

## *What? No Answers?*

*Acts 10:44-48; John 15:9-17*

What? No Answers? I have a Mothers' Day tradition. I heard this morning on the news that Woodrow Wilson had declared in 1908 or something that this would be Mothers' Day. It's since then become kind of one of those sappy saccharine holidays that Hallmark makes a lot of money off of as well as, of course, chocolate stores and flower shops. I also heard this morning that sometime earlier than that, another woman whose name I'm sad to say I've already forgotten, in 1904 had declared that this would be a day to honour women. As she subsequently decided that that was a ridiculous thing to have done and she worked hard to get that declaration rescinded. Karen's about to look it up; she's going to tell me who she was. Prior to that, in a book that I received about 30 years ago, I found this which is, for me, the single most significant statement on Mothers' Day that I've ever had the opportunity to encounter. And so, it's become my annual tradition to read it wherever I am for whomever I can. And so I share it here: It is entitled "The Original Mothers' Day Proclamation of 1870", written by Julia Ward Howe: "Again, in the sight of the Christian world have the skill and power of two great nations exhausted themselves in mutual murder." 150 years ago, that was their opening phrase. "Again have the sacred questions of international justice been committed to the fatal mediation of military weapons. In this day of progress, in this century of light, the ambition of rulers has been allowed to barter the dear interests of domestic life for the bloody exchanges of the battlefield." In 1870, they wrote really well, didn't they? The use of the English language is exquisite, I think. "Thus, men have done; thus men will do. But women need no longer be made a party to proceedings which fill the globe with grief and horror. Despite the assumptions of physical force, the mother has a sacred and commanding word to say to the sons who owe their life to her suffering. That word should now be heard and answered to as never before. Arise, then, Christian women of this day. Arise, all women who have hearts. Whether your baptism be that of water or of tears, say firmly, we will not have great questions decided by irrelevant agencies. Our husbands shall not come to us reeking with carnage for caresses and applause. Our sons shall not be taken from us to unlearn all that we have been able to teach them of charity and mercy and patience. We, women of one country, will be too tender of those of another country. To allow our sons to be trained to injure theirs. From the bosom of the devastated Earth, a voice goes up with our own. It says, disarm, disarm. The sword of murder is not the balance of justice. Blood does not wipe out dishonour, nor does violence vindicate possession. As men have often forsaken the plow and the anvil at the summons of war Let women now leave all that may be left of home for a great and earnest day of counsel. Let them meet first as women to bewail and commemorate the dead. Let them then solemnly take council with each other as by the means for which the great human family can live in peace. Man as the brother of man, each bearing after its own kind, the sacred impress not of Caesar, but of God. In the

name of womanhood and of humanity, I earnestly ask that a general congress of women without a limit on nationality may be held at some place deemed most convenient and at the earliest period consistent of its objects to promote the alliance of different nationalities, the amicable settlement of international questions, the great and general interests of peace." Don't you love it? "At the earliest period consistent with its objects", or objectives. Well, that only took 150 years. And are we there? No. A call for women to unite. A call for women to work together to find a way for peace and justice to prevail. That's where Mothers' Day originated. And it was a call, Julia started with a call to Christian women. "Arise, Christian women of this day." She understood that the way by which we have a movement for justice and righteousness and peace is if we can gather behind one amazing, powerful objective. But it never happened. The congress has not yet come about. And we have turned Mothers' Day into something saccharine rather than sacred. And, in fact, it went from that to not being Mothers' Day anymore. But we now speak of it as Christian Family Sunday, about which I must admit I have exceptionally mixed feelings. Because it seems to me that it means that the one day that was set aside for us to celebrate womanhood and the great gift that womanhood is was subverted into being a family celebration. We didn't do that to Fathers' Day; we did that to Mothers' Day. Let's be clear. The scriptures have called us, or shall I say, Julia Ward Howe called us in very much the same way as the scriptures of this day do. A call not to arms, unless it's the arms of love. A call to action. A call to all that might be. Where we simply sit together and work through our various differences to a place of unity. And it behooves us to expand our boundaries, well, beyond the black lines on the floor, for starters. But beyond our walls, beyond these walls. Beyond the walls of our little local communities in the little neighbourhoods of our city. Beyond even the walls of our city or even the boundaries of our province or our country. Because until we can, as human beings, gather together in some way, whether it be a congress, or some other calling that brings us to a table for conversation about what makes us tick as human beings. About the things that we have in common – not the things that separate us. Until we are able to do that, I am concerned that we will simply continue to turn the best suggestions into saccharine. And to leave us wanting for the lives of our children and grandchildren to be lives of peace. So you see, it doesn't matter that I haven't born children. Well, I don't think it does. It matters only that I can carry the compassion of a human being who understands that the destruction of humanity is not going to lead to a world of peace and justice. And we can all do that. We can all do that, whether we be women, or girls, children of great compassion, or men of great compassion. We must come together to discern the basic questions that need to be answered. I don't have the answers, except to say that I believe we must get together and have discussion. To talk. Karen's offering a theological discussion that might lead to great debate. Good! Because we are all different and yet, at the core, one hopes that we are all in some way the same. The blood that flows through my veins is that which flows through yours. And yours, and yours. It is that which connects us. Maybe we can start there. Maybe we can start there. By holding that which is common to all of us. The sacred; as God holds it, sacred. Amen. Thanks be.