Have any of you had a moment recently where you could see one of your family members in yourself? Or maybe in someone close to you? Maybe it was a gesture or a turn of phrase that someone in your family once used. Like those progressive commercials about young homeowners turning into their parents. It is something I think we have all experienced at one time or another. We have all had moments where we have seen glimpses of someone else in ourselves.

Everyone carries these pieces of other people that have been important to them and have influenced them. As it is Mother's Day, I thought of my own Mom and the moments that I realized I am becoming her. All those pieces of her that I carry with me. Even the unintentional ones, some of them a little strange. Like her, I put ketchup on my mac and cheese and prefer sun tea in the summer. She taught me her way of folding towels, which is the correct way. But, I also wonder about the pieces she intentionally gave me, those lessons she wanted me to hold onto. Her lessons of kindness and compassion, especially for those treated unfairly, especially for the underdog.

As I read the text for this week, I thought about these pieces of myself, not just from my mother, but from everyone who helped me grow both in life

and in faith. Those lessons of love and justice that I picked up at home, at school, and at church and now make up who I am. We all carry these pieces or pieces like them. And I realized that these pieces are filled, not only with the essence of the person we got them from, but also with hope. They are filled with the hope that the lessons they contain will be enough for us in our lives. Jesus had the same hope for his disciples.

The text for today continues from last week. It is still a part of the farewell discourse of John, taking place right after the Last Supper. Jesus had just finished washing the disciples' feet and telling them he is going on ahead of them when he gives them this piece of himself. At the time, the disciples probably did not recognize this for what it was, after all we rarely notice the pieces that we have picked up until later. They were probably confused by what was happening. This passage is full of more theological statements. Like a semester's worth of Intro to Theology: "I am in the Father, and you in me, and I in you." On top of that, Jesus is introducing a new being for them that no one else will see. Yet they will follow it, and it will "advocate" for them. Who knows what pieces the disciples picked up from this lecture on theology?

But Jesus had hope that one lesson would stick with them. Here in the comforting part of the farewell discourse, Jesus gives them one piece to carry with them. He tells the disciples gathered and all of us who hear his words today, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” If you love me and carry me with you, you will love one another. His hope was that his lessons of love would continue in his disciples. It was kind of like a parent giving the list of instructions before they leave home. “Now remember, behave, do this. Take care of your siblings.” Jesus knows that this ask will not always be easy. Sometimes, under the threat of empire it would be easier to ignore the teachings of Jesus, but he still implores them to choose love, just as he would have done.

Sadly, it seems this piece that Jesus gave us has been missing or forgotten in our world today. As I scrolled through social media this week, I was appalled to read some of the comments people were posting. Words of anger and division that I can only hope came from a bot or at least that the person commenting would not actually say that to someone. We live in a world where words of kindness are viewed as either a weakness or a deception. A world that tells people to hide those pieces of themselves, those lessons others hoped we would hold onto. We are told to ignore them if they

do not align with the world's ideals and power structures. I imagine, for Jesus, the world today is a lot like a parent coming home to find their children have disregarded the rules and threw a party instead.

Even in the church, we have forgotten those pieces we are supposed to carry. We get so focused on other things that we sometimes forget the main thing. We worry more about what is happening in other pews rather than our own. Even the Church has fallen short. That is why we confess, every time we have communion. We say, together, "We have failed to be an obedient church. We have not done your will, we have broken your law, we have rebelled against your love." We have tried to hide the pieces given to us. And Jesus wept.

But, it is not too late. Jesus promised his disciples and us, that he would not leave us orphaned. Jesus promises that the Spirit will be with us always advocating for us even when we cannot see it happening. If we only believe and follow God. Every Sunday we pray to God our Father, but sometimes we forget that God is motherly, too. This text is a perfect example of that. The Spirit, the advocate, the one who abides in us and with us. Like a mother watching her child learning to walk, ready to step in, brush the dirt off of bruised knees and start again. Like a mother, always watching even when her

children do not know hoping that they will remember the lessons they have been taught.

Now I know that this day can be a difficult day for many. There are those grieving mothers they have lost to death and those grieving mothers that are still alive. For those grieving, today can be a day of sadness and struggle. Not every earthly mother is perfect. Some have struggled to love and support their children, but God has not. God loves us even when we struggle, even when we fail or those we rely upon fail. Through it all, God is there loving us and sustaining us, just as Jesus promised he would be. God has not abandoned us. So take heart, know that you are loved and a piece of God abides in you, too.

Perhaps these pieces we carry are a little strange to outsiders, like ketchup with macaroni and cheese. Perhaps not everyone will understand our commandment to love others, but those are the lessons that have been given to us, the lesson Jesus still hopes to leave with us. Jesus instructs his followers on how they ought to live in the world through his life teachings and missions. In verse 21, Jesus is speaking directly to us when he said, “They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those

who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them." Those who have these texts will know what Jesus has instructed us to do: love one another. It is all about love. It is about loving as Jesus has loved us and sharing that love with others, just as a godly mother would.

This Mother's Day, I encourage you to give thanks for the pieces you carry. Pieces of those who have shown you love, those that have mothered you wiping away tears and encouraging you in your faith. Give thanks to those who have given a part of themselves to you. Those that have taken the time to teach you and raise you in the ways of the Lord. It is through them that you have come to know the God who abides in and with you. They have shown you the love of God. And they have given you a piece of that love to carry with you. Now, may you show others the love of God being their advocate, being with them, and giving them a piece of yourself too.