

## ‘For mothers in need of a Father’

I would like to preach a sermon to a special group of people. Now I think that all the mums and all grandmothers who are here today would agree with me when I say, “that being a mum is kind of like being in the army.” They say, “It is the toughest job you will ever love.”

I know that when I leave the house for a few days or weeks, life seems to function pretty well. But if Funmi gets sick for 3 or 4 days, then our whole house goes into survival mode. If it hard for the home to be well when mum isn’t right in the middle of it.

Think back to when your kids were just babies, and think about just exactly what you mums did every morning just to keep our house going. Just consider some of the hats that you had to wear back then. Cook, tailor, hairdresser, personal hygienist, launderer, maid, secretary, referee, minister, emergency nurse, chauffer, shopper, and toxic waste disposer. They are just some of the hats that you mums have to wear just to get her day started.

One time this woman phoned up her friend and asked, “How are you doing?” To which she said, “terrible, my head is splitting, I ache all over, the house is a mess, and the kids are driving me crazy.” So with a spirit of compassion the women said, “I tell you what, you go straight to bed, I will be right over, I will fix you some lunch, I will clean up the house, and I will keep your kids until John gets home”. The woman said, “John, there’s nobody here named John.” She said, “Oh I’m sorry I must have called the wrong number”. And after a pause the woman replied, “but are you still coming over?”

Being a mum is the toughest job you will ever love. And I think that we all know that the most important hat that mum wears, is that she is the model of authentic faith, that often makes that very first powerful impression, in the life of a child.

In fact, how many of you can trace the roots of our beginning faith in Jesus to the influence of a mother or a grandmother? Just raise your hand of that is you today. Mothers are the most excellent and under appreciated evangelists in the church today. And mums, I think sometimes we forget just how important your influence is.

Its like the woman who had a little boy named James, and one night she was hovering up and she was singing that song, “Soon and very soon, we are going to see the king”. And she heard little James starting to sing, but something didn’t seem quite right. And so she turned off the Hoover to listen a little closer because he was in his room. And he was in there singing; “Soon and very soon, we are going to Burger King.”

Now that’s probably not what she meant but it’s still a start. And most of you can say that your walk with God started under the influence of your mothers. But this morning I want to speak to our single mums and our spiritually single mums.

And there are many women in the church who get their children up and get their clothes on and they come to church without a husband. Either they don’t have a father at home or he just doesn’t want to get up and bring the kids to church. And I know that this sermon isn’t for all of you but in a way, it is. It’s for all of us because we need to remember those mothers who are in need of a father.

Turn your Bibles to Genesis 16. There was a couple named Abraham and Saria; they had moved Canaan because God had promised them that they would be parents of a great nation of people. But after living there for 10 years they still had no kids. Saria had determined that she had become too old to ever bare a child, that she would never have a child biologically, so she came up with a different plan.

She said to her husband Abraham, “I have young maid named Hagar we picked up in Egypt, she’s young and she could have children, I am going to give her to you, to be your wife, so that I can raise up children through her.” And Abraham agreed. So, Hagar became his wife, they slept together and she became pregnant.

And right away, tension between Hagar and Saria became evident. We pick up that story in Genesis 16:6. Saria is complaining to Abraham and “Abram said. "Do with her whatever you think best." Then Sarai mistreated Hagar; so she fled from her. The angel of the LORD found Hagar near a spring in the desert; it was the spring that is beside the road to Shur. And he said, "Hagar, servant of Sarai, where have you come from, and where are you going?" "I'm running away from my mistress Sarai," she answered. Then the angel of the LORD told her, "Go back to your

mistress and submit to her." The angel added, "I will so increase your descendants that they will be too numerous to count." The angel of the LORD also said to her: "You are now with child and you will have a son. You shall name him Ishmael, for the LORD has heard of your misery. He will be a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he will live in hostility toward all his brothers." She gave this name to the LORD who spoke to her: "You are "Eli Roy", the God who sees me," for she said, "I have now seen the One who sees me."

Have you ever preached at a church where there are a lot of babies? If you have you will know that you have to get used to a lot of activity. People who are constantly getting up and down. Crying and vomiting and toys being dropped.

