

Mom don't want no stinkin' card

By [Ruth Everhart](#)

May 5, 2014

You'll have to forgive me if I'm cranky about Mother's Day. Once again the world will be draped in its annual pink haze, but I'm not feeling it.

One reason I'm cranky—Mother's Day is another working Sunday, with the addition of a whole lotta cultural baggage that doesn't have a thing to do with Jesus. Still, the baggage can't be ignored.

The other reason I'm cranky—Mother's Day is a massive contradiction. Do we actually respect women in our culture, or do we think we can pawn them off with a card and a brunch once a year while we ignore facts such as these?

- Women still earn [only 77 cents](#) on a man's dollar.
- There is much talk about whether [women can "have it all"](#) when the question doesn't even come up for men.
- We don't talk frankly about the fact that the church is becoming a pink ghetto, and what that means [in terms of salary](#) and power structures.

Last year I blogged about [leading the Prayers of the People on Mother's Day](#). Here's what I told the congregation: Mother's Day is not a liturgical holiday, but we tend to treat it like one, perhaps because it falls on a Sunday. There are many theories about the connection between Mother's Day and church. I've heard two opposite schools of thought. Some say that Mother's Day is a banner day for the church, second only to Easter in terms of church attendance. There are many mothers whose desire is to be in a church pew with their families—and families make the effort to make a good showing for Mom.

But for some folks, Mother's Day is a painful experience. They might be tempted to avoid church on this day. Their hearts are not lifted: People whose mothers have died since the last time they celebrated this occasion. People who are estranged from their mothers. Women who have always wanted to be mothers, but for whom that hasn't happened. Women who had an abortion and now regret it. Birth mothers who have given children up for adoption.

I've been through my share of Mother's Days—as a daughter, a mother, a pastor—and I'm aware of how fraught it can be. A celebration like Mother's Day takes all our cultural myths about women and mothers and love and puts it in a powerful package that lands with a wallop!

On one hand we sentimentalize motherhood—drenching it in pink and sprinkling it with candy and flowers.

On the other hand, we still don't have decent maternity leave throughout the land. We have legislators who want to pass laws about women's reproductive organs. Culturally, we have the so-called Mommy Wars<sup>2</sup>—which I don't believe occur on a woman-to-woman level but which are a product of the media. I believe these are a way of labeling the ways in which women are put in impossible situations, having to choose between career and family. It's not easy to be a mother.

There's something about Mother's Day that shines a spotlight on how schizoid our culture is about women. And even about love itself.

So I suggest that on this Mother's Day we celebrate all that is good and lovely about our families, our mothers. We soak in the experience and the love. And at the same time we exercise kindness and compassion even as we celebrate this day. Be gentle with each other, because we don't know everything about each other's stories. Leave room for those other emotions.

*Originally posted at [Love the work. . . \(do the work\)](#)*