

EASTER PEOPLE SHARE THEIR FAITH WITH ALL PEOPLES

May 10, 2009 – Mother's Day

By Pastor Vern Oestmann

The Lord is risen! He is risen, indeed! Alleluia!

Last week we said that this was our victory chant. It's our message that tells the truth of hope, life, and peace. We can have joy in our hearts because we are assured of this message of truth, especially when we face difficulties or face death. God's Word assures us that nothing can separate us from His love. We are certain that because Jesus lives, we shall live with God now and for eternity. The Lord is risen! He is risen, indeed! Alleluia!

Today is Mother's Day, a special remembrance of 'mom' day. Mothers (most of 'em anyway) are great. They're loving and selfless and will stand behind their kids no matter how terrible the prosecution's evidence. For these reasons and more, a woman named [Anna M. Jarvis](#) started the Mother's Day tradition in the early 20th century.

Ms. Jarvis, though never a mother herself, was extremely devoted to her own mom. After the elder Jarvis passed away in 1905, Anna began seeking ways to honor not only her own mom, but all mothers. She started by organizing a Mother's Day Memorial Committee at her local church, but that was just the beginning.

Over the years, Jarvis wrote letters and gave speeches pushing for a national holiday. Alas, the vast majority "fell on deaf ears." Still, Jarvis pressed on, and by 1909, "forty-five states, Puerto Rico, Hawaii, Canada and Mexico observed the day." In 1914, a resolution was passed by Congress and approved by President Woodrow Wilson, declaring the second Sunday in May as Mother's Day. The holiday has been around ever since.

It's worth noting that Jarvis wanted to keep Mother's Day from becoming commercialized. Obviously she wasn't able to do that, but you can still celebrate the way Ms. Jarvis intended -- just spend a little time with Mom.

To all the mothers here today: Happy Mother's Day. We have a special gift for you as you leave this morning. The ushers will be handing those out in the Narthex.

This morning we continue with our sermon series: "Living as Easter People." Easter People Share Their Faith with All Peoples. That might sound strange, but it is very true. The word that is translated nations in the Great Commission can also be translated peoples. Jesus commanded His disciples to go to all peoples baptizing and teaching them. Within the Body of Christ – the church- we are still commanded to go to all peoples. All peoples are the various cultures, races, societies, people groups that are in the world today.

A "people group" is an *ethnolinguistic group* with a common self-identity that is shared by the various members. There are two parts to that word: *ethno* and *linguistic*. Language is a primary and dominant identifying factor of a people group. But there are other factors that determine or are associated with ethnicity.

Usually there is a common self-name and a *sense of common identity* of individuals identified with the group. A *common history, customs, family and clan identities*, as well as marriage rules and practices, age-grades and other obligation covenants, and inheritance patterns and rules are some of the common ethnic factors defining or distinguishing a people. What they call themselves may vary at different levels of identity, or among various sub-groups.

In order to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ, it is more than sharing it in a specific language. It is becoming aware of and understanding the history and customs of the specific people group. Missionaries find this out as they prepare to go to other mission fields to share the Gospel. They not only have to learn the language and special dialects, but also the culture and customs of the people group. Sometimes this takes years of training and having saturated time living among them.

The disciples went and shared the Gospel with various people groups. They were filled with God's Spirit on Pentecost in order to do so. What about us? How can we Easter people that share our faith with all peoples?

First, we must be filled with God's Spirit. At our Baptism we received the Holy Spirit that gave us faith to believe in Jesus Christ as our Savior. Through the teaching of God's Word and the Sacrament of Communion, the Holy Spirit works to keep that faith growing. The Holy Spirit also blesses us with spiritual gifts. Every one of us has a spiritual gift if not more. That spiritual gift is to be used for the furtherance of God's kingdom. That is done by sharing our faith with all peoples. For some, that is being hospitable to all people. For others, it is sharing one's faith through teaching all peoples. For others, it is generously providing funds so that the message of faith can be shared through missionaries, pastors, teachers in the various people groups. For some it is lifting up prayers that all peoples will receive the message of Jesus Christ.

Having a belief that Jesus is Savior is important. Faith also claims that Jesus is Lord. Scripture says, "No one can say, 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:3). To have Jesus as Lord of our life is to submit our life to Him. Submitting our life to Jesus means that we do not live to serve our selves, but we live to serve God. Serving God means that we are diligently reading and studying His Word; that we are faithfully worshipping Him declaring that He is worthy of our time and praise; and that we reach out to others with the message of faith to all peoples.

This takes commitment. It is a commitment of faith and a commitment to serve. This week you will receive a packet that includes a commitment form. On that commitment form you are asked to make a commitment or recommit your life to God and to serve God here at Bethany as a member of Bethany Lutheran Church. There are many opportunities where you can use your God-given gifts and skills. On May 31st, Pentecost Sunday, we are asking everyone to bring those commitment forms and during the service to recommit yourself to God and to serving Him.

Joshua asked the children of Israel, before they entered the Promised Land, to recommit themselves to serve God. Jesus asked His followers to make a public commitment to Him. We come to make our commitment and glorify God.

We are Easter people and we have a victory message to share with all peoples. May God grant us His Spirit to be bold in sharing our faith with all peoples.

The Lord is risen! He is risen, indeed! Alleluia! Amen.