There was a man who went to preach at a church one time where there were no children. A mother had come into the meeting with 3 kids, she was not a member of that church and it was very clear it was her first time and those kids did not know how to act in church. They were all over the place and the little baby was crying and making a racket. The church wasn't used to this and they didn't approve.

And she could feel their glances and about half way through the man's sermon she had enough, she got up to leave. And that was the last thing that visiting preacher wanted. So he stopped right in the middle of his sermon to assure her. He said, "Please don't go, your baby is not bothering my preaching." And she looked back and said, "but yes, your preaching is bothering my baby."

Now I told that story because we usually don't give much thought to those single parents, mums or dads in our churches. Even though we are just one step away from being in their shoes. But God notices the people we tend to overlook. And he's on the side of the single parent.

For example, Psalm 68:5 says, "A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows is God in his holy dwelling."

Psalm 146:9 says, "The lord watches over the alien and sustains the fatherless and the widow but he frustrates the ways of the wicked."

All through the Law of Moses there are teachings about not mistreating the orphan and the widow. In Exodus 22 the Bible says, "Do not take advantage of a widow or an orphan, if you do and they cry out to me, I will certainly hear their cry." Over in the book of James the Bible says, "This is a mark of true religion."

How do you treat the woman who doesn't have a husband? And how do you treat the kid who doesn't have a father? Because that is the sign of real religion. Evidently for part of his life, Jesus was raised by a single mother. My point is that God doesn't just give his attention to the Sarahs of the world but to the Hagar as well.

In fact, God saw Hagar when no one else was looking for her. And Hagar that the God of Abraham and Sarah cared about her too. I don't think she knew that. I don't think she thought that anybody cared about a single mum out there in the desert. But she was wrong, God did.

And when she called God, "Eli Roy, the God who sees me." What she means is, "you are the God that knows what's going on in my life. I didn't think anybody knew what I was going through, I didn't think anybody cared but now I know God knows what my life is like."

And if there is anything we can say to single mums today, it is that. That God knows and God cares. A few years ago, Nike had an advertisement, which said, "Tim Henman knows tennis." And one day I saw a tee shirt, which said, "God knows Tim." And God does know Tim and God knows you and God hears your cries. That's what Ishmael means, "God hears me".

And every time she calls the name of her boy, she was remembering that he had a God that cared about single mums too. You mums may not have an ideal situation this morning but you have an ideal God. You have a God that sees. Let me show you what he sees.

1. Mums I want you to know that He sees your family in the midst of unfairness.

See Hagar's life wasn't fair.

She did not ask to be married to Abraham, that was an arranged wedding and no one asked her opinion. It wasn't fair that she should get kicked out of the family in the middle of the desert, pregnant with no place to go. Now some of you understand that because your life isn't fair.

You planned to retire and spend 50 or 70 years with your husband but he got cancer after 15 and now he's gone, that's not fair. He promised you when he married you that he would get up every Sunday and help you take those kids to church but after one year he stopped and that's not fair.

He stood before your family and God and said, "till death do us part" but he decided to move out and live with somebody else. That's not right. And a lot of mums today are just like Hagar, you are having to live with a life isn't fair.

Now I don't pretend that I know how bad that hurts but I do know that healing begins with recognition that Ell Roy sees it all. He has noticed your situation and he's kept a record of every tear you've cried. In fact, the Bible says in **Psalm 56:8**. "Record my lament, list my tears on your scroll, are they not in your record?"

Listen mums. You have those nights when you pour it out on your pillow and you don't think anybody sees or knows. But even when you can't see God, it is important for you to remember that God can see you. It's important for you to know that you are significant to him, even if you don't feel significant to anybody else.

The Bible says in **Psalm 34:18** "The lord is close to the broken hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit." And what I'm trying to say today is not just that God is watching you mums, but God is watching over you. In the midst of an unfair environment he's watching over you to protect and bring healing and safety to your home.

Let me tell you about a mum who had to live in an unfair world. Her name is Jacobed. She had a little girl and she had a little boy named Aaron and she got pregnant again. And when the king made a rule. All Hebrew babies need to be thrown into the Nile river. Jacobed wasn't afraid of the king. For 3 months, she hid her little boy. And then she came up with a plan and put him in a basket and put him in the Nile River, just where Pharaoh's daughter would go to bathe. Jacobed had to live in an unfair situation, but she trusted in a God who could watch over her.

