morning about the time your mom and I got to see the movie “9 to 5” together back in the ‘80s. She loved Lily Tomlin! You’re both on my mind today.”
3. The “say their name” text – It’s normal for your friend to miss hearing their person’s name on a regular basis. Use it in a text to let them know you remember them, such as, “Hi. No need to respond, just wanted you to know that I’m thinking of you and Marguerite today.”
4. The “meaningful gesture” text – If you have the time, doing something small like lighting a candle or picking a flower for your friend’s person can help them feel acknowledged. You might send a text that reads, “Hi. I placed a stone for your mom in my garden this

morning. It's deep gray, like that sweater she always wore. Remembering you and holding you both in prayer today."

5. The "I didn't know her" text – Even if you didn't know your friend's mom or child personally, you can acknowledge their impact on your friend's life in your message, "Hi. I never got to meet your son in life, but I know he is a big part of you. Honoring his presence in your life today."

None of those texts fix grief. None explain suffering. None tie pain up with a neat theological bow.

They simply refuse abandonment. And that matters because grief so often feels like being orphaned. When someone dies, the world keeps moving with shocking indifference. Emails still arrive. Bills still come. People still ask what's for dinner.

Meanwhile part of your world has vanished. That's why one of the holiest things we can do is simply say: "I remember." "I see you." "You are not alone." That is resurrection work.

You know, our reading from Acts today is fascinating because Paul stands in Athens surrounded by people searching for God everywhere. There are altars to every imaginable deity, including one "to an unknown god." And Paul says: "The God you are searching for is actually already near you."

"In God we live and move and have our being." Not: "We occasionally visit God." Not: "We earn access to God."

"In God we live and move and have our being." God is not distant. God is not withholding. God is not playing hide-and-seek with humanity. God is already here. Abiding. Closer than breath. Closer than fear. Closer than grief.

It's gloriously sacred that sometimes, the people who reveal that most clearly are the ones who practice ordinary, stubborn forms of care. The aunt who keeps checking in. The friend who remembers anniversaries of loss. The neighbor who drops soup on the porch. The teacher who notices a hurting child. The sponsor who answers the midnight phone call. The gay uncle who becomes chosen family. The church member who sits quietly beside someone in hospice.

The truth is: none of us survive alone. We are loved into being by communities of care. And the church, at its best, is one of those communities. Not because we are perfect. But because we practice abiding. We stay. We remember each other. We carry one another. We become evidence that nobody is disposable.

Which is actually one of the deepest expressions of Easter. Resurrection is not just life after death someday. Resurrection is God's stubborn refusal to let abandonment have the final word. "I will not leave you orphaned." Not in grief. Not in failure. Not in loneliness. Not in fear. Not even in death.

And maybe some of us need to hear that very personally today. Maybe you came here carrying sheet metal loneliness. Maybe today hurts more than you expected. Maybe your mother is gone. Maybe your child is gone. Maybe your family story is complicated beyond words. Maybe you have spent years feeling like you were somehow outside the circle.

Hear the Gospel again: You are not abandoned. You are not forgotten. You are not spiritually orphaned. The love at the center of the universe abides with you and will forever more.

So then, our Easter charge is to become people who help others feel less orphaned too. Sometimes through grand acts of justice. But more often through casseroles. Sometimes through protests. But, friends, sometimes the way we get to help others feel less orphaned is through therapy. Sometimes we abide by sitting quietly beside someone in pain. And sometimes it's through a text message that says, "No need to respond. Just holding you in love today."

Honestly, that is one of the holiest things we can offer each other. A little proof that love remains. A little proof that somebody stayed. A little proof that resurrection is already happening among us. So, no matter your relationship with mothering, the Gospel today is love abides.

Blessed Mother's Day, friends. Alleluia and Amen.

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