PREACHING & TEACHING

Mother's Day Sermon

A Mother's Day sermon framework written for the hardest pastoral Sunday in the calendar: a room containing women who wanted children and do not have them, people who have buried a mother, and people whose mother was not safe. Honours mothers without costing those people the service.

18 min preached · 5 segments

Five movements, eighteen minutes, and the acknowledgement written out in full because it is the part preachers most often fumble.

BEFORE YOU RECORD

- This is the Sunday people stay home from. Say something in the first three minutes that makes it safe to have come, and mean it.
- If you hand out flowers to mothers, hand them to everyone or to nobody. A woman who has been through years of fertility treatment counting the row as the flowers pass is a real thing that happens in real churches.
- Do not preach Proverbs 31 as a job description. It is an acrostic poem, and preaching it as a standard has done a remarkable amount of quiet damage.

01. The acknowledgement, first

3 min

[before anything else - this is the movement that matters most]

Before we start, I want to say something to some of you. This is a difficult morning to be in church.

Some of you wanted to be mothers and are not. Some of you have buried a child, or a mother, this year or thirty years ago. Some of you are estranged from a mother who is still alive. And some of you had a mother who was not safe, and have spent this week bracing for a service that tells you to honour her.

You are not on the edge of this service. If today is hard, you can sit and say nothing and that is a perfectly good way to be here.

[pause - then move on without dwelling, which would be its own kind of pressure]

02. The text

3 min

[1 Samuel 1, Ruth, or Isaiah 66:13 - avoid Proverbs 31]

[read 1 Samuel 1:1-20, or Isaiah 66:12-13]

Hannah is a strong choice because the passage is about wanting a child and not having one, prayed in a temple by a woman a priest assumes is drunk. It honours mothers without excluding the people in the room who are not.

03. The turn

7 min

[mothering as an act, not a status]

Scripture treats mothering far more often as something done than something someone is. It is done by aunts, by neighbours, by older women in a congregation, by men, and by God, who is repeatedly described in maternal terms that most sermons quietly skip.

[your material, 500 words - and name real people in your congregation who have mothered others, with permission]

04. Honour, properly

3 min

[do not skip the honouring - just do it without a standard attached]

Then honour mothers plainly and specifically, without turning it into a list of virtues that half the room fails. The work is unglamorous, largely unwitnessed, and mostly done while tired.

05. The close

2 min

[one sentence back to the people you named at the start]

[close by returning, once and briefly, to the people you addressed in the first three minutes - then stop]

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