In **Hebrews 11:23** it says, "By faith Moses parents hid him for three months after he was born because they saw he was no ordinary child." And they were not afraid of the king's edict. Jacobed believed God doesn't make accidents, every one of my kids is here for a reason and she believed that God had a purpose for her young son's life. And mums, I want you to believe the exact same thing. That even in an unfair situation a Moses can still be raised.

**Proverbs 14:26** "If you respect the lord, you and your children have a strong fortress." So, I want you to believe that. You have a God who sees your family in the midst of unfairness and he could be a fortress and a protection for your kids.

Not only that I want you to notice that **God sees your future in the midst of uncertainty.**

**What kind of future did Hagar have?** She's out there in the middle of nowhere and with no one to take care of her, she's got no promise of a future but God gave her one. God could see her future when nobody else could. And God said to her, "Let me tell you something, you're going to have so many descendants, you're not going to be able to count them. I'm going to give you a rich and awesome future even though you can't see it yet."

Some of you need to believe the same thing. You don't see how you're going to make it tomorrow but God does. And the courage to face tomorrow comes from the conviction that Ell Roy sees it and he doesn't just prepare tomorrow for the typical families, don't believe that.

You come to church and you see the well-dressed nice husband and the nice wife and the 2.4 kids and you think that's the nuclear family. And you think that's what God sees, **NO!** God sees all families. He sees all kinds of families and God cares about the widow and he cares about the orphan and he cares about the single mum and he cares about the dad that was left by his wife and God sees and God cares and God gives tomorrow to all kinds of families. He sees the future even when you don't. And with the conviction that he holds tomorrow comes the courage to trust him today.

Let me tell you about another mum, I don't even know her name. **1 King 17** just calls her, **"a widow in Zerepheph."** God sent Elijah there. Elijah went and there was a woman and said, **"can I have a drink of water?"** she went to get him some. He said, **"and can you make me please a piece of bread?"**

She turned around and said, **"I've got a handful of flour and a little bit of oil and I was going to go home to make a little bit of bread for my son and myself to eat before we died."** The prophet of God said, **"you go and make that bread and bring it to me because God has told me, as long as you take care of me the flour and the oil will never run out in your house."**

Now she had a decision to make. She had to make a decision, **"am I going to trust the God of Israel and obey him and let him take care of tomorrow."** She went home and she made that little bit of bread and she brought it to the prophet Elijah and they went back to her house and there was flour in that jar and oil in that jar. And there was as long as the prophet lived there. She had to decide, **"I'm going to obey God and trust him for my long-term future."** Obey God today and trust him for a miracle tomorrow.

We talk about this verse a lot. But I don't know anybody who needs **Matthew 6:33+34** more than single mums. And the Bible says to you mums, **"Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things shall be given to you as well, therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself, each day has enough trouble of its own."**

I've got some good news. The good news is God doesn't supply our needs according to our circumstances; he supplies our needs according to his riches. And that's why he can see and prosperous and awesome future for your family even when it doesn't look like there is one.

And by the way, one-way God does that, is that he sends you where it may not be easy to go. He told Hagar, **"you go back to Abraham and Sarah and submit and I'll take care of you there."** You see God is always sending single mums to his people, to a church family to help them.

And I know it's not easy. I know it's not easy to get up on Sunday and get breakfast made and get the kids washed and get some clothes on them and get them to church and sit there all by yourself while they go crazy on the pew and I know that there are lots of days it would just be easier to give it up and stay home. Please don't do that.

One of the ways God is going to bless you is by sending you to a church family to help meet your needs. You've got a father who knows what you're going through. He sees your family when times are hard; he sees your future even when you can't see it.

And let me show you what else, **He's the God who can see your faith in the midst of ungodliness.**

It took faith for Hagar to go back. It took faith for her to trust God and go back to where she had been mistreated and where she wasn't loved. But God saw her faith and took care of her. I think every single mum today needs to decide; I'm going to do the possible with the faith that God is going to do the impossible. It takes faith to raise kids today; we live in an ungodly culture. In any family situation, it's hard to raise kids. But we must not forget or diminish the impact of a faithful parent. I'm preaching to all of us now.

We have bought too much into the idea that if you do not have a strong youth programme or if the Sunday schools aren't awesome. Listen. Study after study shows that the greatest impact about how a kid turns out is their parent. And there is power and impact in a godly parent.

Like **Eunice**. She had a little boy named Timothy. She was a spiritually single married. Her husband was a Greek, didn't care about the things of God. But Eunice was determined to give her boy a chance to know the lord. And God saw her faith in the midst of ungodliness.

In fact, not only did God see it but little Timothy saw it too. Because Paul said in **2 Timothy 1:5** **"I've been reminded of your sincere faith which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and I'm persuaded now lives in you also."** Faith is not hereditary. Faith is learned through models and nobody knows if faith is sincere better than your kids.

So, you need to be the godliest adult your kids know. Because what your doing is God's work.

There is a church in Kansas, America. And in front of the church there are 2 little baby footprints. Seemingly 20 years ago, when that cement for the pathway was being poured, a woman took her little boy along and asked for permission to put his feet in that wet cement and them right to that church. She did this as a reminder to him that her aim and mission and goal in life was to point him to Jesus Christ.

That was Eunice. I don't know if Timothy's dad was a bad man but he was not the man to make a spiritual deposit in his boy's life and she is determined, my boy is going to know about the lord even if dad won't help. And she made a spiritual deposit on her son that blessed him the rest of her life. In fact, Paul said in **2 Timothy 3:15**. "How from infancy you have known the holy scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus."

That was mummy, that was grand mummy, giving little Timothy that kind of foundation. Now I know that some of you are Christians today is because of a grandmother like Lois. Funmi and I are in un-chartered territory. We were never brought up like that, but we are determined to bring our kids up with the knowledge of our God.

And maybe some you were dragged off to church every Sunday by your mothers. And because of her stubborn faith you are a Christian today. And what I want to say to you single mums and especially you spiritually single mums, is don't give up. I'm telling you that might be a Moses or a Timothy sitting on your lap making all that noise. And God can do awesome things with your faith because he sees what you're trying to do.

A woman named Deveda Dawton, who lives in California. There was a time she had 10 kids and one on the way. So you could imagine how hectic her life was. But this particular morning it was more hectic than usual because little 3-year-old Lynn was wrapped around her leg no matter where she went. Literally bumping into her constantly. She tried time and time again to get him to go out and play on the swing but he didn't want to. He said, "I want to be next to you mum!" So after about the 5<sup>th</sup> time that morning of him stepping on her shoes she finally whipped around impatiently and said, "Lynn! What are you doing?" The little 3-year-old said, "mummy, my teacher said, we should walk in Jesus' footsteps, but I can't see him, so I'm walking in yours".

And I wonder if that exactly how some of you got started with Jesus! One of the hardest things about a mother's job is, it is harder at the end of the day to see the difference you've made. A lot of people have jobs where they can come home and talk about all the things they have achieved.

But a mother. No matter how clean she cleans that kitchen, its messy by the next morning. No matter how much laundry she washes there is a new pile the next day. And those kids are not walking around every evening saying, "thank you mum for being so awesome." And some of you don't have a husband to tell you how awesome you are.

But I don't want you to think that what you do doesn't matter. It is God's work that your doing, and God sees it and God cares about it and he values you. A verse in **Isaiah 49** says, "Can a mother forget the bay at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has born, though she may forget I will not forget you."

God say can you imagine such a thing? Can you imagine a mother forgetting her baby? "But that's not me", God says, "I will never desert you even if everybody else has." Mums, you've got a father who still cares and you're family needs him. He's not going to desert you even if somebody else did. And he sees you even when it's hard to see him.

Let me finish by saying this. Now some of you might think this is a bit strong but I believe this. So, let me just say it. Mums, I believe that it is better to be with God and without a husband than to be with a husband and without God. Let me leave you with this verse to dwell on.

**Philippians 4**. "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition and thanksgiving, present your requests to God and a peace of God which transcends all understanding will guard your heart and your mind in Christ Jesus."

Every time she said, "Ishmael", she knew that God hears.